

Submission: New International Development Policy

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Introduction

Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) in close collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on Australia's New International Development Policy (NIDP). We are part of the world's largest, independent humanitarian network, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) comprised of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IFRC, and 192 National Societies. Commitment to the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity, and Universality are core to our approach. As a National Society, Red Cross is an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field¹ and works closely with government departments, including DFAT, to facilitate life-saving humanitarian assistance as well as expert advisory support on core humanitarian themes. While well known for its humanitarian action, the IFRC network of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies around the world is also a committed development actor, reaching over 270 million people with public health services, over 41 million with disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience programming, and over 31 million with livelihoods programming in 2020 alone.

We note and support the complementary submission made by the ICRC. As part of the Movement, we endorse legal frameworks and norms that protect vulnerable people and prevent and mitigate negative humanitarian consequences, including both international humanitarian law (IHL) and disaster law. Within this submission we will refer to and support the ICRC's submission on various topics and issues, acknowledging their critical humanitarian mandate in some of the most complex environments, including in protracted conflicts, urban settings, and in response to large-scale displacement.

The world continues to face complex and interconnected humanitarian and development challenges, with climate change a major driver looming over many others. Compounding crises have become the new normal, with humanitarian crises exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities, gravely challenging the possibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. It is widely accepted that the humanitarian system is overstretched² and the COVID-19 pandemic made clear that that the same is true when it comes to public health systems.³ Against this backdrop, the NIDP is an opportunity for Australia to articulate and shape a more joined-up humanitarian and development paradigm that helps realise the ambitions of relevant global frameworks to which Australia is a signatory.⁴ This NIDP provides an opportunity to emphasise Australia's commitment to relevant global legal frameworks and norms – at domestic, regional and international levels.⁵

The Grand Bargain, signed on the occasion of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), was a unique agreement which aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. Its latest iteration, Grand Bargain 2.0, includes a stronger focus on investing in the leadership and capacity of local actors and the provision of quality funding. Recognised as a champion of the reform agenda, the Australian Government has made significant progress by working collaboratively with partners in Australia and the region. However, progress on the goals on localisation and quality funding is still far from the stated intentions in the Grand Bargain document.⁶ The empowerment of local civil society is also an important goal in the development (Busan Partnership) and climate arenas (Principles for Locally Led Adaptation), but similar gaps remain in practice, in terms of access to funding to support the long-term institutional capacities of local actors and respect for local leadership.

We urge the Government to place the spirit of the Grand Bargain, especially the promotion of locally-led humanitarian, climate adaptation and resilience action at the centre of the NIDP.

Placing principled humanitarian action at the centre of the NIDP

Aid is most effective when it is delivered on the basis of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence⁷ and is free from political, security, economic and military objectives. Together with our own Fundamental Principles, this principled humanitarian approach enables the Movement to work in some of the most difficult humanitarian contexts and hard-to-reach areas. Both Red Cross and the Australian Government have committed to upholding the key principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in their humanitarian work.

Impartial assistance should be provided to individuals, groups and communities on the basis of need alone, prioritising those experiencing most vulnerability.⁸ These groups include, but are not limited to, women and girls; migrants, refugees and other displaced persons, and people of different ethnic origins, nationalities, citizenships,

language groups; people of diverse political opinions, religious beliefs, social backgrounds, physical appearances, colour and racialised identity; persons with disabilities; people of different ages including unaccompanied and separated children and the elderly; survivors of sexual and gender-based violence including survivors of trafficking; people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).⁹ We welcome Australia's championing of disability inclusion and women's and girls' rights and urge that Australia's commitment to aid under the NIDP be protected and allocated on the basis of need to ensure the most vulnerable are assisted.

The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events is leading to increased impacts on people experiencing vulnerability around the world and in Australia. Effective disaster laws and well-functioning disaster risk management systems are the foundation to all aspects of disaster risk management – risk reduction, preparedness, response, recovery, climate change adaptation and strengthening sustainable community resilience. Good disaster risk governance also supports communities to be prepared and take early action to save lives.¹⁰ The Australian Government has played an important role in championing effective disaster laws, including international disaster response law (IDRL), as well as disaster risk governance, including through promoting disaster risk management laws, policies and frameworks that help to protect and prepare communities around the world. As we face climate change, ongoing pandemics and increasingly frequent and intense disasters, the need for effective disaster laws, governance and frameworks continues to rise. We urge the Australian Government to continue its support for IDRL and disaster risk governance to develop strong, effective disaster and health frameworks, laws and policy to keep communities safe and save lives before, during and after disasters.

Strengthening of local legal and policy frameworks will be a vital part of the NIDP, and we urge the Australian Government to ensure its domestic laws do not undermine humanitarian action. Many States, including Australia, have strengthened sanctions and counter-terrorism measures over the last two decades. These measures can have unintended consequences for humanitarian responses, including the criminalisation of legitimate relief. We urge the Australian Government to maintain an active awareness of this risk in the NIDP and ensure that the development of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures do not undermine the efforts of genuine humanitarian actors and their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance to affected people, including in accordance with IHL, which protects rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in armed conflict.

We acknowledge Australia's strong track record advocating for IHL and the humanitarian principles and echo the ICRC encouragement to ensure that the promotion of and respect for IHL remain at the core of the NIDP.

Key recommendations

- Ensure that humanitarian action remains an essential component of the NIDP.
- Centre agreed principles of humanitarian action at the heart of the NIDP and ensure aid is protected and allocated on the basis of greatest need.
- Continue support for effective disaster laws, IDRL and disaster risk governance to develop strong, effective disaster and health frameworks, laws and policy to keep communities safe and save lives before, during and after disasters.
- Ensure that the development of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures do not undermine the efforts of genuine humanitarian actors and their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance to affected people.

Embed localisation and mutual partnerships as fundamental objectives of the NIDP

We commend Australia for championing locally-led humanitarian action, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Over the past four years, Australian Red Cross has pursued significant change to better prioritise listening to local partners and is actively seeking to change our ways of working to meet their needs regarding leadership and capacity strengthening. Collectively, through our partnership with DFAT, we have developed flexible financing and operational models that have further empowered National Societies and enabled them to respond to requests from their governments to scale up, be prepared for, and respond to, humanitarian need. Capacity strengthening also needs to invest in and be more explicitly linked to approaches that support organisational development and that helps local humanitarian actors transform their organisational models.¹¹ We welcome Australia's commitment to multi-year flexible financing to strengthen capacities to deliver relevant and effective humanitarian services.

A similar degree of support will be needed for locally-led climate adaptation, pandemic preparedness and prevention and resilience building activities. Today, it is estimated that no more than 10% of climate adaptation funding is reaching the local level.¹² Moreover, as reported by the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness in 2021, "where community structures, such as cadres of community health workers, have been mobilized, they have made a critical difference in establishing trust in government instructions, extending services, and in relaying scientific

information. However, the potential for communities to shape the response at the decision-making table has been severely neglected.”¹³ Key investments in the core functions of National Societies have enabled Australian Red Cross’ Pacific partners to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and respond to requests from their governments to provide humanitarian assistance. Independent case studies undertaken of the dual response to COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold in Fiji and Vanuatu in 2020¹⁴ and COVID-19 and flooding Timor Leste in 2021¹⁵ found that investments in longer-term and flexible partnerships between local and international actors lead to flexible and locally driven responses.

Embedding relationships with local partners as a priority of the NIDP will require Australia to go beyond traditional aid modalities. This includes cross-cultural recognition and appreciation of traditional knowledge in response and preparedness, and therefore we welcome the Australian Government commitment to a First Nations Foreign policy.¹⁶ Ensuring local partners are a key part of the decision-making process will be an important component of this. The spirit and intent of localisation should privilege policy frameworks developed by local actors. Several of Australia’s partners already have supportive policy frameworks in place, for example the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific,¹⁷ which is already supporting a more integrated approach to investments in climate change, DRR, long-term resilience and disaster management.

One of the greatest challenges to localisation is the need to shift from ‘risk transfer’ to ‘risk sharing’. While this will require a wider shift of power in the humanitarian system, there is a need for a more transformative approach to localisation in going forward.

Key recommendations

- Continue to champion locally-led humanitarian action, capacity support and multi-year flexible support that strengthens and sustains capacities to deliver effective humanitarian activities and action.
- Champion support for local actors in resilience, pandemic preparedness and climate adaptation.
- Ensure local partners have a seat at the decision-making table and align with partner policy frameworks.
- Consider the impact rules and guidelines on procurements, risks and financing have on local actors and examine how to better balance the focus on partnerships and funding compliance.

Identify, test and scale new models of humanitarian and resilience action and financing

Humanitarian aid on its own cannot meet increasing humanitarian need. The shared commitments outlined in the Agenda for Humanity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demand stronger coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development systems and investments.

It will be critical to build new types of partnerships to address the growing and increasingly complex challenges we face in the Asia Pacific region and globally. Australia is well placed to bring together a broad spectrum of actors across the public, private, scientific, technology and financial sectors and harness their expertise, knowledge and resources for new models of collective impact. At all times, communities must be at the heart of decision-making and implementation. In particular, Australia could be a powerful voice for greater convergence of humanitarian, climate and development financing for local actors’ long-term institutional capacities. The great majority of local actors are already “triple hatted” across these roles in practice, but many still struggle to obtain the capacity support they need.

The Australian Red Cross and IFRC recognise the need for taking action before crises occur. Evidence suggests that early or anticipatory action (acting on warnings or forecasts to protect people before a disaster strikes)¹⁸ can save both lives and money,¹⁹ and UN resolutions and G7 leaders have affirmed their commitment to improving the resources and capacity for anticipation.²⁰ But while there have been many important initiatives to put this into practice, it has proved hard to scale and join these up. There is an opportunity for Government leadership in anticipatory action and risk reduction by linking development and humanitarian investments before disaster strikes.

The Asia Pacific region faces many known risks such as seasonal cyclones and droughts, new epidemic outbreaks as well as the need to continually model for new, as yet unknown risks. As a first step, this can be in part addressed via supporting scaled-up multi-hazard early warning systems and robust early action and contingency planning for known and anticipated risks and back these up with predictable pre-positioned financing, ensuring timely action is taken and the impacts of disaster events on lives and livelihoods are mitigated. Additionally, country level investment plans also support enhanced social safety nets that address the humanitarian needs of those experiencing the greatest vulnerability.²¹

We welcome Australia’s investment in the IFRC’s multilateral Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), which facilitates early action in advance of forecasted events and quick response when they do occur, and we encourage

continued and scaled-up investment in these mechanisms that have demonstrable benefit for communities affected by disasters and crises.²²

Key recommendations

- Broker new collective impact partnership models for humanitarian action between donors and humanitarian actors, promoting a stronger nexus between humanitarian climate and development financing for local capacity, and ensuring the centrality of individuals and communities in decision-making and implementation.
- Ensure predictable pre-positioned financing for anticipatory action and fast response.
- Invest in and scale up multi-hazard early warning systems and robust early action and contingency planning.

Strengthen mechanisms for preparedness

The findings of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)²³ are clear: the humanitarian impacts of climate change will become more severe, frequent and widespread. These impacts are not just a future problem; they are already felt by communities around the world. In the past 10 years, 83% of all disasters triggered by natural hazards were caused by extreme weather and climate-related events, such as floods, storms, and heatwaves, impacting 1.7 billion people. Nor are they short or simple shocks; climate-related disasters collide with and compound other chronic causes of crisis – including extreme poverty, protracted insecurity, social and economic marginalisation – so, the most vulnerable people are the hardest hit by climate change.²⁴

International climate adaptation funding (2019 figures) averaged less than US \$1 per person in the five most climate vulnerable countries.²⁵ On average, countries that are highly or very highly vulnerable to climate change received less than a quarter of the adaptation funding per person than went to low or very low vulnerability countries, and less than a thirteenth of the amount per person of DRR funding. Thirty-two countries that were classed as either highly vulnerable or very highly vulnerable received less than US \$1 per person in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and DRR funding.²⁶ We urge Australia to ensure that adaptation finance reaches the most vulnerable, particularly in our own region, where Pacific Island Nations face some of the most extreme climate-related challenges.

We support the ICRC in urging the Government to ensure that its future climate change related programming includes conflict-affected locations.

The NIDP is an opportunity to ensure that climate finance is accessible to local actors, both for risk reduction action and to ensure sustainable capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Without this sustainable local capacity, communities will not be able to prepare for, adapt and respond to the growing risks created by the climate crisis.

Additionally, scaling up Nature based Solutions (NbS) now could protect society from some of the most severe consequences of climate change, the economic cost of losses and damages, and the number of people in need of international humanitarian assistance due to climate- and weather-related disasters.²⁷

In May 2021, the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations opened for signature. The ICRC and IFRC co-led the Charter's development in consultation with the humanitarian sector, aiming to galvanise and guide humanitarian response to climate and environmental crises. The Charter captures both the importance of stepping up the response to growing humanitarian needs and helping people adapt to the impacts of crises and of maximising the environmental sustainability of humanitarian action. We recommend that as part of the development of the NIDP the Government formally support the Charter and its objectives.²⁸

Currently, climate impacts are also compounding the social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 highlighted the interconnectedness of nations and the impact that country preparedness has on global resilience.

Epidemics begin and end in communities and are as much a social problem as a health problem.²⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how central communities and their behaviours are to epidemic prevention and control. When meaningfully engaged, and linked to effective frontline³⁰ service response capacity, communities and other civil society actors play a pivotal role in prevention, early action and response to infectious disease threats. The ongoing pandemic and secondary impacts such as threatening routine immunisation and communicable disease prevention and control programs,³¹ and diverting health care and surveillance efforts to focus on COVID-19, exacerbate pre-existing threats to health security in the region. Now, more than ever, the importance of strengthening community-centred epidemic preparedness and frontline response capacity is paramount. We welcome the Australian Government's existing support for epidemic and pandemic preparedness, including community-based surveillance programming and strongly recommend the NIDP continue to prioritise and invest in locally-led action to strengthen health security.

Key recommendations

- Increase action to address the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis, including scaling up adaptation action and financing.
- Ensure funds reach the local level by investing in decentralised and locally-led adaptation mechanisms that harness local knowledge and expertise.
- Optimise synergies and break down silos between humanitarian assistance, climate change adaptation, DRR and development assistance.
- Formally support the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations and its objectives.
- Continue investment in regional health security, including prioritising community engagement and locally-led prevention and early response.

Complex crises and increasing numbers of people on the move

A growing number of countries globally are affected by complex emergencies, resulting in devastating humanitarian crises and requiring scaled-up and long-term responses. Flexible funding and the ability of humanitarian organisations to determine the greatest need leads to more effective humanitarian response. The Movement's experience demonstrates that predictable and multiyear core funding enables humanitarians to better prepare for and address multiple hazards on an ongoing basis. This is critical for effective responses – as demonstrated in the regional response to COVID-19.³²

Australian Red Cross welcomes Australia's commitment, under the Grand Bargain, for greater flexibility and predictability in its funding approach. We support the position of our partner, the ICRC, and echo their recommendation to continue high levels of unearmarked funding to enable effective principled humanitarian action globally.

Against a backdrop of increasingly insecure and conflict-affected contexts, there is a renewed need for strengthened policy and operational complementarity between humanitarian action, development, climate change and peacebuilding efforts. This is particularly true when we consider migration and displacement, which pose some of the biggest humanitarian challenges of our time.³³

In the Asia Pacific region alone, there are 9.2 million refugees and people seeking asylum, including from two of the world's most complex and protracted humanitarian crises in Myanmar-Bangladesh and Afghanistan.³⁴ Despite the number of refugees under the UNHCR mandate increasing, Australia's humanitarian intake has not increased in real terms relative to need. Australia has the capacity for greater collaboration with partners across the region to protect, assist and foster resilience for the most vulnerable people, particularly those navigating compounding challenges of climate change, conflicts and pandemics.

The NIDP is an opportunity to invest and implement regional protection mechanisms to ensure Australia is prepared for and addresses current and future humanitarian challenges relating to migration. For example, by adopting the Global Compact on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration, a comprehensive framework that addresses all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects, and specifically covers people displaced by disasters.³⁵ By adopting this non-binding Compact, which gives States the flexibility to pursue implementation, Australia could make an important statement that demonstrates commitment to participating in the governance of migration.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to provide unearmarked and flexible funding to enable effective principled humanitarian action globally.
- Include regional protection mechanisms to ensure Australia is prepared for and addresses current and future humanitarian challenges relating to migration.

Conclusion

Australian Red Cross thanks the Australian Government for the consultative process in the formulation of its NIDP. Australia has been a champion of humanitarian action. We trust that the NIDP will continue to underpin strong support and engagement with a principled approach.

As always, we remain available to provide additional support and information as needed.

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- ¹ See, inter alia, [Royal Charter Consolidated and Fourth Supplemental Charter and Article 4 \(3\) of the Movement Statutes](#)
- ² ALNAP (2022). [The State of the Humanitarian System](#).
- ³ Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (2021). [COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic](#).
- ⁴ Key global frameworks include the Grand Bargain agreed following the World Humanitarian Summit, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Global Compact on Refugees and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- ⁵ International Humanitarian Law, International Disaster Response Law, Human Rights Law, International Refugee Law.
- ⁶ See ODI (2021). [The Grand Bargain at five years: an independent review \(odi.org\)](#) and Development Initiatives (2022). [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report](#).
- ⁷ See OCHA (2022). [Humanitarian Principles](#).
- ⁸ See Protection Principle 2 (2018). [Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#)
- ⁹ See IFRC (2018). [Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies](#) these standards draw on and complement existing international standards and policies in international protection work, including Sphere Handbook (2018) [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#); ICRC et al, (2018). [Professional Standards for Protection Work Carried Out by Humanitarian and Human Rights Actors in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence](#); IASC (2016). [Protection in Humanitarian Action](#); and (2016) [Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#)
- ¹⁰ See IFRC (2020). [An Introduction to IFRC Disaster Law](#) and IFRC (2021). [Case Study: Climate-smart disaster law in Fiji](#)
- ¹¹ IFRC (2022). [Localisation of Humanitarian Action in the Red Cross Red Crescent: National Society Development Building Capacities for Crisis Management, Resilience and Peace](#).
- ¹² IFRC (2022). [Where it matters most: Smart climate financing for the hardest-hit people](#).
- ¹³ Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (2021). [COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic](#).
- ¹⁴ Australian Red Cross (2020). [Local Response in a Global Pandemic: A case study of the Red Cross response to Tropical Cyclone Harold during COVID-19 in Vanuatu and Fiji](#).
- ¹⁵ Australian Red Cross (2022). [Double Disaster: a case study of the local Timor-Leste Red Cross \(CVTL\) response to the 2021 floods during COVID-19](#).
- ¹⁶ Senator the Hon Penny Wong (2022). [Ambassador for First Nations People](#).
- ¹⁷ See [Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management \(FRDP\) 2017 – 2030](#).
- ¹⁸ For definitions of early warning, early action and anticipatory action, see: <https://www.ifrc.org/early-warning-early-action>
- ¹⁹ Weingärtner L. et al (2020). [The Evidence Base on Anticipatory Action](#). WFP.
- ²⁰ See DFID (2021) [G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact](#) and <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N21/370/57/PDF/N2137057.pdf?OpenElement>
- ²¹ Barca V. and Beazley R. (2019). [Building on government systems for shock preparedness and response: the role of social assistance data and information systems](#). Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- ²² Australian Red Cross (2022). [Red Cross welcomes Government's pledge to increase funding to global emergencies fund](#).
- ²³ IPCC (2022). [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#).
- ²⁴ IFRC (2022). [Where it matters most: Smart climate financing for the hardest hit people](#).
- ²⁵ IFRC (2020). [World Disasters Report 2020 Come Heat or High Water](#).
- ²⁶ IFRC (2022). [Where it matters most: Smart climate financing for the hardest hit people](#).
- ²⁷ IFRC & WWF (2022). [Working With Nature to Protect People: How Nature-Based Solutions Reduce Climate Change and Weather-Related Disasters](#).
- ²⁸ See [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#).
- ²⁹ Natoli L, et al. (2020). [Community Engagement to Enhance the GHSA: It's about time](#). *Health Security*. Vol 18; No 4; pp 335-37.
- ³⁰ Frontline services refer to the community and the human and service providers closest to the community usually called primary or first level services. Frontline staff include primary health care workers and nurses at the community/first level health facility (which will usually have no or very few inpatient beds, and be mainly providing community outreach services, health promotion and facility based outpatient care); agricultural extension workers; environmental officers; wildlife officers; veterinary extension workers; quarantine or biosecurity officers – all at the level closest to the community – the first level of the system.
- ³¹ See Nelson R. (2020). [COVID-19 disrupts vaccine delivery](#). *Lancet Infectious Disease*. 20(5):546. and Hogan AB, et al. (2020). [Potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria in low-income and middle-income countries: a modelling study](#). *Lancet Glob Health*. 8(9).
- ³² See IFRC (2022). [Real Time Learning COVID-19 global operations: How are the IFRC secretariat and National Societies learning from the COVID-19 pandemic to prepare and address multiple hazards?](#) and UNHCR (2021). [Global Trends Report](#).
- ³³ UNHCR (2021). [Global Trends Report](#).
- ³⁴ IFRC (2021). [Displacement in a Changing Climate](#).
- ³⁵ See IOM [Global Compact for Migration](#).