

**ChildFund Australia and Plan International Australia co-submission to 2022 new *International Development Policy***

**About ChildFund Australia**

ChildFund Australia is an independent international development organisation that works to reduce poverty for children in developing communities. We partner to create community and systems change which enables vulnerable children and young people, in all their diversity, to assert and realise their rights. ChildFund Australia directly implements programs with a range of local partners in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and other Pacific nations, and manages projects delivered by partner organisations throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas.

ChildFund Australia is a member of the ChildFund Alliance – a global network of 12 organisations, which assists close to 23 million children and families in over 70 countries.

**About Plan International Australia**

Plan International is a global independent development and humanitarian organisation. As one of the oldest, largest and most experienced organisations in our field we work alongside children, young people, supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the injustices facing girls and the most marginalised children.

## 1. Introduction

ChildFund Australia and Plan International Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a co-authored submission to the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade's consultation on the *New International Development Policy*. We endorse the ACFID submission, and the joint agency submission from ChildFund Australia, Oaktree Foundation, Plan International Australia and Save the Children Australia on a child and youth centred international development policy.

We recognise the ongoing struggle for First Nations justice, the long and continuing history of discrimination and disenfranchisement of First Nations people in Australia, and the marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples globally. Gender, climate, economic and racial justice are not possible without First Nations justice. We recognise the critical importance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that Indigenous children and girls are some of the most marginalised populations when it comes to the realisation of their rights. We recognise that in Australia and globally, First Nations and Indigenous children and young people are leading the fight for justice and systemic change. We stand in solidarity with them and their communities and commit to ongoing learning, deep and active listening.

In addition to the below recommendations, we call for:

- **Poverty alleviation to be the core purpose of Australia's new international development policy**, given the context of protracted conflict, COVID and climate change, whereby children and young people are disproportionately impacted by the resulting multidimensional poverty. We recommend that this underpinning purpose determine how and where Australia's support through the aid policy is geographically directed.
- Australia's **development policy to be at the heart of our foreign policy**, and in doing so, Australia to adopt a feminist approach to all areas of foreign policy, including international development, which is informed by intersectional feminist analysis and in alignment with a First Nations foreign policy.

### Recommendations:

#### That the Australian Government, through the new international development policy:

1. Identifies children and young people as a cross cutting priority, with a particular focus on adolescent girls.
2. Responds to the scale of violence against children and young people, both online and offline.
3. Ensures climate change and disaster risk management are a cross-cutting priority, are better integrated, and are underpinned by a lens of intergenerational justice.
4. Responds to the threats and interruptions that COVID-19 and climate change have and continue to have on education through prioritising quality, inclusive and disaster proofed education.
5. Commits to multi-year, flexible and inclusive responses for humanitarian and protracted crises, expanding the focus on the humanitarian program to the Middle East and Africa to ensure the most acute needs are met, and places women, children and girls at the centre.
6. Articulate localisation as a chief priority to strengthen partnerships with civil society across the region through and to advance locally led development.
7. Elevates the critical importance of civil society and Australian NGOS in achieving the SDGs alongside Australian development priorities, and commits to growing the high performing ANCP Program budget in line with international standards.

#### Section 1 - Key questions answered:

- *What key trends or challenges will shape Australia's engagement in our region and globally over the next five to 10 years?*
- *What development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?*
- *How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?*

## 2. Centering Children and Young People

*The region at the centre of Australia's aid program – the Asia-Pacific – has one of the youngest populations in the world and presents incredible opportunity, yet Australia does not have a strategy for protecting and empowering children and young people through development assistance.*

The new International Development Policy will lead Australia to the doorstep of the culmination of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs). At the same time, over the next decade, the overwhelming mass of children and young people in South-East Asia and in Oceania will reach adulthood. It is their progress, their wellbeing and their rights that will catalyse achievement of the SDGs.

Child-rights, child and youth wellbeing and sustainable development across the region must be core business for Australia. The Indo-Pacific has one of the youngest populations in the world. In South-East Asia, as at 2020, children and young people aged 24 and under are estimated to account for 42% of the population, and in Oceania (excluding New Zealand and Australia) they account for more than half of the total population (53%).<sup>i</sup> Such a demographic phenomenon will have a large impact on every development area and provides both opportunities and risks.

Children and young people experience particular marginalisation directly related to their age and factors such as gender, race and developing capacity<sup>ii</sup> – with particular factors exclusive to the experience of children and young people – which combine to alienate them and ultimately prevent them from accessing the support they need to realise their rights.

#### What do Children and Young People Say?

In *A Better Normal*<sup>iii</sup>, more than 1,060 girls, young women and gender diverse young people mapped out their visions of more just, equitable and peaceful post-pandemic world, with six pillars of change:

- Education for all: a world of equal access to quality and inclusive education.
- Gender justice: an empathetic world where girls and women in all their diversities have a say in the decisions affecting their bodies and quality of life.
- Protection of rights and access to resources: a world where human rights are protected, respected and upheld, with equitable distribution of resources and opportunity, including financial security and freedom from discrimination or exploitation.
- Inclusion and equality of power: a cycle of leadership which includes minorities and youth as experts in their own right, to ensure policies and laws empower and lend a voice to those they affect.
- Climate justice: A society in harmony with nature and the planet, in which everybody lives within what our planet can sustain.

### **3. A life-cycle approach, with a focus on adolescence**

Adolescence is a crucial time in the transition from childhood to adulthood and the opportunities, risks and needs for young people diverge considerably during adolescence. For adolescent girls, this time in their lives is critical. Adolescent girls in their diversity are agents of change – within their communities, countries and globally. However, they are held back from realising their full potential as change leaders because of deep rooted and reinforced gendered norms. Adolescent girls are at particular risk of gender-based violence, exclusion from education, child, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy and labor exploitation<sup>iv</sup>. These risk factors were only heightened by the pandemic.<sup>v</sup>

Despite the importance of this period for young people, adolescent girls in particular are overlooked and under-resourced in traditional development programs that are aimed at younger girls or women.<sup>vi</sup> Adolescence is also a critical time in which gender roles and norms intensify, and therefore a time in which young men can be engaged to address harmful gender norms and promote gender equality, alongside adolescent girls.<sup>vii</sup>

#### The Asia Pacific Girls Leadership Index

Focusing on six core domains for 19 countries across the Pacific and Asia, the index measures the essential factors that can enable or constrain girls' wellbeing and ability to fully exercise their rights. The 2020 report in particular found that a critical enabler to gender equality was the value placed on girls' and young women's participation and voice: 'inclusive and peaceful societies depend on the active participation and meaningful engagement of young people.'

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. That the new international development policy identify children and young people as a cross cutting priority, by:**

- 1.1. Explicit recognition of the urgent and unique needs, circumstances and agency of both children and young people, girls and young women in particular, through a standalone policy goal that promotes individual and integrated programming, as guided by a resourced child and youth strategy, and enabled through increased DFAT capability.
- 1.2. Adopting a life cycle approach in Australia's new development policy, recognising the significance of the various developmental stages in a child's life, and emphasizing an improved focus on adolescence which is traditionally underfunded and provides a second window of opportunity for positive development.
- 1.3. Taking an intergenerational approach to gender equality, with greater emphasis on educating and empowering adolescent girls, and working with adolescent boys as agents of change to address gender-based violence and discrimination.

### **4. Gender based violence – offline and online**

The link between child protection and global development is recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals as a pre-condition for global development. Safe and healthy development throughout childhood and into the second decade is the bedrock for sustained economic and social development. Violence against children weakens the foundations of sustainable development, diverting funding from social spending and eroding a "nations' human and social capital."<sup>viii</sup>

At least three out of every four of the world's children – 1.7 billion – have experienced violence, and it is particularly prevalent in the Pacific. In Australia's immediate neighbourhood, violence against children (VAC) is at endemic levels. Levels of physical, emotional and sexual violence as well as neglect is exceptionally high and has worsened during COVID-19.

While the Australian government highlights the need to address EVAC approaches in aid investment plans for countries like PNG, international development budgets lack a deliberate focus on child-focused prevention and programming initiatives aimed at ending all forms of violence against children. Addressing this gap will ensure that investments in education and health are not undermined due to the exponential negative physical, psychosocial and social impact of violence against children. Without a standalone focus, and in amidst increasing gender-based violence against children and young people, there is a risk of a contraction of services. A key opportunity for Australia to signal to partners in the Pacific its intent on international cooperation and take a leadership role on ending violence against children, is to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children as a ‘pathfinding country’.

DFAT could further scale existing and evidenced programs to a regional level in order to support victim-survivors. For example, since 2015 ChildFund has partnered to support children and women victim-survivors of gender-based violence through 1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain. Based on the expertise and success of 1-Tok, the ChildFund helpim is now supporting other helplines in the Pacific to strengthen their capacity and increase quality of support to victim-survivors, both children and women.

Progress to address domestic and family violence, VAC, and to advance gender equality in the Pacific have been slow. As previously acknowledged by Pacific Leaders gender inequality and gender-based violence impose a high personal social and economic cost on Pacific people and nations. Investment in quality counselling services and potentially a contextualised regional counselling framework to address domestic and family violence would make a significant contribution to the safety of women and children, and creation of a prosperous, stable and secure Pacific for current and future generations. As an immediate step, DFAT could consider supporting South-South learning across existing Helplines in the Pacific to promote shared learning and good practice.

*1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain Case Study - Fostering regional links to increase capacity and quality of service delivery*

*1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain is a confidential, free, 24-hour national telephone service supporting survivors of gender-based violence and children in need of care and protection.*

ChildFund, alongside its partner The Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) have worked in partnership since 2015 to support the growth of quality violence against women response services, through a national toll-free telephone counselling service for victim-survivors. The ‘1-Tok’ Helpline delivers counselling, information, and referral services in the three national languages— Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin and English—to survivors of gender-based violence. Since 2015, the 1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain has responded to over 50,000 callers. During the global pandemic, the 1-Tok Helpline has undergone rapid changes and expansions including responding to a rapidly growing number of clients, providing a 24-hour service, and providing a national support function during the COVID-19 crisis.

Significant increases in gender-based violence for children and young people, particularly girls and young women, prior and during the pandemic – both offline and online – are a regional challenge and requires collective action through high level policy commitments.

A defining trend of the last decade has been the rise of digital environments and technologies, which has been intensified by COVID-19 moving many parts of children’s lives online. It is estimated that globally 1 in 3 internet users is a child (under the age of 18), and that of young people (aged 15 – 24) 71% are online, compared with 48% of the total population.<sup>ix</sup> This number is even higher in the global South, with numbers set to increase.<sup>x</sup> There are positive impacts for children in digital environments and it is game changing for young people and children, who see it as transforming their access to education, health care, political participation and livelihoods, but it also makes them more susceptible to harm both offline and online.<sup>xi</sup> We can no longer separate ‘online’ and ‘offline’ Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.<sup>xii</sup>

The ‘Disrupting Harm’ research project demonstrates that in South-East Asia, there is clear and present danger. It is also a key issue identified by Pacific civil society, who in 2019 declared “There is also a growing increase in cyber violence throughout the Pacific and current data shows that once again women and girls make up the majority of the victims to this type of violence.”<sup>xiii</sup> It also clearly aligns with the priorities of ASEAN<sup>xiv</sup> which illuminates the way in which online safety and harm are a shared challenge, that go beyond typical boundaries and borders.

The leadership of the Australian Government to establish the E-Safety Commissioner and the resulting partnership with the Fiji Online Safety Commission, as well as the Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program is a source of strength for Australia to draw from. DFAT should act to increase similar acts of cooperation across the region, to continue to foster the growth of regional and shared commitments to online safety. A number of actors working together through a coordinated approach could address existing gaps which include:

- building the knowledge and skills of young people, parents, teachers and community leaders
- strengthening legislation and judicial knowledge and recognition that violence can be experienced online
- integrating online safety into national child protection systems across the region
- services to support survivors and victims

*Swipe Safe Case Study – Building core competencies of children, young people and protective partners to keep children safe online.*

*Swipe Safe* is a tried-and-tested hands-on training program that helps children safely navigate their online lives and supports parents and helping professionals to partner with them. Rather than just 'telling' children about online dangers and harm, *Swipe Safe* helps children grasp core concepts and apply learning through bespoke digital and gamified tools.

*Swipe Safe* has already been carefully developed, piloted, and scaled. First developed in 2017, the program has impacted 33,216 (16, 070 girls) children and young people alongside 6,598 (3,990 women) protective partners across the Asia-Pacific, mostly in Vietnam and the Solomon Islands.

The model additionally supports children and young people as agents of change and advocates, and includes professional training for protective partners such as teachers, religious leaders and child protection frontline workers. *Swipe Safe* amplifies impacts at systemic level, where elements are now being integrated into national Vietnamese systems, for example.

## Recommendations:

### 2. That the new international development policy responds to the scale of violence against children and young people, both online and offline, through:

- 2.1. A formal public commitment to becoming an End Violence Pathfinding Country and commit resources to galvanise action including the appointment of a senior official focal point, and collecting, organizing, and analysing disaggregated data on VAC.
- 2.2. Commitment of human and financial resources to supporting other Pathfinding countries across the region to build integrated responses to VAC, in particular PNG.
- 2.3. Public release of budget data on the percentage spend on EVAC and EVAW initiatives as percentage of ODA.
- 2.4. Scale evidenced based SGBV programs to achieve a regional counselling framework
- 2.5. Resourcing of comprehensive data collection in both South East Asia and the Pacific of children and young people's experiences online to inform policy, program investment and prevention strategies.
- 2.6. Resourcing the development of bespoke tools/apps to educate children and young people across the region on the core competencies to stay safe online.

## 5. Climate Change as a Cross-Cutting and Intergenerational Justice Issue

The climate crisis is intensifying gender inequalities, particularly for the most marginalised girls, young women and gender diverse young people who have contributed the least to the climate crisis. Climate change, and associated loss and damage, is disrupting girls' daily lives and futures<sup>xv</sup> and is the greatest intergenerational injustice facing young people today.

An estimated 1 billion children – nearly half the world's 2.2 billion children – live in one of the 33 countries classified as "extremely high-risk" for climate and environmental shocks, with a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services and wider climate resilience measures.<sup>xvi</sup> Among these countries are Bangladesh – home to the world's largest refugee camp, and Myanmar – which is beset by a military coup, ethnic conflict and widespread internal displacement. The 34<sup>th</sup> country is Papua New Guinea – one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman or a girl.

The impacts of loss and damage are experienced in youth and children's everyday lives as growing inequality; hunger and food insecurity; reduced access to education and health services; the present day erosion of livelihoods; increased gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage; and loss of loved ones, with the most marginalised likely in rural areas who are also more likely to be dependent on agriculture.

By 2030, the financial cost of loss and damage for developing countries is estimated at between \$290–580 billion (USD) annually and, by 2050, it is estimated to reach \$1–1.8 trillion (USD) annually. This scale of loss and damage must be a key part of how Australia engages with the region over the next decade.

### Prevention and anticipatory action

Further, given the ability to forecast the impact of climate change on key aspects of development through both data and local knowledge and insight, this should form part of budget forecasting and investment. For example, there is evidence that future populations at risk of disease and incidence rates are predicted to increase substantially, signifying the need for future estimates on climate change associated health risks to be made, and taken into account and prioritised in climate adaptation funds. A critical lesson from COVID, and critical with regard to intergenerational justice, is the importance of forecasting and preparing for the health investment needed in the region. The same could be said for child protection, migration, education and other critical issue for children and young people now and into the future. Given the impact of climate change on access to clean, potable water, food and other natural resources, investment in climate resilient agriculture, WASH and health is essential to safeguard the survival of future generations.

### Integrating Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change Adaption (CCA)

The new development policy must put local communities and civil society organisations at the heart of an improved and integrated approach to DRM and CCA. As the severity and frequency of disasters is exacerbated by climate change - whether it's more frequent and intense storms, flooding, drought, crop failure, or changes to rainfall patterns - those on the frontlines of disasters and climate change do not distinguish between DRM or CCA when tackling these realities on the ground. There is a need to ensure critical actors working on disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response do not have to continue to navigate superficial policy and funding siloes between DRM and CCA. An integrated approach to DRM and CCA at DFAT across policy, funding and staff resourcing will minimise climate-related losses through widespread DRR measures, but also act to increase resource efficiency and enhance effectiveness and sustainability of CCA and DRR approaches.<sup>xvii</sup>

The Australian Government can, in improving integration of DRM and CCA, meet international standards set in key frameworks including the Sendai Framework and Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP).

As a regional framework, the FRDP articulates how integration will be achieved at a regional level across funding and policy, represents a core guiding document to integration within DFAT, and DFAT should commitment to this framework as a standalone action.

Funding renewal would require both a pooling of CCA and DRM fund and ensuring core funding for critical actors is available, alongside increasing the capability and expertise within DFAT to better meet the needs at the community level. Currently, such actors working on disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response do not have access to recurrent core funding. Instead, they are subject to short-term, project based or restricted funding that results in the loss of key staff and a lack of resources to undertake critical aspects of this work – like coordination of efforts and responses, like engaging in the decision-making structures and fora to represent communities' interests.

### **Children and Young People are agents of change**

It should be noted that children and young people are already working to address the impact of climate change and reduce disaster risk. Young women and girls consistently tell us that they want to be part of climate solutions that will help their communities and the world. A contemporary international development policy should include specific focus on working with girls and young women to develop their technical and leadership skills in climate resilience and adaptation.

#### Case study - Eliana and Real Action to reduce the Impacts of the Climate Crisis in Manado, Indonesia

As part of Plan International's Urban Nexus and Girls Leadership Program in Indonesia, 19 year old Eliana was supported by seed grant funding to put her knowledge into action in Skola Kuala Manado community, by making Eco Enzyme from fruit waste from restaurants. She learned to use 60 kg of organic waste to produce 320 litres of *eco enzyme* which can be used as an alternative to soap at an affordable price. Eliana socialised the use of *eco enzymes* to the local community and she aims to bring the idea into the village planning process next year, to be adapted by the city government. This project receives funding from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

### **Recommendations:**

- 3. That the new international development policy ensures climate change and disaster risk management are cross-cutting priorities, are better integrated and are underpinned by a lens of intergenerational justice by:**
  - 3.1. Acknowledging the strong link between Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation as expressed through Pacific regional frameworks and on the ground realities and promote DFAT policy and funding coherence accordingly
  - 3.2. Facilitating core funding for regional and national civil society organisations that coordinate disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response across the Pacific.
  - 3.3. Committing to climate justice, and integrate climate mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk management as cross-cutting and intergenerational justice issues.
  - 3.4. Centering gender-responsive and inclusive climate mitigation and adaptation responses that ensure the most marginalised and climate-affected populations, particularly children – especially girls – are not left behind, and are also empowered to develop their technical and leadership skills in climate resilience and adaptation.
  - 3.5. Committing to climate finance, including loss and damage finance, as a critical element, separate to ODA, prioritising the rights of children and young people in its commitments.

### **6. Education as a catalytic investment**

Education is a catalytic investment – it improves the intergenerational wellbeing of communities, lifts children and their families out of poverty, and it is transformative when it comes to progress on gender equality. Education is the best investment that the Australian Government can make to empower children and young people and break the cycle of

poverty. Education also drives climate resilience, with one report finding that "...200,000 climate disaster-related deaths could be averted in the following two decades through improved risk awareness if every child received a full secondary school education by 2030." xviii

Yet, right now, that impact of crises such as armed conflict, food insecurity, COVID-19 and climate-related disasters on adolescent girls' education threatens to undo the years of progress and hard-won gains that Australia's aid and diplomacy efforts have achieved for gender equality, especially in the Asia Pacific region.

Worldwide, 130 million girls<sup>xix</sup> – 15% of all girls under 18 – were already out of school before the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation that has only worsened over the last two years. It is estimated that every seventh girl globally – 222 million in total – was unable to access remote learning programs when schools were closed due to COVID-19.<sup>xx</sup> When girls drop out of school, they are at increased risk of child, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy and gender-based violence.

Disasters and emergencies, including extreme weather events, are increasingly putting children's right to education at risk through severe and repeat disruption to education services which impacts on learning<sup>xxi</sup> and through physical collapse and destruction of education infrastructure – which has killed tens of thousands of children.<sup>xxii</sup> In the Pacific region, a gap analysis of policies related to comprehensive school safety found that "poor integration of disaster management and education policies, a failing to address comprehensive school safety responsibilities, a lack of targets and indicators and resource scarcity".<sup>xxiii</sup>

It is critical that the next development policy has a prominent place for education, and education that is quality, that is inclusive, that prioritises the most marginalised and is disaster proofed.

## Recommendations:

- 4. In response to the threats and interruptions that COVID-19 and climate change have and continue to have on education, the international development policy should prioritise education through:**
  - 4.1. Committing to high-quality education (from early childhood education and primary, through to secondary and beyond) that addresses the barriers faced by the most marginalised children, particularly girls, children with a disability, and LGBTIQ+ young people in accessing and staying in school.
  - 4.2. Ensuring quality education in the region is disaster proofed in line the with Comprehensive School Safety Framework, and education planning better integrated into DRR/CCA planning.

## 7. Children and girls in crisis

Humanitarian crises are growing increasingly complex and interlinked, and this will only become more acute as more frequent and intense climate induced weather events and disasters increase the risk of famine, displacement and conflict. There are over 1 billion people who need humanitarian assistance, and 49 million people on the brink of famine. With conflict, protracted crises, and climate induced weather events and disasters only increasing, and the links and causations between them only intensifying, it is critical that Australia's new development strategy sets out a strong commitment to use all aid, political and diplomatic means to prevent, respond to and address the root cause of humanitarian crises<sup>xxiv</sup>. This should recognise the link between development programs, humanitarian preparedness and response, and conflict prevention and peace building, and the resulting need for more adaptive approaches.

The highest areas of humanitarian need continue to be in the Middle East and Africa<sup>xxv</sup>. It is critical for an expanded geographical focus to Australia's humanitarian program, to ensure that it is meeting the greatest and most acute need.

Australia's development policy needs a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and gender transformative approach that places children, women and girls, people with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities at the centre of investment, design and delivery, and ensure it addresses girls' rights and needs as 'core business,' rather than an add-on to programs targeted at other groups.

## Recommendation:

- 5. That new international development policy commits to multi-year, flexible and inclusive responses for humanitarian and protracted crises, expanding the focus on the humanitarian program to the Middle East and Africa to ensure the most acute needs are met, and places women, children and girls at the centre.**

## Section 2 - Key questions answered:

- *How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?*
- *How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance?*

## 8. Stronger and more meaningful partnerships through localisation and support to civil society

If Australia is to form deeper and stronger relationships with partners, the localisation agenda<sup>xxvi</sup> should be of paramount importance to the new international development policy. It will require high-level policy intent to progress genuine partnership with local actors through the shifting of power, decision-making and resources in order to wrap around the strengths of communities and those who are best placed to respond, and in many cases already doing so, but at the margins of sources of power and resources. This should be underpinned by a decolonised<sup>xxvii</sup>, gender-based and lifecycle approach that shifts power and values locally led knowledge and solutions.

We have heard from our regional counterparts and partners and recommend that DFAT articulates localisation as a chief priority in new development policy, and progresses this agenda through:

- **Leadership:** DFAT articulates aid localisation as a chief priority in the new development policy and drives this through clear policy settings, funding targets and the identification of departmental capabilities and culture required to drive this agenda.
- **Commitment:** Explicitly commit to Pacific Policy Frameworks, such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.
- **Resourcing:**
  - DFAT direct resources towards robust and independent civil society across the Pacific to protect the rights of children, women, and people with disabilities, and to strengthen democracy and transparency;
  - Establish a Pacific Partners Fund to build the capacity of local actors across the Pacific to address the root causes of poverty and inequality; and to progress CCA; and,
  - Commits of a minimum of 25% of DFATs aid budget directly funds local organizations.
- **Inclusion:** Formalised frameworks to include diverse local voices into DFAT's planning, policy development and decision making (clear pathway for dialogue and advice with local actors) i.e., a strategy for regular engagement with regional civil society actors.
- **Compliance requirements:** A simplification of DFAT's compliance requirements, at least for new partners or grassroots local organizations, including youth led and women's rights organizations. This would require DFATs to increase its risk appetite to ensure that the proportionate and appropriate safeguards in place, but also enable community led development and humanitarian work.
- **Reporting:** Review of key reporting mechanisms and performance indicators with a view to locally led co-creation to ensure frameworks are context and culturally appropriate and provide a better balance of accountability between Australia and its partners, and moving to a decolonised system that holds Australia accountable to local actors.
- **Accountability:** accountability to children and young people, through specific mechanisms for children and young people, and youth led CSOs, to evaluate, review and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the development policy and program.

We reiterate here the advice provided by ACFID in relation to locally led development, and in particular emphasis the need for core funding to local actors and civil society organisations in order to ensure development and humanitarian action is sustained outside of project or program based funding.

#### **Recommendation:**

6. **Articulate localisation as a chief priority to strengthen partnerships with civil society across the region through and to advance locally led development.**

#### **9. ANCP and ANGOs as trusted partners**

Much of Australia's development objectives are delivered through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (herein ANCP). ANCP investment is critical in our programming work for children and young people, and the realisation of their rights. The flexible nature of this longstanding program works to address the needs of children and young people as our primary stakeholders, their families and communities and our local partners, as well as the strategic intent of our organisations.

The recent ANCP Evaluation report (draft) underlined the importance of ANGOs and civil society more broadly to achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda, as well as Australia's aid program goals, and particularly localisation: 'The grassroots connection provided through the long term relationships of ANCP partners is invaluable in building people-to-people connections and deepening understanding of the development context and political economy'. It found that ANGOs through the ANCP program contribute to public diplomacy both by sharing values such as democratisation, rights, disability and gender inclusion, in over 50 countries annual, and through providing a 'vital interface' between the Australian public and the development program. Despite this, the ANCP review also shows that Australia risks falling behind other OECD DAC donors, with only 10 per cent of development directly through NGOs, in comparison to the global average of 20 per cent.

#### **Recommendation:**

10. **The new international development policy elevates the critical importance of civil society and ANGOS in achieving the SDGs and Australian development priorities, and commits to growing the high performing ANCP Program budget in line with international standards.**



## 11. Performance and delivery systems

There is a need to build DFAT capability and culture to deliver on these priorities and to catalyse the investment of the development program. This could include the reinstatement of the Office of Development Effectiveness and/or the creation of a standalone Department of Development Cooperation to grow the robust expertise and political capital that is required to activate the extent of ambition on soft diplomacy power, whilst ensuring that development is at the heart of our foreign policy, and thus end the implied colonial 'Aid for Trade' approach attached to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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<sup>i</sup> United Nations Population Division (2019) *World Population Prospects 2019*. File POP/7-1: Total population (both sexes combined) by five-year age group, region, subregion and country, 1950-2100 (thousands). View at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

<sup>ii</sup> UNDRR (2020) 'Words Into Action: Engaging Children And Youth In Disaster Risk Reduction And Resilience Building', *A companion for implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*; Hoban, A., Lister, R., Bowie, J., Aspinall, L., & Proefke, R. (2019). Shifting power to young people. Action Aid & Restless Development.

<sup>iii</sup> Plan International Australia (2020) A Better Normal: Girls Call for a Revolutionary Reset, retrieved from: <https://www.plan.org.au/publications/a-better-normal-girls-call-for-a-revolutionary-reset/>

<sup>iv</sup> Plan International (2018), Half a Billion Reasons, retrieved from: <https://www.plan.org.au/publications/half-a-billion-reasons/>

<sup>v</sup> UN Women (2020) From Insight to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19, retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-COVID-19-en.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Plan International (2022) Girls to the Front: Time for Foreign Aid to see Adolescent Girls, retrieved from: <https://www.plan.org.au/publications/girls-to-the-front-time-for-foreign-aid-to-see-adolescent-girls/>

<sup>vii</sup> See for example, Plan International's [Champion of Change model](#)

<sup>viii</sup> UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (2015) Why ending violence against children is essential to sustainable development, retrieved from: [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/why\\_ending\\_vac\\_is\\_essential\\_for\\_development\\_viewpoint](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/why_ending_vac_is_essential_for_development_viewpoint)

<sup>ix</sup> UNICEF (2019) Growing up in a connected world. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

<sup>x</sup> Livingstone S., Carr J., and Byrne J. (2015) One in Three: internet Governance and Children's Rights. Report no. 2016-01], January 2016. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

<sup>xi</sup> Western Sydney University (2021) Our rights in the digital world: a report on children's consultations to inform UNCRC General Comment 25.

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<sup>xii</sup> Ending Violence Against Children (2022) *Disrupting Harm Country Reports*, retrieved from: <https://www.end-violence.org/disrupting-harm#country-reports>

<sup>xiii</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2019) *2019 Civil Society Dialogue with Pacific Islands Forum Leaders*. Funafuti, Tuvalu 14 August 2019.

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<sup>xiv</sup> See the [ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse](#) and its [Action Plan](#) which sets commitments for member states regarding legal reform, improvement of capacity and community awareness.

<sup>xv</sup> Plan International (2021) Adolescent Girls in the Climate Crisis: Voices from Zambia and Zimbabwe, retrieved from: <https://plan-international.org/publications/adolescent-girls-in-the-climate-crisis-voices-from-zambia-and-zimbabwe/#download-options>

<sup>xvi</sup> UNICEF (2021) The climate crisis is a child rights crisis

<sup>xvii</sup> Gero, A., Méheux, K., and Dominey-Howes, D. (2011). Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific Climate and Development, 3:4, 310-327.

<sup>xviii</sup> Beardmore, S., & Pankhurst, C. (2022). Solving the climate and education crises together. Global Partnership for Education. View at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/solving-climate-and-education-crises-together>

<sup>xix</sup> See UNICEF SOWC 2022: <https://www.unicef.org/media/114636/file/SOWC-2021-full-report-English.pdf>. The global population of U18 (all children) is 2,353,672,000 --> 2.5 billion. The total number of U5 children is 677,942,000 --> 678 million. Total number of school aged children would be around 1,675,730,000 worldwide --> 1.676 billion. Let's say half (837,865 million) are girls. If 130 million girls worldwide were out of school prior to the pandemic, this is 15.5%.

<sup>xx</sup> UNICEF (2020) COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures? A global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies

<sup>xxi</sup> Beardmore, S., & Pankhurst, C. (2022). Solving the climate and education crises together. Global Partnership for Education. View at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/solving-climate-and-education-crises-together>

<sup>xxii</sup> Jisung Park, R., et al (2020) Heat and Learning. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*. Vol. 12, No. 2

<sup>xxiii</sup> Jiwani, A., Paci-Green, R., & McFarlane, K. (2020). Comprehensive school safety policy: Trends in the Pacific region. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol. 35. No. 2. Pp.19-25.

<sup>xxiv</sup> ACFID (2022) Humanitarian Action for those in Greatest Need, retrieved from: <https://acfid.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Election-Policy-Brief-Humanitarian-Action.pdf>

<sup>xxv</sup> UNOCHA, 2022, Global Humanitarian Overview, retrieved from: <https://gho.unocha.org/>

<sup>xxvi</sup> Using the definition of localisation as defined in the [ACFID 2022 policy brief, 'Civil Society as the Cornerstone of Effective and Inclusive Development'](#): "In a humanitarian context, the Red Cross defines localisation as a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations." In the context of development cooperation, localisation can be defined as a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by local and national actors in order to support the interests and wellbeing of the populations and communities in question."

<sup>xxvii</sup> Decolonisation in this context refers to the 'process of deconstructing colonial ideologies regarding the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches'. See Ian Cull et al., 'Decolonization and Indigenization', in Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff Student Services and Advisors, BC campus (2018), retrieved from: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/chapter/decolonization-and-indigenization/>