



29th November, 2022

Coordinator

International Development Policy
Development Policy Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221
Australia

Dear Coordinator,

Re: Submission from the PNG CSOs on the Design of a New International Development Policy for the Australia Government

1. Background

In light of the Australian Government doing its regional consultation on the design for the New International Development Policy to set the long-term direction for Australia's development program in the Indo-Pacific this submission is a collective input from Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and Non-Government Organisations (NGO) in Port Moresby. It is understood that the purpose of the policy is to chart a framework that will enable partnerships and collaboration with the Pacific and the Southeast Asian neighbours to address shared challenges and achieve common aspirations.

Although the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC) was invited to provide input into the development of the policy for the Australian government and her engagement with its neighbours, it was important to get a broader perspective or views from NGOs and CSOs working in the country to support government extend its service delivery and development reach. So CIMC had reached out and facilitated the discussions to get their collective input to the submission.

2. Introduction

The Consultative, Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC) facilitated the consultative meeting to seek inputs from Non State Actors (NSA) the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and National and International Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to the design of the New Development Policy. Organisations that provided input are Equal Playing Field, Salvation Army, Marie Stoppes PNG, PNG Summer Institute of Linguistics, Child Fund-PNG, Save the Children-PNG, and PNG Education Advocacy Network, Urban Rural Development Foundation, Institute of National Affairs and the CIMC. Below are views from them.

3. Issues

The Non State Actors (NSA)-NGOs, CSOs and FBOs have the following concerns on Australia's engagement on climate change, education, law and order, infrastructure, health, job creation, gender equality and economic empowerment, disability and social inclusion, governance, CSO-NGO funding, population, and sports for PNG and the region.

- I. The NSAs are doing tremendous work in filling up the gaps in the country with no or minimal support from the Government (GoPNG) and development partners especially the Australian Government. This includes lack of capacity, no transfer of technical knowledge especially for the local NGOs and CSOs. When funding is availed, the lack of capacity in securing, managing and reporting is an issue. Data and concerns of the NSAs are not taken on board and not given enough priority by the government and the development partners. When funding is provided from Australia to INGOs, there is no exit strategy especially on sustainability and ownership with the PNG Government at all levels and local NSAs;
- II. Climate change is a major concern for PNG and the pacific. We are not losing only our land but also our economy, identity and heritage. Climate change is becoming a social and economic issue for many PNG Communities. Support in this area through the policy is very critical;
- III. There are many issues surrounding education with inclusive education not taken on board by government and still left to FBOs and NGOs, adult literacy is underfunded, quality of education and general education especially in the rural schools and importantly the disproportion of educating girls and in economic opportunities is limited;
- IV. No strong accountability mechanisms on holding the government accountable on ODA but strong on NSAs. The accountability mechanisms are weak from the national level down to ward level. The impact of the direct budget funding support provided by the Australian Government to the GoPNG is not seen or felt;
- V. Gender Based Violence (GBV), gender inequality, violence against children and law and order issues including boarder security are major concerns for PNG and the region;
- VI. Due to capacity issues International NGOs have more advantage to source funding and seek external support over local NGOs, FBOs and CBOs with who have very limited capacity to procure, deliver and report on funding appropriated to them. This prevailing limitations and misconceptions limits communication, coordination, sense of unity and direction among these vital service oriented players.

- VII. With the growing population which includes a youth bulge, there are no concrete steps taken to shape the young minds. Youths are neglected and not given adequate attention. This includes lack of access or limited access to education and economic opportunities or to raise their voice to be taken into consideration. Thus, youth related social issues continue to escalate in the country.
- VIII. PNG and the pacific seems to be the pawns, caught in the game of chess by the ‘big players’ in the region with no strong leadership and real partnership/relationships based on mutual respect in their quest for strategic influence in the region. Our agendas and priorities are not given enough attention.

4. Recommendations and Way Forward


We are proposing the following to the Australian Government based on our experiences at the community, national and regional level.

- I. For the Australian government to be pro-active and taking lead in the region to cut down on carbon foot print and drive the agenda based on national and regional plans. The plans must have the ‘Pacifinness’ spirit. Australia must recognise our sovereignty based on shared history and mutual respect as partners in the region. This includes alignment of the Australian Government interest and priority with the government of PNG and others;
- II. We want to see strong conditions on the accountability mechanism on ODA and Non-ODA including loans to the governments to ensure impacts and productivity. Without governance and accountability mechanisms framed into the budget support funding, Australian taxpayers money continues to disappear into a black hole and nothing is being done about it;
- III. We want to see the INGOs that receives funding from the Australian tax payers to transfer technical skills and build capacity for the local NGOs, CSOs and FBOs. Sustainability and ownership must be the key in the region. Better still the Australian Government should set the parameters on how the budget support funding could be used including appropriating funding to build capacity for local CSOs, NGOs and FBOs so they continue to support the government to deliver on its aspirations;
- IV. Australian Government funding and support must be focused on critical areas such as empowering women & youth, quality education & health and reducing Gender Based Violence amongst others;
- V. Soft diplomacy must be given precedence which includes sports and cultural exchange. People to people relationship is paramount in bringing two nations together and tie the people based on rich history.
- VI. Climate change must be given priority and the Australian Government must take the leading role in the region through appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- VII. Uphold and ensure the regional plans and aspirations such as the implementation of the Boe Declaration, 2018 on the Six (6) Strategic Areas in the Blue Pacific as a priority.
- VIII. The exponent rise in youth led law and order issues around the country calls for the Australian Government to critically revisit the AFP and PNG Police partnership program and evaluate the outcomes and impacts to curb the situation. The outcome of this partnership is not visible with very minimal impact on the law and order situation.

5. Conclusion

We thank the Australian Government and Australian tax payers through the DFAT for the continued support to NSAs in PNG and the region. We appreciate that we are given an opportunity at the table to be consulted on our priorities and agendas as the critical player in nation building and we look forward to working amongst ourselves and the Australian Government to build on our shared history, mitigate the issues and work together in the Blue Pacific.

Yours Sincerely,



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Wallis Yakam (Mrs.)

Executive Officer