



New International Development Policy: International Needs Australia Submission

Background: International Needs Australia (INA)

International Needs Australia (INA) helps some of the world's most disadvantaged, marginalised, and oppressed women and children be who they can be. Rural women, single women, lower caste women, unemployed women, women with disabilities and geographically isolated women are supported on a pathway out of poverty. As we approach our 50th year (1974-2024), we strive for a just world where all people are treated equally to reach their God-given potential.

Empowering women markedly improves childhood cognitive development, growth, early learning, and nutrition outcomes.

Through authentic local partnerships in developing countries, we target priority issues that impact a person's life through sustainable poverty reduction and community wellbeing programs. We build on local capacity to drive change. We focus on regions with the greatest poverty - **Eastern Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific** - to remove barriers for women and children from living their fullest lives, with a key focus on **Education, Health, Livelihoods, Gender Equity and Climate Change mitigation** programs. These foundations help individuals earn an income and live a decent life.

We work with our donors and partners to respond to humanitarian crises and needs arising from contemporary challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate events and political upheavals. A focus on current loyal donors, with a need to encourage new supporters and a strategic organisational (schools, churches, businesses, trusts) partnerships program has required internal capability to support a strategic vision as well as a transactional success.

INA is building on a solid commitment to helping women and children be who they can be through localisation, new supporter partnerships and a commitment to be a next-generation global social impact organisation.



What key trends or challenges will shape Australia’s engagement in our region and globally over the next 5 to 10 years? What risks and opportunities does this present for Australia’s development assistance?

Women and children suffer the most significant and disproportionate impacts of poverty, inequality, and civil unrest or health crises, such as COVID-19. All programs need to be inclusive and localised to ensure each is especially inclusive of indigenous communities.

Women

Women, and the support of women’s participation, development and empowerment need to be core to our work. We especially consider single women and Dalits (people of the lowest stratum castes). The role of an educated and healthy woman in her community and mother in the destiny of children is well proven¹. Nearly 60% of chronically hungry people globally are women and girls².

Children

There were 6.3 million instances of child mortality for 0-5-year-olds in 2017, of which 5.4 million (85%) were in the developing world.³ Approximately 20% of children live in extreme poverty, compared to 9.2% of adults⁴. Period poverty, for example, is a monthly worldwide struggle for 500 million girls and women who face stigma and have limited or no access to facilities or sanitary products.

Among the greatest development challenges globally, and to Australia’s New International Development Policy (NIDP), lies in the continuing impacts of the **COVID-19 pandemic**. This international health event has impacted every arm of global aid and development, exacerbating existing inequalities and slowing progress towards each of DFAT’s six priority development areas.

One of the most significant areas of post-COVID disadvantage is **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**. **Women, children** and people with disabilities throughout our Indo-Pacific region and around the world have experienced the greatest accelerations of poverty and systemic disadvantage throughout the pandemic. Up to **31 million** additional cases of gender-based violence are estimated to have occurred globally within just six months of COVID lockdowns, with a subsequent 15 million

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000190214>

/ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/improving-maternal-health-through-education-safe-motherhood-necessity>) -

² . <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/commission-on-the-status-of-women-2012/facts-and-figures>)

³ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/10e8a12c-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/10e8a12c-en>

⁴ Source: World Bank (2021), Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Turning the corner on the pandemic in 2021?

more projected every additional three months⁵. COVID-19 has also complicated, slowed, and prevented treatment of other development issues, such as localised endemics in Africa, climate change mitigation in the Pacific, and humanitarian assistance following natural disasters in South-East Asia.

If left unaddressed by the development policies of countries like Australia, these COVID-era setbacks will derail global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and condemn millions of innocent people to poverty and deprivation.

Another challenge that must be addressed with urgency by Australia's NIDP is the accelerating impact of **Climate Change**. The Bureau of Meteorology found this year that oceans around Australia and the Pacific are acidifying and have warmed significantly, contributing to marine heatwaves⁶ and endangering ocean-based economies. Countries within our Indo-Pacific region have long suffered the effects of financial inaction and political inertia on this issue and have called upon Australia's new government to immediately fund climate mitigation strategies, green energy policies and sustainable infrastructure developments both at home and abroad. **Climate change** is anticipated to push millions deeper into poverty and hinder the opportunities for sustainable development and pathways to escape from poverty⁷. The 74 poorest countries in the world account for less than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet the impacts of climate change hit these countries the hardest.

If Australia fails to address these contemporary development concerns through its actions and role on the global stage of partner nations, our national approach to international development could be questioned, and our role in alleviating the sufferings of millions could be questioned. Failure to accurately target the concerns of our regional partners and global aid beneficiaries may jeopardise Australia's relationships with these countries, alongside our reputation as a leader in the humanitarian aid and development spheres⁸.

Conversely, by embracing and adapting to these challenges through our new international development policy, Australia can begin to mend regional relationships strained by historical inaction on climate change mitigation/adaptation. Furthermore, by adopting a development policy guided by climate science, social inclusion and innovation, the Australian government can maximise our development impact by focusing on clear and rational priorities.

⁵ CARE Action, "Why Women and Girls Are At the Centre of CARE's Work", CARE, July 27 2021, https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/IB_Gender_2021_Screen.pdf

⁶ Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and CSIRO, "State of the Climate Report 2022", BOM, November 23 2022, <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>

⁷ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIAR5-Chap13_FINAL.pdf

⁸ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIAR5-Chap13_FINAL.pdf

We believe that **authentic localisation** needs to be deeply embedded in the NIDP. Criteria and clear strategies to achieve this need shared understanding and buy-in to ensure that international development is not “supplier driven” and is a mutually respectful partnership. An NGO claiming to practice “localisation” is naturally an important starting point, but benchmarks of best and acceptable practice need to be understood and required.

Humanitarian assistance is provided for communities who need immediate material and logistic assistance, often because of natural disasters, wars, or famines. We do this to alleviate suffering and help maintain human dignity. In 2021, for example, 235 million (or 1 in every 33) people needed humanitarian assistance and protection due to conflict and natural disasters.⁹

Educating our Australian youth: The Australian public and youth can better understand the global challenges and goals reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the aid effectiveness agenda, and global interdependence Youth have a key role as current and future supporters of overseas development programs and the achievement of greater global equity. A culture of philanthropy, social enterprise, global understanding, and compassion is key for future generations. The NIDP should nurture engagement in the Australian Curriculum and primary and secondary education to encourage Australian youth to understand and act on global poverty issues.

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. ... poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.” Nelson Mandela (activist, politician)

Economic growth - Cross-sectoral and a whole-of-government issue: Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries. *‘Historically nothing has worked better than economic growth in enabling societies to improve the life chances of their members, including those at the very bottom.’ Dani Rodrik, Harvard University One Economics, Many Recipes: Globalization, Institutions and Economic Growth (2007).* The central lesson from the past 50 years of development research and policy is that economic growth is the most effective way to pull people out of poverty and deliver on their wider objectives for a better life.¹⁰

The NIDP should identify opportunities in whole of government strategies and actions to impact the economic development of developing countries. This also impacts other sectors, such as mining, manufacturing, retail, education and tourism, where Australian sectors should be given leadership and support to help improve their activities in improving the social, economic and environmental status of developing countries.

⁹ [https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/topics/development-issues/building-resilience/humanitarian-preparedness-and-response#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20235%20million%20\(or,more%20than%20in%202020](https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/topics/development-issues/building-resilience/humanitarian-preparedness-and-response#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20235%20million%20(or,more%20than%20in%202020)

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/40700982.pdf>

What development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?

To efficiently and effectively respond to the challenges highlighted above, Australia will need to focus its attention and build capabilities in the following priority areas:

- Local education on regional and global issues, therefore incentivising greater local interest in the development space and increasing Australian presence within the global development sector
- Investment in and development of a strong network of renewable energy systems and technology to reflect a growing global interest in green energy and climate change mitigation
- Strengthening of diplomatic relations to ensure access to Australian NGOs and development projects for communities in need
- Sector-wide training in participative development, localisation, and capacity building to ensure that all development efforts are conducted sustainably and in line with DFAT's priorities
- Continued commitment to values of social inclusion and gender equality within Australia's borders, to lead by example and promote equitable treatment of all.

How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?

Australia can utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program by engaging with development challenges and projects which stand to benefit from our national strengths. For example, as a nation with an innovative and successful agriculture and horticulture industry, Australia can meaningfully assist our regional partners and development beneficiaries with agricultural and horticultural projects of their own. Engaging with these issues will also provide Australia with the opportunity to encounter new and diverse perspectives and potentially contribute to our understanding of food production and security. Other comparable Australian economic assets and areas of expertise desirable within the development include extensive health, energy, community, transport, business and water infrastructures, as well as education and research institutions¹¹.

Moreover, by addressing projects such as the above in which Australia holds comparative regional expertise, our development practitioners and projects are better equipped to adjust to and address additional layers of vulnerability. In our region, these added vulnerabilities may include susceptibility to climate change, political or economic turmoil, and systemic disadvantages such as class, ethnicity, or gender discrimination. The intersection of various vulnerabilities such as these can further

¹¹ Infrastructure Australia, "Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps", 17 March 2022, <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/regional-strengths-map>

complicate the conditions for development; therefore, it is important that Australia plays to its strengths to maximise the positive impact of our development policy and strengthen regional resilience to external and social vulnerabilities.

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?

To build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, Australia's NIDP must centre around sustainable development initiatives, such as capacity building and localisation. Australia can honour our regional partners and the beneficiaries of our development assistance by assuring that it caters to their actual and perceived needs for both the present and the future.

Rather than focusing on the sharing of resources in a welfare-based development system, Australia must move towards a development policy based on capacity building and localisation. Consultation and co-design between Australian development practitioners and regional beneficiaries are essential to ensure local people have ownership over their development. Furthermore, Australian practitioners must engage in these processes to ensure that they know how best to support these communities through the education and training of local people. When development beneficiaries have ownership over their development and are trained and educated in how to meet the needs of their community without outside intervention, development projects can become sustainable, and local capacity to respond to future challenges is built. By assisting our regional neighbours to meet their own development needs in this way, Australia can work towards a fairer and more equitable Indo-Pacific.

What lessons from Australia's past development efforts should inform the policy? What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well?

Looking at our past successes and failures can help us to inform our future approach to international development. In the past, Australia has been criticised for several years of successive funding cuts to our international development policy and no deep focus on the impact of climate change in our region. This has contributed to security and development pacts that exclude Australia from the development trajectories of our regional peers and which threaten our political standing and long-term diplomatic relations within the Indo-Pacific.

If we wish to build a positive future, Australia must align our development priorities with the social and economic priorities of our neighbours. Highlighting climate change resilience/mitigation/adaptation, digital economy, and health security as key areas of concern within DFAT is a promising first step.

Australia must also continue to play to its existing development strengths. The current consultation process on the NIDP represents Australia's commitment to working with domestic development partners such as charities and NGOs through which much of DFAT's allocated funding is disseminated. DFAT's continued support of this diverse range of organisations is key to Australia's fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals and allows the government to provide funds for thousands of initiatives whilst outsourcing the administration to highly trained Australian development practitioners and regional experts.

Genuine and authentic localisation needs to underpin the "how". This needs independent local partners (rather than encouraging large global providers to "game the system").

The Australian public and youth can better understand the global challenges and goals reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the aid effectiveness agenda, and global interdependence. Youth have a key role as current and future supporters of overseas development programs and the achievement of greater global equity. A culture of philanthropy, social enterprise, global understanding, and compassion is key for future generations.

Support for education programs within the education sector/Australian curriculum that informs Australian youth to be better informed and active global citizens. This is achieved through information sharing, alignment with the Australian Curriculum and student agency/youth action across Australia in support of development programs and projects.

Leverage a whole of government approach to the new development strategy to have a facilitative and leadership role is important: e.g. Work with businesses (e.g. incentivise supply chains (products that can be partly manufactured in partner countries to contribute to Australian-made goods) and value chains (support opportunities to develop local value chains to maximise financial return and local skills development) for Australian business in key countries to help develop local economies, encourage academic (teach and research) collaboration between Australian universities and TAFEs in key regions, etc.

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?

To promote transparency, accountability and reciprocal learning, the Australian government should encourage a participative development approach. This approach advocates for the participation, consultation, and partnership of development beneficiaries in all phases of program design and delivery. Participative development promotes local ownership of development programs and contributes towards sustainable solutions by empowering beneficiaries to work alongside practitioners to create lasting results. This method is preferable for Australian NGOs also, as it

provides practitioners with the opportunity to learn and collaborate more meaningfully with their overseas partners and communities.

Australia can promote participative development and its values of transparency and accountability through the continued and discerning use of its DFAT accreditations. The government can also continue to use this system to direct organisations' programming towards DFAT's six development priorities.

The NIDP should have a clear approach to supporting countries that are, or have a clear roadmap to achieving, democratic governance and respect for human rights.

The Pacific is a priority region for the Australian Government and faces several challenges, such as conflict and inter-communal violence, and violence against women. Pacific Island countries are some of the most vulnerable in the world to the effects of climate change and disasters.

The NIDP should not forget about Africa. By 2030, nearly 9 in 10 extremely poor people will live in Sub-Saharan Africa¹². 41% of the population in sub-Saharan **Africa** lives in extreme poverty of less than US\$1.90 per day, which is expected to rise to 9 in 10 by 2030¹³.

How should the new policy address the role of ODA and non-ODA in supporting the development of our regional partners?

The **Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)** is core to the NIDP achieving its objectives. This key program will continue to leverage material and other support from the Australian public and NGO civil society networks across the globe to support the NIDP. It is suggested that the ANCP be expanded to more expansively include onshore programs that develop Australian public and youth commitment to the SDGs and support for strategies that address global inequity. The ANCP needs to be additionally funded to support Australia's regional strategic objectives and to embed these in partner countries of interest.

In recent years, Australia's contribution to global ODA has enabled developing countries to disseminate crucial doses of COVID-19 vaccines and helped curb the overall devastation of the pandemic. Australia's assistance was critical in raising 2021's ODA to an all-time high of USD 178.9

¹² <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/number-extremely-poor-people-continues-rise-sub-saharan-africa>

¹³ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/number-extremely-poor-people-continues-rise-sub-saharan-africa>

billion, which constituted a 4.4% increase from 2020 in real terms due to the eagerness of developed countries to help combat COVID-19¹⁴.

Despite this recent rise in ODA, which totalled 0.33% of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s combined gross national income (GNI), this number is still below the United Nations' target of 0.7% ODA to GNI¹⁵. INA would therefore recommend that Australia pledge a greater contribution to ODA and encourage their peers within the DAC to meet this 0.7% target as aid remains crucial to the recovery of the Global South in the coming post-COVID world. As of 2021, Australia's ODA to GNI totalled just 0.22%¹⁶. Australia can increase their ODA contributions and minimise administrative burden through continued funding of DFAT-accredited development NGOs, who can support Australia's development agenda.

As far as non-ODA is concerned, INA recommends that the government encourages local NGOs, CSR initiatives and charities to align their agendas with DFAT's six key development priorities. Non-ODA is a valuable means through which Australia and Australians can address the development challenges of our region and overseas beneficiaries in a less formal manner.

¹⁴ OECD, "COVID-19 assistance to developing countries lifts foreign aid in 2021 – OECD", OECD, 12 March 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/covid-19-assistance-to-developing-countries-lifts-foreign-aid-in-2021-oecd.htm>

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ OECD, "Official Development Assistance (ODA)", OECD, accessed 23 November 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm#:~:text=Official%20development%20assistance%20%28ODA%29%20is%20defined%20as%20government,the%20main%20source%20of%20financing%20for%20development%20aid.>