

## **Submission to the Australian Government New International Development Policy**

The Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Australian Government's new international development policy.

### **About PIANGO**

PIANGO is the regional coordinating body for civil society networks in the Pacific. As an established and influential civil society actor, PIANGO connects and represents civil society bodies across 24 Pacific Island countries and territories, which collectively reach over 1,200 local civil society organisations.

### **Introduction**

Australia and its Pacific partners have a close relationship that has been forged through shared history – and has been sustained over decades of engagement at leadership and community levels. Australia has contributed to Pacific leadership through the Pacific Islands Forum and has been a long-term Pacific development partner.

We affirm that long-term trusted relationships can only be maintained by long-term partnerships. This submission, outlines PIANGO's key priorities for the Australian Government's new development policy, and the implementation of that policy through the development program.

PIANGO supports the submission of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). We share the view that Australia's new international development policy should be facilitating locally led approaches to sustainable, inclusive development through systems transformation and poverty reduction.

As a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Australian Government should be guided by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Pacific leaders, communities, and development partners must work together to implement this strategy (see **Appendix A** for PIANGO's Priorities for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent which this submission draws from).

### **Priorities for the New International Development Policy**

#### **Civil Society and Civic Space**

Supporting and strengthening civil society enhances effective and accountable governance, builds deeper partnerships and people-to-people linkages, and contributes to stability. However, despite the importance of an open civil society and civic space for development, governments across the Pacific are undertaking actions that are closing safe civic space.

Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and networks are more than development delivery partners. They are essential development actors that can hold governments to account and provide a voice and empowerment for communities, in particular those most marginalised.

The Australian Government's new international development policy should commit to investing in, and supporting, civic space and civil society across the Pacific. This means including CSOs in decision-making processes and the development of national and regional policies, strategies, and implementation. This must include local CSOs and networks, as well as Australian international development NGOs.

Critically, the new international development policy must also articulate how the development program will implement the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance.

#### *Recommendations*

The Australian Government, through its new international development policy and program, should:

- support and resource mechanisms that strengthen civil society and civic space at national and regional levels; and
- support civil society voices by providing core funding for civil society organisations to strengthen their role as actors in their own right, not just as delivery partners.

#### **Climate Change**

The impacts of climate change are already a reality to the lives, security, and development of Pacific Island people. The 2018 Boe Declaration and the 2019 Kainaki II Declaration, highlighted climate change is a key threat to human security in the Pacific.

As a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Australian Government has committed to these declarations. However, global climate action and finance commitments, including those of the Australian Government, still fall short of what is needed to address climate change and mitigate its impacts. For far too long, the realities of Pacific people have been used to highlight the urgency of the climate crisis without seeing any tangible changes. We call on the new international development policy to make greater strides in climate action.

The climate crisis is exacerbating humanitarian needs. The current humanitarian system, including funding levels, cannot keep pace with the increasing demand. We need a more proactive, fast, and localised humanitarian system where communities are supported to analyse risks, create and carry through indigenous plans and solutions, and have access to pre-arranged financing – which will ultimately save more lives and contribute to a more secure region.

In 2022, civil society came together at Kioa to further articulate the priorities of Pacific people in meeting the 2019 Kainaki Declaration. Sustainable and effective climate responses must have local priorities at their core. The Australian Government, as a key development partner in the Pacific, must invest in climate actions that ensure communities' access to resources for climate adaptation, mitigation, relocation, resettlement and human security amidst the climate emergency.

### *Recommendations*

The Australian Government, through its new international development policy and program, should:

- endorse and support the Kioa Pledge, including the Kioa Finance Mechanism and the appointment of Pacific Civil Society Special Advocates;
- scale up funding for anticipatory action and pre-arranged disaster risk finance. This should be complemented by wider risk management efforts within the climate, development, and humanitarian portfolios;
- work to guarantee access to finance, and the creation of more equitable finance arrangements, beginning with a review of regional and international financial architectures, with inputs from civil society organisations and other stakeholders;
- support and fund innovative ways of addressing the climate crisis including forecast-based action, insurance mechanisms, and community-based innovation. This will ensure that indigenous wisdom and locally led anticipatory action approaches are at the centre of these actions;
- cancel climate debt and commit to a debt-free future for the Pacific. This action will support inter-generational equity, ensuring we leave a better world for our descendants; and
- actively create space for communities and civil society to participate in disaster coordination mechanisms. This includes strengthening and supporting CSOs to build and coordinate collective humanitarian priorities and actions.

### **Inclusive Locally Led Approaches**

Pacific people know better than anyone else our culture, traditions and development needs and priorities. We have long asked for greater locally led and locally owned approaches to development, where the traditions and customs of Pacific people are both valued and integrated into programming. This requires both Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners – like the Australian Government – to genuinely engage with tensions of traditional knowledge, power, inclusion, and decolonisation.

Development in the Pacific must focus on addressing the systems and structural drivers of poverty, inequality and injustice. Critically, this must ensure Pacific people are included in the process and solutions to address these. This must include a focus on gender equality (including gender and sexual orientation minorities), the inclusion of people with disability, children and young people, migrant workers, and a strong focus on human rights.

Violence against women and children, human trafficking, modern slavery, and illicit drug and money laundering are all on the rise in the Pacific, and are a significant threat to the social fabric of our communities. These crimes target those in our communities who are often most vulnerable.

### *Recommendations*

The Australian Government, through its new international development policy and program, should:

- recognise, respect, uphold and value the contributions traditional knowledge, culture and faith have played and continue to play in sustaining the unique relationship between the oceans and the environment.

- work with Pacific Leaders to strengthen national coordination mechanisms and local systems to build regional connections and approaches. These should include civil society and ensure all voices are included in shaping priorities and decision-making at a regional level;
- work with Pacific leaders to strengthen regional mechanisms including community involvement to reflect cultural values and traditional knowledge to build a greater level of accountability and transparency to address sustainable management and development of resources.
- devolve power to local responders in Pacific countries. Funding and decision-making power is needed at the local level and the Australian Government must action their Grand Bargain commitments;
- invest in a Pacific leadership program, which includes leaders from across communities, in particular those from marginalised groups;
- create clear pathways for supporting social enterprise at the community level, particularly for women’s engagement in income generating activities that support disaster recovery and resilience;
- invest in education and awareness at a sub-national level on the crimes targeting the most marginalised people. This should be supported by strengthening coordination and response at a national and regional level;
- integrate traditional knowledge into science and technology for culturally specific responses e.g. traditional knowledge integrated into early warning systems; and
- support the Pacific-led implementation of the Pacific Regional Accountability Framework for CSOs and endorse its use as a benchmark for NGO accountability in support of the realisation of locally led development and humanitarian responses across the Pacific.

### **Development Opportunities for all Pacific People**

Development opportunities must be available for all Pacific people. Climate change and the over-exploitation of natural resources – including deep sea mining – will impact the development and resilience of Pacific communities and countries.

Access to resources and opportunities are not broadly available. Across the Pacific, communities are often not included in decisions about access and use of their land for resource use including in mining, logging, palm oil plantations and sand mining.

At best, access to technology and ICT infrastructure is uneven across the Pacific. Those without affordable access risk being left further behind in harnessing the opportunities that come from connectivity and technology.

Activities currently articulated under the Blue Economy are often focused on exploiting our ocean environment at industrial scales, allowing for the exploitation of marine and human life for economic wealth of the few – at the expense of so many. Healthy oceans and the environment are central to the livelihoods, food security, health, and traditional knowledge of Pacific Island communities and economies.

### *Recommendations*

The Australian Government, through its new international development policy and program, should:

- work with Pacific leaders to reconsider the current Blue Economy framing with a critical lens on the geopolitical, ideological and neoliberal economic agendas that underpin it. These should be closely examined in order to identify who, and what, they truly represent;
- invest in ICT infrastructure and ensure all Pacific people, including those most marginalised, have access to affordable ICT infrastructure and the benefits of technology. Alongside this, it should ensure communities are provided with information and education for digital safeguarding; and
- invest in education, policies and use technological advancement that preserve the ocean and environment and strengthen best practice across the region.

## **Appendix A**

### **PIANGO Priorities for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent**

The Pacific's civil society work is centred on Pacific values. It is guided by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Pacific Principles for Development Effectiveness, the accompanying Drua Model for implementation, and the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration.

Sustainable and effective development requires all of society's full attention. CSOs and networks are essential development actors that can hold governments accountable and provide a voice and means of empowerment for communities, in particular those most marginalised.

In line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance, donor partners to the Pacific should work to support civic space and civil society actors. Pacific Governments and Pacific development partners must include CSOs in the decision-making process, the development of national and regional policies, strategies, and their implementation.

Investing in long-term, respectful and genuine partnerships takes time and trust to develop, and can evolve in unpredictable ways. There needs to be more effort invested in consultation and dialogue.

Enabling locally led approaches ensures the long-term sustainability of development actions and empowers skilled and knowledgeable local leaders and organisations.

As Pacific CSOs, we call on Pacific Development Partners (including donor governments, INGOs, development contractors and multilateral institutions) and Pacific Leaders to prioritise:

- placing local and indigenous voice and knowledge at the centre of Pacific development
- strengthening and supporting civil society as development actors in their own right
- enabling urgent and effective climate action through strengthened cooperation, collaboration and co-implementation with civil society.

Further, we highlight the following priorities and asks for Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners as Pacific people work to implement the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

#### **Political Leadership and Regionalism**

***Leadership in the Pacific must be inclusive and accountable*** – Leadership in the Pacific comes in many forms including political leaders, traditional leaders, faith leaders and leaders across civil society and communities. However, we are seeing governments across the Pacific undertaking actions that are closing safe civic space. Supporting and strengthening civil society strengthens effective and accountable governance, builds deeper partnerships and people-to-people linkages, and contributes to stability.

***Regionalism is most effective when countries are also strong*** – Regional mechanisms are a valuable tool for sharing knowledge, ideas and resources and amplifying the voice of the Pacific. However, engagement and investment in regional mechanisms should not be at the expense of investment in governance and coordination at the country level. This includes supporting the legitimate self-determination aspirations of people across the Pacific including the people of West Papua.

**Key Asks:**

1. Pacific leaders should support and resource mechanisms that strengthen civil society and civic space at national and regional levels.
2. Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners should:
  - a. strengthen national coordination mechanisms and local systems to build regional connections and approaches. These should include civil society and ensure all voices are included in shaping priorities and decision-making at a regional level;
  - b. strengthen system-wide support for improved communication and information sharing including deliberate investments in infrastructure as well as human resources; and
  - c. institutionalise mutual accountability and safeguarding including supporting the Pacific-led implementation of the Pacific Regional Accountability Framework for Civil Society Organisations and endorse its use as a benchmark for NGO accountability in support of the realisation of locally led development and humanitarian responses across the Pacific.
3. Pacific leaders should:
  - a. put the human rights crisis, humanitarian crisis and question of West Papua self-determination on the leader's agenda for the 2023 PIF Leaders Meeting; and
  - b. endorse the right to self-determination of people of the Pacific including the people of West Papua.

**People Centred Development**

***Transformational inclusive development is at the centre of the Pacific development*** – Pacific development must be for all Pacific people; gender equality (including gender and sexual orientation minorities), the inclusion of people with disability, children and young people, migrant workers, and a strong focus on human rights must be at the forefront of development approaches. This requires not only ensuring the voices of the most marginalised are included in decision-making and programs but also a focus on addressing the systems and structural drivers of poverty, inequality and injustice.

***Traditional culture and knowledge are embedded at the heart of Pacific development*** – Traditional philosophies and approaches to development are frequently not grounded in Pacific values and beliefs. Alongside greater locally led and locally owned approaches to development, it is essential that the traditions and customs of Pacific people are both valued and integrated into all approaches of development. This requires both Pacific leaders and Pacific Development Partners to genuinely engage with tensions of traditional knowledge, power, inclusion and decolonisation.

**Key Asks:**

4. Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners should:
  - a. reinforce family centred approaches to wellbeing and resilience; and
  - b. create clear pathways for supporting social enterprise at the community level, particularly for women's engagement in income generating activities that support disaster recovery and resilience.



5. Pacific development partners should:
  - a. support civil society voices by providing core funding for civil society organisations to strengthen their role as actors in their own right not just as delivery partners; and
  - b. invest in a Pacific leadership program, which includes leaders from across communities, in particular those from marginalised groups.

## Peace and Security

***Climate change is the greatest threat to the security of the Pacific*** – The 2018 Boe Declaration and 2019 Kainaki II Declaration highlighted climate change as the key threat to human security for the Pacific. In 2022, civil society came together at Kioa to further articulate the priorities of Pacific people in meeting the 2019 Kainaki Declaration. The Kioa Declaration highlighted that telling stories is no longer enough. For far too long, the realities of Pacific people have been used to highlight the urgency of the climate crisis without seeing any tangible changes. This has placed a heavy weight on Pacific communities.

***Organised crime is targeting the most marginalised*** – The 2000 Biketawa Declaration and 2018 Boe Declaration highlighted the expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental and resource security, transnational crime, and cybersecurity. Violence against women and children, human trafficking, modern slavery and illicit drug and money laundering are all on the increase in the Pacific and are a significant threat to the social fabric of our communities. These crimes target those who are already vulnerable in our communities and lack voice and power.

### Key Asks:

6. Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners should:
  - a. endorse and support the Kioa Pledge including the Kioa Finance Mechanism and the appointment of Pacific Civil Society Special Advocates;
  - b. strengthen education and awareness at a sub-national level on the crimes targeting the most marginalised people. This should be supported by strengthening coordination and response at a national and regional level; and
  - c. strengthen support to the victims of organised crimes.

## Resources and Economic Development

***Pacific prosperity is more than economic development*** – The Pacific values of wellbeing places prosperity in a holistic frame; encompassing environment, culture and community led responses.

***Financial mechanisms need to be locally led and accountable*** – Financial mechanisms and reporting across the Pacific need to be more accountable and locally led. International financing mechanisms do not allow for locally led solutions but instead are driven by risk and compliance requirements of donors. Further, many Pacific governments have limited transparency and accountability to communities for their national budgets (which include direct budget support from donors) and expenditure is often not prioritised in line with their own development priorities.

***Communities hold the rights to their land*** – Across the Pacific, communities often lack voice and decision-making regarding the use of their land. Access to land for resource use (mining, logging, palm oil plantations and sand mining) is often undertaken with limited engagement of the



community. Climate change will further exacerbate this as the amount of sustainable land reduces and the potential for poorly managed carbon sequestration projects further risk the protection of communities rights and access to their lands.

**Key Asks:**

7. Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners should strengthen regional mechanisms including community involvement to reflect cultural values and traditional knowledge to build a greater level of accountability and transparency to address sustainable management and development of resources.
8. Pacific development partners should work towards achieving inter-generational equity, ensuring we leave a better world for our descendants, by cancelling climate debt and a commitment to a debt-free future.
9. Pacific Governments should:
  - a. implement citizen budget guidelines to strengthen accountability and community engagement in the budget process; and
  - b. ensure Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of communities be a non-negotiable requirement for any natural resource development. This should be accompanied by greater education of communities in this area.

**Climate Change and Disasters**

***The climate crisis is a humanitarian crisis*** – All humanitarian actors must play an active role in addressing escalating climate risks. The climate crisis is exacerbating humanitarian needs and humanitarian funding; global and centralised approaches cannot keep up with increasing demand. Sustainable and effective climate responses must have local priorities at their core. We need a proactive, fast, and localised humanitarian system where communities are supported to analyse risks, create and carry through indigenous plans and solutions, and have access to pre-arranged financing to save more lives. Anticipatory action is one of the practical ways that civil society can address loss and damage. We must scale up anticipatory action to meet the challenges of the climate crisis.

***Climate justice is central to our survival and development*** – Climate change will impact every aspect of the lives, security and development of Pacific people. The Kioa Declaration upholds the civic values and rights of our respective peoples, villages and neighbourhoods, including values and qualities such as spirituality, reciprocity, compassion, love for people, ecosystems: *te fenua* [land], *te lagi* [sky] and *te moana* [ocean]. It also supports collective aspirations for a just and dignified legacy for our families and future generations. Pacific people must ensure our communities’ access to resources for climate adaptation, mitigation, relocation, resettlement and human security amidst the climate emergency.

**Key Asks:**

10. Pacific development partners should:
  - a. devolve power to local responders in Pacific countries. Funding and decision-making power is needed at the local level and donors must action their Grand Bargain commitments; and

- b. support scaled up funding for anticipatory action and pre-arranged disaster risk finance which is complemented by wider risk management efforts within the climate, development, and humanitarian portfolios.

11. Pacific leaders and Pacific development partners should:

- a. work to guarantee access to finance, and the creation of more equitable finance arrangements, beginning with a review of regional and international financial architectures, with inputs from CSOs and other stakeholders;
- b. support and fund innovative ways of addressing the climate crisis including forecast-based action, insurance mechanisms, and community-based innovation. Ensure that indigenous wisdom and locally led anticipatory action approaches are at the centre of these actions; and
- c. actively create space for communities and civil society to participate in disaster coordination mechanisms. This includes strengthening and supporting CSOs to build and coordinate collective humanitarian priorities and actions.

## Ocean and Environment

***The ocean and environment are the source of our resilience*** – Healthy oceans and the environment are central to the livelihoods, food security, health and traditional knowledge of the Pacific Island communities and economies. Climate change and over exploitation of natural resources (including deep sea mining) will impact the development and resilience of Pacific communities and countries.

***The Blue Economy narrative is a scramble to control the Pacific Ocean and its natural resources*** – Pacific culture, spirituality and identity flow with the ocean’s tides, connecting our relationships, and regulating our very existence through long-term ocean health. The rhetoric of the dominant Blue Economy distorts this relationship and marginalises Pacific peoples’ voices. The planned activities under the Blue Economy encompass both old fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, shipping, and new frontier issues such as deep-sea mining, genetic resource exploitation, and renewable energy. Such activities are focused on exploiting our ocean environment at industrial scales and allow for the exploitation of marine and human life, for economic wealth for a few at the expense of so many.

### Key Asks:

12. Pacific Island leaders and Pacific development partners should:

- a. Prioritise the preservation of the ocean and environment through education, policies and use technological advancement to strengthen best practice across the region.
  - Work to ensure ocean policies that are compatible with the climate goals, including:
    - Banning deep sea mining;
    - Banning discharge of wastes, including nuclear;
    - Protecting the oceans for the survival of small island communities and ecosystems;
    - Recognising, respecting, upholding and valuing the contributions traditional knowledge, culture and faith have played and continue to play in sustaining the unique relationship between the oceans and the environment.

13. Pacific Leaders should reconsider the current Blue Economy framing with a critical lens on the geopolitical, ideological and neoliberal economic agendas that underpin it. These should be closely examined in order to identify who, and what, they truly represent.

### **Technology and Connectivity**

***Connecting and strengthening Pacific culture and knowledge through technology*** – Technology and the connectivity it brings, can be used to strengthen our knowledge and enhance development. It can connect people, strengthen regional approaches and be a leverage for women’s economic empowerment. However, access to technology and ICT infrastructure is at best uneven across the Pacific. Those without affordable access risk being left further behind in harnessing the opportunities that come from connectivity and technology. It is important that in embracing technological advancements we do not lose our knowledge, values and ways of communicating. Integrating traditional knowledge and valuing and protecting citizen data and stories are essential to keeping Pacific values and knowledge at the centre of technological advancements.

#### **Key Asks:**

14. Pacific Island leaders and Pacific Development Partners should:
  - a. Strengthen ICT infrastructure and ensure all Pacific people, including those most marginalised, have access to affordable ICT infrastructure and the benefits of technology. Alongside this ensure communities are provided with information and education for digital safeguarding;
  - b. Support and protect citizen generated data. This includes ensuring access for communities to contribute, protecting their data and privacy and valuing the data they provide as essential research and knowledge; and
  - c. Integrate traditional knowledge into science and technology for culturally specific responses e.g. traditional knowledge integrated into early warning systems.

### **About PIANGO**

The Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) is the regional coordinating body for civil society networks in the Pacific. PIANGO is an established and influential civil society actor that connects and represents civil society bodies across 24 Pacific Island countries and territories, which collectively reach over 1200 local civil society organisations.

PIANGO’s mandate is to strengthen and build the capacity of Pacific NGOS and the civil society sector through giving the sector a voice in policy formulation and strengthening its member organisations.

***Our members***

Fiji Council of Social Services – FCOSS

Development Service Exchange – DSE

Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations – VANGO

PNG Environment Alliance

Forum of NGO Timor Leste - FONGTIL

Pasifika – West Papua

Marshall Islands Council of NGOs – MICNGOS

Kiribati Association of Non-Governmental Organisation – KANGO

Payu-Ta Inc. - Guam

Belau Association of Non-Governmental Organisation (BANGO) Palau

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) Alliance of NGOs – FANGO

Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations – MANGO

American Samoa Association of NGOs -ASANGO

The Cook Islands Civil Society Organisations Inc. – CICSO

Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisation – SUNGO

Civil Society Forum of Tonga - CSFT

Tuvalu Association of NGOs – TANGO

Niue Islands United Association of Non-Governmental Organisation - NIUANGO

Nauru Island Association of NGOs – NIANGO

Council for International Development – CID

Australian Council for International Development – ACFID