

Australia's New International Development Policy

Building upon Australia's leadership for an inclusive world

Australia's commitment to justice, fairness and inclusion have underpinned international action and established a legacy of leadership in disability-inclusive development. On the global stage, Australia has been at the forefront of developing inclusive policy frameworks, championing disability inclusion in humanitarian contexts, and supporting countries in our region to strengthen their own systems to better respond to the needs and capacities of people with disabilities. This work has been undertaken not to gain political capital or actively pursue leadership, but to reflect the humanitarian values and nature of Australians.

Australia's new International Development Policy (IDP) should drive stability, prosperity and resilience in a way that is representative of our national values and character. However, the IDP should not stand alone; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an overarching framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in line with not only Australia's interests and values, but global common interests and values. The SDGs are wide-reaching and inclusive; calling for outcomes to be achieved for 'all people, everywhere', with disability specifically referenced 11 times across five goalsⁱ.

It is in this context that Australia enters a new decade full of opportunity in which to embed a modernised and fully inclusive IDP. A decade in which to take action to alleviate poverty, inequality and injustice, whilst strengthening Australia's international relationships. The new IDP should be grounded in the ambitious 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper where, 'Australia is committed to promoting the rights of people with disabilities'ⁱⁱ and 'focus on poverty reduction and promoting the participation in the economy and society of the most disadvantaged, including women and girls and people living with disabilities'.ⁱⁱⁱ

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper, designed to guide a decade of influence and investment, builds upon the relationships developed through years of targeted, effective aid investments. In partnering with others to achieve Australia's goals, the effective relationships and proven approaches should not be disregarded. Forsaking low or middle income countries experiencing significant challenges in human development to focus solely on our neighbours in the Pacific undermines Australia's ability to influence global peace, stability and prosperity. The unprecedented humanitarian and climate challenges the world currently faces are threatening the hard won gains across all areas of human development.

CBM Australia supports an IDP built on the principles of inclusion, equality and empowerment. Australia's investment in the stability and resilience of low and middle income countries contributes to improving our own security and prosperity. And our national interests are best advanced by an international system anchored in 'international law, support for the rights and freedoms in United Nations declarations, and the principles of good

governances, transparency and accountability'.^{iv} It is imperative that Australia maintains a strategic, global view of what the IDP can achieve.

Across all humanitarian, development and human rights contexts people with disabilities are being left behind^v. Central to an IDP that reflects an ambitious and internationally influential Australia is the need to embed disability inclusion as a cross-cutting theme, supported by a third iteration of DFAT's disability-inclusive development strategy. Disability-inclusive development supports people with disabilities in claiming their human rights, being active members of society and ensuring they are meaningful participants of all development and humanitarian efforts. People with disabilities make up an estimated 15 per cent of the global population, and are not just people with disabilities; they are also members of every other group targeted by the IDP. They are women and girls, LGBTI, users of health and education services, farmers, small business owners, office workers and students. No matter what sector or which geographic region, people with disabilities must be included.

Investing in disability-inclusive development

While inclusion is a values-based imperative for Australia's aid and foreign policy, supportive statements alone are not enough to generate real outcomes for people with disabilities. Inclusion requires stable, predictable and long-term investment. With Australia's new IDP outlining priorities in the next five-to-ten years, efforts should be made to ensure that underlying strategies such as the Australian Government's *Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program* are renewed and expanded to cover the broader foreign policy portfolio.

The introduction of *Development for All*, Australia's—and the world's—first strategy for disability-inclusive international development has driven real achievements, including embedding disability inclusion as a crosscutting theme of Australia's aid program;^{vi} establishing inclusive approaches to humanitarian response and disaster preparedness;^{vii} and facilitating high-level policy discussions through co-chairing the Global Action on Disability Network.^{viii}

The 2018 Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) evaluation of implementation of *Development for All* found that the aid program has made good progress in strengthening disability inclusion. This was attributed, in part, to enablers including dedicated funding for disability-inclusive development, which was described by evaluation respondents as 'catalytic'^{ix} and a 'key driver'^x for effective inclusion practice.

The ODE evaluation also found that performance in disability-inclusive development was supported by access to expertise and technical assistance, both internal and external. The evaluation explicitly called for the Australian Government to '[build] DFAT's internal technical capacity to support disability inclusion by significantly increasing the number of staff positions in the Disability Section in Canberra'.^{xi} While increased administered funds to support disability inclusion in the Australian aid program are critical, their correlation to outcomes in programs and policy depends on increased capacity to deliver targeted support, both in Canberra and at Posts.

The Australian Government's work championing and being a global leader in disability-inclusive development in the past decade has been supported by key investments within the development program, which have returned significant results for minimal expense. Despite these concerted efforts there is still much to be achieved. The UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development^{xii}, released late in 2018, found that people with disabilities are still disadvantaged compared with those without disabilities and as many as half of primary

and lower secondary-school age children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school.^{xiii}

The Australian Government has previously committed the IDP to promoting disability-inclusive development and the rights of people with disabilities through the White Paper.^{xiv} This coupled with Australia's Article 32 and Article 11 responsibilities under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities^{xv} requires the new IDP to include a targeted approach to ensuring disability inclusion.

The Australian Government's overarching and renewed commitment to the Pacific provides significant opportunities to support much-needed disability inclusion outcomes and showcase contemporary partnership approaches while asserting continued leadership in the region. At present, an estimated average of 17 per cent of people in the Pacific have a disability.^{xvi} But many live without access to necessary services that can provide linkages to existing Australian aid investments, and more broadly support full and equal inclusion in community life. Through the *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016-2025* (PFRPD), Pacific governments have committed to action tied to priority themes of the SDGs, including livelihoods, social policy, leadership and enabling environments, disaster risk management, and strengthening available evidence.^{xvii} However, there is a substantial role for influential donors in the region, such as the Australian Government, to support implementation and showcase innovative partnerships by developing a regional modality to better support national initiatives.

Recommendation: Commit to, and implement, a third disability inclusive development strategy, incorporating all areas of the IDP, which champions Australia's leadership, drives evidence and innovation on inclusion and embeds Australia's catalytic role in influencing multilaterals, donors and governments on a global scale. Incorporate recommendations from *Development for All: Evaluation of Progress Made In Strengthening Disability Inclusion in Australian Aid* in the new strategy.

Recommendation: As a significant Pacific donor, influential development partner and good neighbour, commit to making implementation of the PFRPD a priority by allocating dedicated funds to supporting the implementation of the PFRPD, and mobilise other donors to contribute resources for this purpose.

Investing in effectiveness through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

A new IDP requires new approaches to partnerships reflecting the Busan Principles^{xviii} of inclusivity, mutual respect, empowerment and mutual benefits for all partners. An essential part of this is recognition of CSOs as key contributors in development partnerships, drawing on their extensive knowledge and capacity in policy issues, local relationships and knowledge and research to enhance Australia's development cooperation. A responsive and innovative IDP prioritises new civil society projects and increased funding for Global NGO Programs. It looks to provide long term, flexible assistance for civil society strengthening through country and regional programs to ensure that the most marginalised and the poorest in communities are engaged.

Australia's new IDP should showcase partnerships characterised by local leadership, trusted relationships and co-designed objectives. The Australian Government will then be well placed to work alongside country-partners and delivery partners to build diverse and successful partnerships. The new Australian IDP will shift away from a focus on partners as delivery contractors to diversify its relationships, respect south-south assistance, prioritise local delivery partners, and work to develop and maintain flexible partnerships open to inclusion and local adaptation.

In mapping those regional and global organisations of the greatest strategic importance for our policy objectives, the Australian Government should not confine disability inclusion to representative Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) engagement and broader disability inclusion to disability-specific fora. In order to build inclusive partnerships and embed the contributions of DPOs, particular efforts should be made to support their engagement in more 'mainstream' platforms in which Australia is engaged. This will not only amplify the voices of people with disabilities, but will support them to access newer stages and challenge newer audiences for broader development policy change.

The White Paper recognises NGOs as vital partners in efforts to encourage greater stability in our region. Despite NGOs out performing multilateral organisations^{xix} and a commitment to NGOs and civil society within the Foreign Policy White Paper and current policy, Australian Government funding to and through civil society organisation has decreased. This goes against the general trend of an increase in OECD countries.^{xx}

The Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) has, since its inception, proven itself to be among the Australian aid program's most effective investments. It extends the reach of Australian aid to beneficiaries beyond the footprint of DFAT's bilateral aid programs and enables NGOs to deliver effective development activities from the grass roots through to the institutional and policy levels.^{xxi} It delivers strongly on results; in 2013–14 ANCP represented around 2.7 per cent of the aid budget and delivered 18.2 per cent of outputs reported in the Department's aggregate development results.

The ANCP acknowledges the unique strengths that NGOs bring to development activities, which both complement and strengthen Australia's overall aid efforts. In reporting its progress against the SDGs, the Australian Government cited ANCP initiatives as evidence of Australia's commitment and performance in prioritising equality and inclusion.^{xxii}

Recommendation: With ANCP projects held up as examples of Australian best practice in achieving impact, increase the Australian Government's financial investment in the program. This investment would form a core component of a commitment to Official Development Assistance (ODA) expenditure, invested through Civil Society Organisations, increasing to 20 per cent, up from current levels of 11 per cent.

Investing in a performance framework for transparency and disaggregation

A new Performance Framework needs to ensure the IDP remains internationally credible, showcases Australian impact and progress and integrates with international standards and norms. International statutes like ODA and UN indicators are among the gold standard for creating sustainable, long-term change for the poorest and should be used as a benchmark for all Australia's development efforts and as key measures of transparency for development partnerships. Any changes and improvements to the performance framework need to ensure Australia returns to a consistently high ranking on the Aid Transparency Index and enables comparison internationally.

In an IDP where disability inclusion is a cross-cutting theme, it is important to ensure that the accompanying Performance Framework is also inclusive and designed to capture progress towards ensuring 'No One Is Left Behind'. Evidence-based data on people with disabilities is instrumental in supporting policymakers to address gaps and amend existing policies and regulations to address their needs. This framework should include an ambitious and time-bound target for a percentage of investments to be rated 'satisfactory' against disability

inclusion across the whole international development program, and specific disability inclusion targets for each of the international development program's thematic areas.

People with disabilities are among those furthest behind and, accordingly, the SDGs and their indicators clearly state that disaggregated data is needed to monitor advancement in the implementation of the goals. The SDGs Report 2017 states: 'a lack of rigorous evidence and comprehensive data has long compromised the ability of governments and the international community to accurately document the discrimination faced by various groups. As a result, planning and budgeting for necessary services along with effective policymaking have suffered. Persons with disabilities, for example, have largely fallen off the statistical "map".'^{xxiii}

Several key areas within the international development program currently lag on disability inclusion. These include agriculture, fisheries and water, infrastructure and aid for trade. In 2017-18 the percentage of investment rates of disability-inclusive in Aid Quality Checks was 40 percent.^{xxiv} In the aforementioned key areas, the percentage was well below average at less than 30 per cent, and less than 20 per cent for infrastructure. A target to drive improved performance in disability inclusion is an important step in meaningfully addressing poverty reduction and inclusion.

While this target will drive greater inclusion efforts, it cannot stand alone if it is to create meaningful outcomes for the one in five people living with disabilities in developing countries. To support the meaningful implementation of a disability inclusion target, DFAT staff and funded organisations will require fit for purpose guidance and processes to ensure they can accurately reflect and report on disability inclusion.

Recommendation: To ensure improved performance, introduce a revised Performance Framework that includes clearly defined and measurable targets to accompany the new IDP. This framework should include an ambitious and time-bound target for a percentage of investments to be rated 'satisfactory' against disability inclusion across the whole international development program, and specific disability inclusion targets for each of the international development program's thematic areas.

About CBM Australia

CBM Australia is a Christian international development agency, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in the poorest places in the world. In 2019, CBM Australia supported field projects in 11 countries and supported partners including governments, multilateral organisations, non-government organisations and DPOs in 18 countries.

CBM Australia is proud to have a partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) as part of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), and is a member of the Australian Council for International Development.

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- ⁱ United Nations Enable, *Disability Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals*. URL: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf.
- ⁱⁱ 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, DFAT, P.g.89
- ⁱⁱⁱ 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, DFAT, P.g.90
- ^{iv} 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, DFAT, P.g.7
- ^v United Nations, Realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development, P.g. 24.
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html>
- ^{vi} Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018. *Development for All: Evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid*. DFAT, Canberra. p. 2.
- ^{vii} Australian Government, 2017. *Fact sheet: Australian Humanitarian Partnership*. DFAT, Canberra.
- ^{viii} GLAD Network. *The Network*. Available from gladnetwork.net/network.
- ^{ix} Office of Development Effectiveness. p. 59.
- ^x Office of Development Effectiveness. p. 60.
- ^{xi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xii} United Nations, 2018, Realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html>
- ^{xiii} 2019, GLAD Network, <https://gladnetwork.net/search/resources/glad-infographic-inclusive-education>
- ^{xiv} 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, DFAT, P.g.89
- ^{xv} UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 24 January 2007 (A/RES/61/106)
- ^{xvi} UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2012. *Disability at a Glance 2012: Strengthening the Evidence Base in Asia and the Pacific*. United Nations, Bangkok. p. 3.
- ^{xvii} Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016. *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. PIFS, Suva. p. 6-7.
- ^{xviii} OECD, The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, <https://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>
- ^{xix} DFAT, 2018. 'Performance of Australian Aid 2016-17', <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/performance-ofaustralian-aid-2016-17.pdf>
- ^{xx} OECD 2019, Aid for Civil Society Organisations- Statistics based on DAC Members' reporting to the Creditor Reporting System database (CRS), 2016-2017 <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-for-CSOs-2019.pdf>
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- ^{xxii} Australian Government, 2018. *Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*. DFAT, Canberra. p. 72.
- ^{xxiii} <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/thesustainabledevelopmentgoalsreport2017.pdf>
- ^{xxiv} <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/aid-program-performance-reports.aspx>