



Australia supports social protection programs to help poor people deal with predictable daily stresses and unexpected shocks. Social protection addresses risk, vulnerability, inequality and poverty through a system of transfers to people in cash or in kind. These transfers can unlock the economic potential of the poorest and contribute to inclusive growth.

Strategic direction

Social protection is a relatively new space for the Australian aid program, but one of growing importance in the Indo-Pacific region.

Australia's approach is outlined in the *Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Social Protection*. This strategy guides our official aid expenditure in social protection, and supports our program teams to make informed investment choices within their respective global, regional or country level allocations.

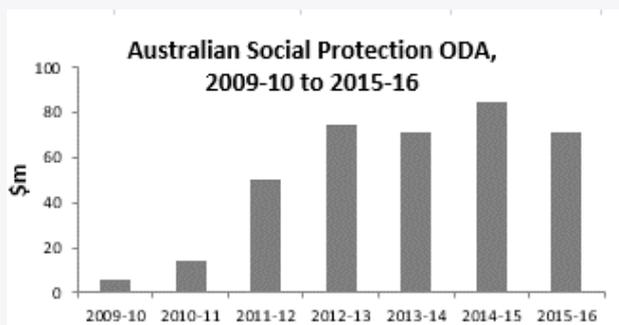
Australia's approach to social protection typically involves working with partner governments' to improve their delivery of social protection for the poor and vulnerable to contribute to human development and economic growth outcomes.

We work in economic partnership with a number of governments in the region including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Philippines, Laos and Timor-Leste.

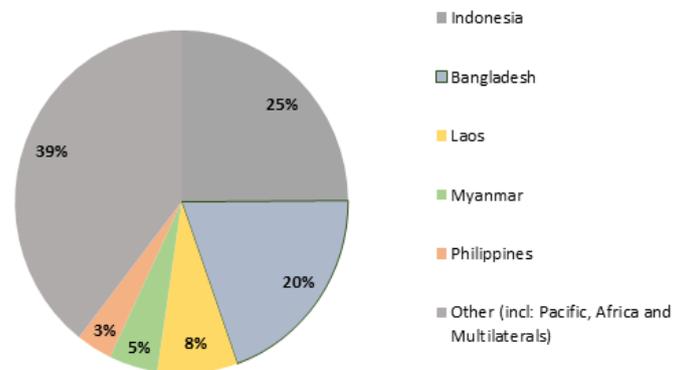
Australia's aid investments in social protection pursue three objectives:

- improve social protection coverage in the Indo-Pacific;
- improve the quality of social protection systems; and
- enhance our partner governments' ability to make choices on appropriate programs and systems for their context.

Australia's work in social protection contributes directly towards achieving SDGs 1, 3 and 10, and indirectly to SDGs 2, 4, 5, 8, 12 and 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Australian Social Protection ODA by country, 2015-16



Key framework document

[Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Social Protection](#)

Sector performance in 2016-17

- Through MAHKOTA (Towards a Strong and Prosperous Indonesian Society Program), Australia helped Indonesia focus the payment of electricity subsidies to the poorest 40 per cent of households. The Indonesian Government reports that this will save it \$1.6 billion in 2017.
- Through the Partnership for Knowledge-based Poverty Reduction we supported the World Bank to help extend Indonesia's cash transfer program from 3.5 million to 6 million poor households. Cash transfers help families access health and education and pay for basic household needs. Indonesia is now planning to expand this to a further 10 million households in 2018, using its own budget.
- In the Philippines, Australia's support to the Conditional Cash Transfer program is improving access to transfers for vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, street children and people with a disability.
- Supporting extremely poor people in Bangladesh by contributing to social transfers for 88,961 households and increasing incomes for 86,975 households in 2015-16.
- Laos Australia Rural Livelihoods Program: The Independent Evaluation recommended the extension of some program components to enhance sustainability.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Operational evaluations in 2016-17

- The MAHKOTA investment review in February 2017 recommended increasing the funding and expanding the scope of the program for the current phase.
- A DFAT funded impact evaluation of Fiji’s use of its social protection system to provide humanitarian top up payments following Tropical Cyclone Winston showed this intervention was effective and efficient.

Priorities for 2017-18

- We will seek to expand our engagement in the Pacific, both through furthering country preparedness for greater use of cash in emergencies and the development of longer term social protection systems.
- DFAT will contribute to the global learning and engagement on social protection through the hosting of webinars, South-South events, global online communities, funding of key social protection tools and research where there are clear evidence gaps.
- DFAT’s Social Protection Hub will focus on providing technical support to our country programs.



Participants of the Chars Livelihood Programme’s Milk Market Development Project in Bangladesh. Photo credit: Narayan Chandra Debnath, British High Commission Dhaka, 2015

Innovation

In Indonesia, our support is enabling the Government to test different mechanisms to distribute electronic funds through the banking system. This includes trialling mobile phone payments, smart cards and vouchers with barcodes.

Gender equality

The social protection programs we support around the region overwhelmingly target women, empowering them to pursue economic opportunities as well as supporting their families’ basic needs.

Social Protection Investments Performance 2015-16

% of Aid Investments rated Satisfactory

