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Accenture welcomes this opportunity to provide its perspective for the purposes of the Australian Government developing a new International Development Policy. We recognise that this new policy reform comes at a challenging time. The economic and geopolitical landscape in our region is facing increasing uncertainty and disruption. The Australian Government seeks to implement immediate imperatives around economic empowerment and recovery, as well as securing sustainable impact in the long term. The economic impact of COVID-19 means that unemployment has risen, as have the precariousness of livelihoods in our region and the global south more broadly. Achieving equitable and resilient development in the region should be catalysed by policy and enabled by technology and multi-sectoral partnerships.

Accenture is a global professional services company. Our purpose is to deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity. Combining unmatched experience and specialised skills across more than 40 industries, we offer Strategy and Consulting, Technology and Operations services and Accenture Song — all powered by the world's largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centres – to private, public and non-profit clients around the world. We have a global track record of helping clients from these sectors to develop and deliver transformative visions.

Our work in the international development sector through Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP) is a non-profit enterprise. We have built ADP to deliver the power of Accenture's global capabilities and experience to address social, economic, and environmental issues to improve lives around the world. We think daily about how to apply Accenture's business expertise to aid sustainable development outcomes for NGOs, foundations, governments, and multilateral donors. The perspective we offer in this submission is based on our understanding of the exigencies created by today's rapidly changing circumstances, including in technology, and our experience of bringing innovation and data to cross-sector partnerships in the development sector.

This submission addresses five key areas that we feel should be central to Australia's future international development policy:

1) Leveraging technology and data for policy design and security
2) Promoting equitable and resilient economic development
3) Enhancing the use of digital in development initiatives
4) Championing climate change mitigation and adaptation
5) Facilitating cross-sector partnerships and engaging the private sector in new ways

In this submission, we refer to technology as the application of knowledge for practical purposes, and digital transformation as the process by which people or organisation embed technologies across their practices to drive fundamental change for inclusive societal and regional benefit.

1) Leveraging technology and data for policy design and security.

Digital is now the norm. Companies and governments globally use data to re-imagine modes of interactivity, consumption, and what it means to be productive. We are also seeing a rapid adoption of machine capabilities and artificial intelligence within supply chains, with less demand for human intervention, a trend we predict will expand beyond the commercial domain. This trend means governments and organisations will need to consider human-centred and society-based technology design in order to develop responsible AI practices and prevent any unintended discrimination.

Technology. Digital disruption and technology are playing a pivotal role in development as it modifies the fundamental expectations and behaviours in cultures, markets, and industries, and can greatly increase the reach of economic and social transformation. The World Economic Forum and Accenture analysis estimates

the combined value of digital transformation to industry and society at $100 trillion over the next decade[i]. Within this context, there is a significant opportunity for DFAT to consider how it can leverage improved upstream technology for policy development and outcomes. Today, technology is often leveraged in reaction to development issues. Rarely do we see technology being used proactively, 'upstream', to assist in decision making to inform policy and development interventions. Investing in the right technology platforms and capabilities to enable data driven decision making in government is fundamental to the success of this.

Data. From our experience, we observe that governments who proactively use data to inform policy are able to make more intuitive decisions, better evaluate program effectiveness, and work more efficiently to optimise impact. It is forecast there will be an additional 900 million internet users by 2025, and governments' IT spending is forecast to grow to US$151 billion by 2025[ii]. Utilising data to inform policy design not only allows governments to establish baselines, benchmarks, and goals, but also has the ability to transform outcomes. For example, Accenture recently helped the Treasury Department of a government in the Asia-Pacific region to leverage data to gain visibility into internal population migration. We identified reliable external data sources before building a nowcasting and forecasting population model for a new and novel way of generating population statistics. This data-based visibility about the current and future scenarios is expected to be the basis for making policy decisions by the Treasury Department, such as informing planning of infrastructure and services. Data in policy design can also improve the ability to better serve women in development initiatives, through the collection of sex-disaggregated data to inform gender-sensitive public and private investment strategies. Technology and digitalisation allow governments to be more 'data driven' at all levels, from policy design through to operational management and risk management, to individual decision making. By investing in government capability development like this, governments are able to function more effectively and achieve more economic gains.

Security. National and regional security, both cyber and physical, are fundamental to people's livelihoods in today's digital economy. Security must be a key consideration, rather than an afterthought, for all future policy development – embedding security governance frameworks to support desired policy outcomes, investing in people so security processes are understood and cyber threats targeting individuals are mitigated, and implementing appropriate security tools, technology and infrastructure across all capability development. A peaceful and stable online environment and improved cyber resilience across the indo-pacific region ultimately supports Australia's national security interests.

2) Promoting equitable and resilient economic development.

A significant percentage of the world's population remain offline as they are either lacking the skills required to interact with digital technologies, are excluded by income, or lack access to internet connectivity. For example, in Asia Pacific, mobile broadband coverage is high (reaching 96% of population), but only 44% of the population (1.23 billion) are able to use mobile internet services[iii]. Enabling equitable access to digital services and upskilling in digital literacy can help to improve the overall digital maturity of our partner countries, which is ultimately what enables them to create value through the digital economy.

Equitable access. Investment in equitable access to digital infrastructure is of critical importance, with an emphasis on rural or remote areas which are often excluded. Improving access to digital devices and financial services for women, people with disabilities and marginalised groups within society needs to be a consideration for development policy. This can provide opportunities for these groups to earn income and increase employment opportunities and access to knowledge. Closing the digital gender gap (where women are disproportionately excluded) could deliver an estimated $624 billion increase in economic activity by 2025 globally[iv].

Equitable upskilling. Closing the digital divide will require investments in both infrastructure and digital literacy training. Starting in early childhood education and promoting education opportunities for women and girls is particularly significant in technology-related industries where men are overrepresented compared to women (e.g. software production, STEM, entrepreneurship/start-ups). Australia has an opportunity here to be a leading partner with countries in our region to support digital skills training, empowering populations to be active in the digital economy and thus improve economic and social conditions.

Equity in decision making. In addition to the need for equity of access and skills provision, equity in decision making is required across the whole policy lifecycle. Establishing inclusive representation through consultations for policy design and implementation, as well as collaborating with local actors, enables development outcomes that are more resilient and equitable.

3) Enhancing the use of digital in development initiatives.

Digital disruption creates a historic opportunity to reshape industries such as finance, healthcare and education. This can lead to significant outcomes for poverty alleviation, gender equality, and economic development. The economic gains governments can achieve through incorporating digital delivery in development initiatives is significant, as the cost to serve can reduce exponentially if done effectively. Furthermore, data created through digital programming can then be used to inform future policy design. This creates a mutually reinforcing cycle for increased development effectiveness.

Finance. Digital finance is a powerful means to enable greater financial inclusion, which can unlock productivity and investment, reduce poverty, empower women, and help build stronger institutions. For example, we witnessed this potential when we supported M-Pesa, which is a mobile phone-based money transfer service born out of a partnership between the UKs Department for International Development and telecommunications companies and banks. It increases financial inclusion in emerging markets, with researchers believing that this initiative alone has lifted 2% of Kenyan households out of poverty. M-Pesa demonstrates how powerful the use of technology, innovation, and the digital economy can be in development work[v]. Digital finance can be particularly transformational for empowering women, enabling them with independent access to predictable income streams and them greater control over how the money will be used within their households.

Healthcare. Digital can radically expand access and improve outcomes to transform how healthcare is delivered and experienced. It can fundamentally change the cost-quality equation of healthcare. Digital can empower patients, health providers, governments, and other stakeholders with the information and tools they need to manage their own health, deliver better care, and strengthen the underlying health system, thereby radically expanding access and improving outcomes. These high impact outcomes can come from basic improvements to provision of services: they do not need to be complex solutions. For example, utilising mobile based learning platforms to build health capacity in rural communities can extend the reach of healthcare and improve livelihoods. Work we did with Amref to build the capacity of community health workers in Kenya is on its way to reaching 1 million people. Due to the digital nature of the delivery, scale of this size was realistic. We launched a report at the UN General Assembly in 2018 with practical recommendations and best practice examples for how policy makers can use readily available digital technology to enable digital health and address non-communicable diseases.

Education. Digital innovation can enhance the quality and relevance of learning, strengthen inclusion, and improve education administration and governance. In times of crises, distance learning can mitigate the effects of education disruption and school closures. For example, the Youth Learning Passport, a platform designed through a partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft to provide education for displaced and refugee children through digital remote learning, offers a scalable solution to skill youth in Jordan, providing a critical bridge to help hard-to-reach and disadvantaged youth access learning and training. By transforming modes of provision to support universal access to learning, governments and organisations are speeding up progress to Sustainable Development Goal 4 for education.

4) Championing climate change mitigation and the energy transition.

The Australian Government has an opportunity to take a leading role in helping our region decarbonise, develop more sustainably, and improve the region's energy resilience. This also represents a significant opportunity to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Australia currently has a population of 25.7 million people and accounts for 1.2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Comparatively, Indonesia has a population of 276 million people and accounts for 4.8% of emissions globally[vi]. Whilst decarbonisation of our domestic economy remains of critical importance, the impact of decarbonisation of our closest neighbours could provide much greater total emissions reduction.

Mitigation. Helping our partners transition to renewable power sources would also be a valuable opportunity for DFAT to support long-term sustainability and energy security in the region. Helping with the transition to renewables also has a number of benefits for economic development – it helps countries to become more self-reliant and resilient through generating their own power supply, while generating sustainable, new jobs. According to Accenture's modelling of job creation, it is estimated the number of green jobs, those related to producing and delivering goods and services focused on conserving natural resources or reducing their use, in Australia, China, India, Indonesia and Japan could grow by 62%, reaching 32.6 million, by 2030[vii].

DFAT has a critical role to play here through supporting investment in infrastructure, capability building and catalysing private investment. Technology will continue to drive down the cost of renewable generation technologies, but in particular, wind operation and maintenance, and the development and construction of utility-scale solar. There is a significant economic opportunity for policy to support the skilling of workers to attain green jobs, ensuring the most underrepresented communities are not excluded, and improving working conditions.

Adaptation. The projected consequences of sea level rise for the many island nations means our region will be hit particularly hard by the impacts of climate change – physically, socially and economically. While there is much to consider here, we wish to highlight the potential role of digital in climate change adaptation. For example, we recently partnered with the Government of Tuvalu, who in response to rising sea levels being projected to submerge their nation in a matter of decades, are starting the journey of becoming the world's first digital nation. Beginning with development of a digital twin of one of the first of its islands to be impacted, Tuvalu's land and culture will be preserved in the metaverse to prepare for a worst case scenario. Another example is ReefCloud, developed by Accenture in partnership with the Australian Institute of Marine Science. This coral reef monitoring tool harnesses Artificial Intelligence to annotate images of coral reefs, allowing the world's coral reef monitoring community to work together in real time to improve the monitoring, reporting and conservation of our reefs. These are just two of the many potential applications of how digital and technology could be used in the context of climate change adaptation.

5) Facilitate cross-sector partnerships and engage the private sector in new ways.

Official Development Assistance, government spending and philanthropic capital alone cannot solve global systemic or 'wicked' problems alone. An estimated $2.5 trillion investment is needed to achieve the SDG targets by 2030[viii]. To bridge this gap, we need to integrate public services and development programs with ambitious, new, and inclusive business models from the private sector. Collaboration between a diverse set of stakeholder groups and sectors is challenging but necessary to solve many of the complex challenges faced by our region.

The opportunity and need for mobilising private sector capital and business models in international development is significant. Leading companies are already moving away from traditional corporate philanthropy and CSR programs that have inherent limits in terms of scale and long-term sustainability, towards embedding ESG values in their business. Leaders in this space are building or buying inclusive business models that create scalable social impact and ultimately embed this into their core business strategy, proving there is both business opportunity for the private sector but also a concrete and financially viable pathway for economic inclusion and growth. For instance, Accenture employs 45,000 people in the Philippines and 250,000 in India, positively contributing to the economy of these partner countries while also providing business value to Accenture through strengthening our human capital. Similarly, Unilever, Vodafone, Mastercard, GSK, Facebook and Google are already positioning themselves centrally in emerging ecosystems across developing markets. Many of these are using technology to connect people, as well as connecting organisations across industries and sectors. Profitability, risk tolerance, and investment levels have increased as companies have used their innovation and venturing capabilities better, new players from the global south have begun expanding and specialist venture capital, private equity, impact investment, and blended capital funds have begun focusing on new opportunities in developing markets. All of this said, the private sector would work in concert with public and civil organisations to ensure their efforts are complemented by global safety nets and wider reforms to trade, tax, migration, workers' rights and digital rights.

There are three ways we would recommend DFAT prioritise to engage the private sector to contribute to development outcomes more effectively. First, DFAT has an opportunity to build on the success it has had with the private sector in the past to further promote private sector engagement and investment. We suggest continuing to partner directly with private companies, and perhaps look for ways to expand that collaboration, to find greater areas of complementary expertise, networks and channels. Second, DFAT should work 'upstream' to try to promote greater private sector investment by working with regional partners to reduce barriers to investment. Creating an enabling policy environment and incentives for private investment and responsible private sector activity will support this. Finally, DFAT should look to contribute to innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance in order to incentivise more private capital allocation to less developed markets across the region. As the global policy landscape for blended finance grows, confidence regarding the viability of investments and impacts generated will increase. This can be further enabled by providing tax incentives and introducing rules for increased transparency.

Based on Accenture's diverse range of experiences across our region and the globe, we believe these insights around regional development opportunities and reflections should be considered by DFAT when writing new policy that sets the long-term direction for Australia's international development program.

We look forward to the delivery of this significant and important review of Australia's international development policy.

Yours sincerely,

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