



Australia's International Development Policy: Submission from Humanitarian Advisory Group

SUMMARY

Australia's new International Development Policy provides an exciting opportunity for Australia to deepen partnerships, and to lead on localisation, inclusion, and climate change in its approach to humanitarian action. The consultation process enables Australian development and humanitarian actors to bring their knowledge and experience to the table, to help shape Australia's revitalised approach.

ABOUT HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

Humanitarian Advisory Group is an ethically driven business that combines the passion of humanitarians with the agility and innovation of entrepreneurship. For ten years we have brought fresh thinking, research and new evidence to the humanitarian sector, seeking to elevate the experience and perspectives of humanitarian actors in the Indo-Pacific region to the global level.

ELEVATING EVIDENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Our partnership-based research programme, *Humanitarian Horizons 2021 - 2024*, produces insights, evidence and guidance to support more effective humanitarian action. Humanitarian Advisory Group also provides technical advice to operational humanitarian agencies and governments including independent evaluations, policy development and programme design.

Australia's new International Development Policy will need to recognise the linkages between the three key areas of humanitarian action, sustainable human development, and peacebuilding, whilst navigating the inherent tension and complementarity between them.

This submission will focus on *Humanitarian Action* and highlights the importance of recommitting to global and regional agreements to inform Australia's priorities and approach. In particular, the new policy will consider, uphold and recommit to:

2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent



Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles



Agenda for Humanity – including the Grand Bargain Commitments



The new International Development Policy needs to mainstream three key themes to ensure a partnership-based, inclusive and environmentally sensitive approach to humanitarian action. We have provided practical considerations for the policy based on evidence from our research.



LOCALISATION

- 1 Build an **ongoing independent review and feedback process for DFAT to connect directly with local/national non-state actors and communities to collect unfiltered feedback on aid investments**, channelled through governments, UN, INGOs and even national organisations. This needs to be done at multiple levels and not only through official channels (ie: Posts). All senior DFAT officials with an international development component within their responsibilities **should have a local reference group they meet with every quarter or six months**.
- 2 **Ensure local/national expertise is embedded into DFAT supported knowledge production:** make it mandatory to have local research partners co-author and/or co-produce every review, evaluation, research piece, situation report etc. that is supported/commissioned with DFAT funding – either directly or through intermediaries. **Local research partners need to be recognised as co-producers of knowledge.**
- 3 **Require intermediaries funded by DFAT to go through formal partnership brokering processes with their national/ local counterparts.** This will also help them to be clear on their individual roles and how they complement each other. This is particularly aimed at moving intermediaries away from direct implementation to more of a support role.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 1 Make sure **diversity of voices informs policy direction and implementation** – this means diverse voices from communities, civil society and from within the diaspora community here in Australia.
- 2 For diversity to be productive it **requires inclusive practices and needs to be intentional**. Mechanisms need to be built into the policy to ensure that diversity and inclusion is central to inform thinking, design and implementation.
- 3 In order for innovation to thrive in addressing existing and emerging humanitarian challenges, **diversity and inclusion must be present at the highest level** of decision-making.



ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS HUMANITARIAN ACTION

- 1 The new policy needs to demonstrate mutual complementarity of **climate action, environmental protection and humanitarian action**. This extends to the breaking down/integration of other themes and silos too. Our research shows that siloed funding leads to siloed programs that miss out on key cross learning and unity of effort.
- 2 **Understanding and addressing the psycho-social impacts of climate change:** Climate change poses not just physical threats, but threats to individual and community wellbeing. Strengthen the links between climate action and psycho-social support.
- 3 **Embedding local knowledge and expertise** into climate action initiatives is critical. The focus on First Nations people is an excellent approach in recognising the value of tradition wisdom and practices into humanitarian action.

The 'how' is as important as the 'what' when it comes to international development. The Australian government will need to ensure the following four pillars are mainstreamed and resourced across the policy and its implementation. This will contribute to overall effectiveness of the policy as well as harness support for Australia's international assistance in the domestic context.



Partnership

Australia actively promotes and practices good donorship. It firmly centres local partner knowledge, experience and priorities.



Accountability

Australian development assistance is open, transparent and influenced by feedback at all levels, including upstream and downstream accountability.



Coordination

Investment in coordination amongst other donors and amongst humanitarian partners can facilitate better learning and complementarity.



Communication

What Australia does and how it does it needs to be communicated in an engaging way that can be accessed by a diverse range of groups, both in Australia and in the region.