

WFP inputs for Australia's new international development policy

Australia's partnership with the World Food Programme

Australia's support for multilateral organisations including WFP is reflected in the Foreign Policy White Paper 2017, the Australian Government's development policy, Partnerships for Recovery — Australia's COVID-19 Development Response 2020 and in any successor policy frameworks. WFP is a valued partner in delivering food assistance and supporting food security under Australia's aid programme. DFAT supports WFP's overarching approach, goals and objectives as outlined in its Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Australia supports predictable core funding to implement WFP's Strategic Plan including the important normative and operational functions of WFP, and the efficiencies which are realised through multi-year planning. In this regard, WFP would like to recommend following elements are captured in Australia's new international development policy.

The importance of eradicating hunger

Extreme hunger and malnutrition remain barriers to sustainable development and create a trap from which people cannot easily escape. Hunger and malnutrition mean less productive individuals, who are more prone to disease and thus often unable to earn more and improve their livelihoods.

Global Food Crisis

The world is facing the largest food crisis in modern history. Humanity currently faces the greatest hunger crisis in a generation, and the outlook for 2023 is alarming. Crippling climate shocks— including multi-year droughts, catastrophic hurricanes and floods —have piled on to the devastating economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. These, in turn, have led to massive income losses, record inflation, tumbling currencies, deteriorating living standards, and a mounting global debt crisis. At the same time, conflicts have taken an already strenuous situation to a new level of severity, with dramatic knock-on effects on food security and energy and fertilizer markets. New estimates from the 79 countries where WFP has an operational presence and where data is available show the number of acutely food insecure people will hit a record high of 349 million in 2022. This is an increase of 200 million people compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Disability Inclusion

The World Food Programme appreciates the Government of Australia's leadership in advancing disability inclusive development and humanitarian action and encourages continued prioritization and investment in both targeted and mainstreamed action on disability, food security and nutrition.

Evidence shows that including, and prioritizing, persons with disabilities is more important than ever in advancing the Leave No One Behind agenda. WFP partnered with Trinity College Dublin to lead the drafting of the first stand-alone chapter dedicated to SDG 2 in the UN Disability and Development Report, supported by UNDESA. Preliminary and draft findings of the chapter, entitled "Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition for all persons with disabilities", reinforce those persons with disabilities are more likely to be food insecure than persons without disabilities. This is further compounded by intersectional identities, with findings showing that women with disabilities experience higher level of food insecurity than men with disabilities. Acknowledging these realities within our Saving Lives and Changing Lives mandate, and in line with a people-centred approach, WFP is making progress on integrating disability inclusion into resilience building efforts, social protection, education and livelihoods programmes. Much of this work has taken place within the Asia and Pacific Region and has been possible because of DFAT funding to WFP in the region, nevertheless, sustained action globally on disability inclusive development will require this work to be scaled up significantly. WFP will continue to work with the disability movement to inform how we work, and increasingly, with governments to uphold a rights-based approach to disability inclusion. Any steer from DFAT at a policy level could be instrumental on moving this agenda forward.

Throughout partnerships and investments, WFP would like to highlight the importance of taking a people centered, participatory approach that enables meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations throughout. This includes prioritizing funding mechanisms that allow for localized



response. Simply put, zero hunger will not be achieved without the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities throughout – because they know best, what they need.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Globally we are seeing rising food insecurity and malnutrition caused by climate change, conflict, price shocks and the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia and its region will continue to see and bear large impacts of climate change especially in the small island nations. It is important to consider that the impacts of climate change affect everyone, but not equally. Women and girls around the world are disproportionately negatively impacted by climate shocks and stresses. Gender-differentiated roles, responsibilities and rights reinforce inequalities that result in specific challenges for women and girls to access and have control over land, technology, financial services and information, as well as decision-making and natural resource allocation. This results in disparities between women, men, girls and boys in their exposure and ability to adapt to the climate crisis as well as other shocks. Australia's development policy should promote approaches which address the climate crisis impacts on food security and nutrition for the most vulnerable. A regional development focus should also take into account the interconnected nature of global food systems and the impact of shocks to these systems on local communities, working to build resilience of these communities and to shape policies which promote progress towards gender equality and social inclusion as fundamental precursors for access to healthy, affordable diets for all.

Climate change

The climate emergency is also a hunger emergency. As a multiplier of risks, climate impacts accelerate other drivers of hunger - including social tensions, displacement and food price inflation. In light of the outcomes of COP27, and against the backdrop of Australia's ambition to co-host COP31 in 2026 alongside Pacific nations, the topic of climate change has the potential to feature as a cornerstone of the new International Development Policy. When integrating climate considerations, the following aspects should be considered:

- **Strengthen mechanisms for climate finance to reach the most vulnerable communities more directly.** Historically, 70% of Australia's bilateral and regional climate finance has been directed towards adaptation and resilience programming in the Indo-Pacific region, prioritizing Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It is critical for Australia to continue focusing on the most vulnerable nations, but also to emphasize locally driven and targeted mechanisms which deploy grants-based financing to communities in other fragile and highly vulnerable contexts.
- **Advocate for more context-specific and integrated climate resilience interventions.** Integrated climate resilience approaches layer and combine mechanisms to strengthen ecosystem services with access to climate risk and early warning information, financial protection, and the empowerment of local communities.
- **Ensure that climate, humanitarian, development, and peace action that is supported by Australia are mutually supportive.** Effective use of humanitarian and development finance requires the strategic sequencing and combination of different funding sources. Adding a loss & damage prevention angle to humanitarian support (e.g. through anticipatory action, contingency planning and disaster preparedness); strengthening adaptation efforts with mitigation co-benefits (such as soil restoration, agroforestry or watershed management); co-financing no-regrets initiatives to achieve large regional impacts (e.g. by supporting climate risk and early warning systems); and using grants-based finance to catalyze private sector investments (e.g. through climate risk financing and insurance mechanisms) are examples of nexus approaches that achieve multiple benefits through a strategic alignment of different funding sources.

Working with Indigenous community

In line with the Uluru statement from the heart and Australia's First Nations approach to foreign policy, it is recommended that Australia ensure Indigenous peoples' voices from across the Indo-Pacific region are heard



in decision making processes that affect poverty reduction strategies, climate action, the fulfillment of human rights and gender equality. Indigenous peoples' systems and practices based on millennial knowledge are a resource to all and if harnessed - with consent- can provide solutions to food insecurity, climate variabilities and shocks. Australia therefore has an important role to play encouraging the engagement of Indigenous peoples as partners in community resilience. Moreover, its experience in peer-to-peer or community to community exchange as a way to share learning and knowledge based on mutual respect can be an asset in partnership building across the region.

Social Protection

About half the world's poor, and some 60% of the chronically hungry, were living in fragile or conflict-affected states in 2018; and if poverty declines in more stable contexts, without action by 2030 around 80% of the extreme poor will be in fragile states ([OECD, 2018](#)). Climate change and the global pandemic could compound this trend.

While food insecurity is a driver of both poverty and fragility, social protection is a key solution that can be used to combat these challenges by addressing vulnerability across the food system.

- Social protection can improve the **availability** of nutritious food by incentivising local production, and reducing risk and encouraging investment for farmers.
- Social protection can improve **access** to nutritious food by promoting market development, enabling physical access, and increasing affordability and equitability.
- Social protection can improve **utilization** by promoting dietary diversity, increasing consumption of nutritious foods, and facilitating access to education and health services.
- Social protection can improve **stability** of food security in times of shocks by building household resilience and smoothing consumption patterns. Social protection in crises is especially important because it protects and prevents households from falling back into poverty when they are at their most vulnerable.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half the world's population had either inadequate or no access to social protection, including two out of three of all children. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, governments with strong social protection systems are far better able to respond to shocks; in 2021, over USD 2.9 trillion was devoted to social protection responses to COVID-19.

Nevertheless, there remain significant gaps in social protection coverage globally; only 46.9 percent of the global population are covered by at least one social protection benefit, while the remaining 53.1 percent are left unprotected. In low-income countries only 1.1 percent of GDP is spent on social protection compared to 16.4 percent in high-income countries, and these national systems tend to be weakest in terms of coverage, adequacy of assistance, and sustainability of financing.

Success in achieving the SDGs by 2030 must include investments in social protection. SDG 1.3 calls for the implementation of "nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable" in order to end poverty in all its forms. Yet according to the ILO, social protection assistance accounts for only 0.84 percent of DAC countries' total disbursed ODA (2018).

Development capabilities:

Delivering on the commitment to poverty reduction and to 'Leave No One Behind' will require Australia to continue being at the forefront social protection globally and strengthening its longstanding leadership in this area.

Australia has played a leading role in supporting regional governments to establish their own social protection systems and strengthening those systems to be more capable of responding in emergencies. While partnerships have been a key part of this strategy, UN agencies are not primary stakeholder that Australia works with.



WFP supports governments to strengthen their social protection systems by providing technical advice and guidance, and by designing and implementing elements of programmes on behalf of governments. Australia has supported WFP's social protection programmes in emergency contexts where they involve delivering humanitarian assistance through or in alignment with national systems.

Sustain investment and leadership in social protection globally

- Australia should continue to demonstrate global leadership in championing and advancing adaptive and shock-responsive social protection as part of the upcoming policy, alongside creation of decent jobs and public financing. Australia's continued leadership would also align with the strategic direction outlined by the UN Secretary General and coordinated efforts of WFP's sister agencies.
- Australia should recognize the need for investment in social protection across the food system through coordinated humanitarian and development programming, especially in fragile contexts. ODA should support integrated social services and assistance across food security, education, health and other sectors, and promote partnership and harmonization amongst UN agencies and with other development partners.
- Australia's investment in major research and technical assistance programmes should be maintained, but should go further and build on existing regional partnerships with UN agencies and international financial institutions so that efforts across international stakeholders are more aligned and harmonized, particularly in crises and humanitarian contexts.

Flexible funding

For millions of people worldwide, assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) is what makes the difference between life and death. WFP's timely intervention at times of heightened crisis has helped pull people back from the brink of starvation. WFP's work to build resilience, adapt to a changing climate, promote good nutrition and improve food systems is helping lay the foundations for a more prosperous future for millions, and reduce humanitarian needs over time.

To address the increasingly complex and entrenched crises we face today, flexibility in donor contributions and predictability of resources are critical to enable WFP to be strategic and agile as it responds to unprecedented needs in multiple humanitarian crises around the world. It is mutually beneficial to all parties: value for money for donors and improved efficiency and effectiveness for WFP that ultimately benefits the poorest people as WFP can use more resources to reach those in need. Importantly, flexibility is an investment in reducing humanitarian needs over time as it helps WFP bridge between immediate needs and longer-term support for improved resilience. We must act on two fronts: saving those whose lives are at risk while providing a foundation for communities to meet their own food needs. Otherwise, it is clear that we will pay even a higher price in terms of supporting the displaced, rebuilding societies and recovering from everything we have lost as years of support for development is reversed.

In the context of the widening gap between needs and resources available, WFP would like to highlight the value of **flexible and predictable funding** as mechanisms that help maximize the effectiveness of each dollar: Flexibility and predictability improve programmatic and cost efficiencies and lessen the administrative burden on aid organizations, partners and donors alike.

Multi-year funding:

- The predictability achieved through multi-year funding facilitates **effective planning** and helps ensure greater **stability of support**.
- Greater funding predictability is integral in supporting the humanitarian–development–peace nexus in line with the OECD DAC Recommendations and aid organizations' partnerships with national governments, as it allows for **longer-term investments in resilience building, capacity strengthening and anticipatory action**.
- It also helps **enhance trust with WFP's counterparts and cooperating partners**, as it contributes to greater job security and tenure for staff.



- Ultimately, the **reduced transaction costs** that come with multi-year agreements mean that WFP is able to use more resources to reach those in need.

Flexibility allows:

Agile prioritization of needs across regions, especially in rapidly changing environments and in protracted crises;

Integrated approach from immediate to longer-term activities to reduce needs over time;

Optimized use of modalities from cash to in-kind;

Timely interventions through anticipatory action, prepositioning and rapid scale-up.

Please find more examples of the benefits of flexibility and predictability of funding in WFP's Annual Report here: www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-annual-report-flexible-funding-2021

WFP appreciates Australia for being a leading champion of flexible donor in the past years. WFP would also like to see that Australia advances its leadership in advocating this among donor communities under the new international development policy.