



## Response to Consultation

International Gender Equality Strategy  
September 2023

## RE: Response to Public Consultation on International Gender Equality Strategy

Deloitte has a longstanding presence across our region (including the recent celebration of 40 years of service to Papua New Guinea) – our collaborations with governments, businesses and non-government Organisations across the Indo-Pacific have provided us with insight into the specific challenges and opportunities for closing the gender gap. Deloitte fully supports the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s commitment to placing gender equality at the centre of international development and foreign policy priorities.

To foster economic growth, inclusive and resilient societies, and a fair and just future for all, an International Gender Equality Strategy must move beyond discrete activities and evaluation to bold programs that realign power and gender norms. There have been numerous commitments to gender equality in our region, with progress in legislative reform and policy making, however without reshaping power dynamics, implementation remains complex.

These norms must be challenged only through a locally-led lens – our role as a nation is to champion self-determination, resisting homogenous solutions. As we continue our own national journey, the lessons learned from our neighbours will accelerate our own efforts towards true intersectional gender equality.

Finally, women must be central to climate change and disaster resilience efforts. The knowledge that women in our region hold, combined with the disproportionate effect that these events have on women and children, uniquely places them at the centre of sustainable solutions to one of the most urgent issues facing our region.

When combined with other forthcoming strategies – including a First Nations approach to foreign policy, an International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy, a Humanitarian Strategy, and a Human Rights Engagement Strategy for LGBTQIA+ equality and inclusion – this is a landmark time for our nation to forge an accelerated path with our neighbours towards long term change.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute our thoughts and look forward to the evolution of this important strategy.



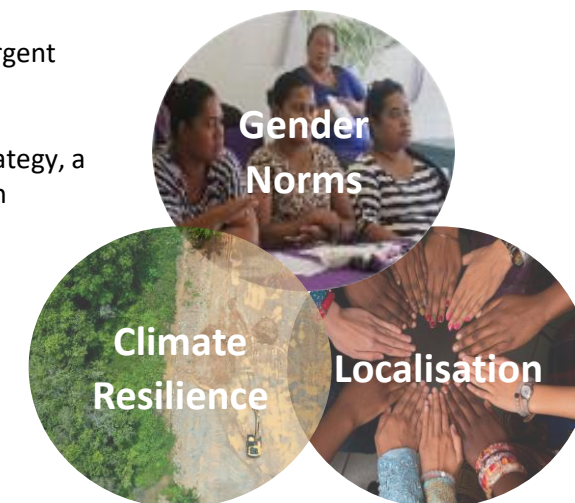
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# Redefining Gender Norms

Scaffolding for meaningful, lasting impact.

Australians Investing in Women, in partnership with Deloitte Access Economics, found rigid gender norms underpin gender gaps in Australia and our region- detailed in the [Breaking the Norm: Unleashing Australia's Economic Potential](#) report.

The driver of gender inequity lies in the beliefs that we as a world hold about women and men – our gender norms. This influences outcomes for women and girls across all areas of anticipated reform-including including political participation, economic empowerment, gender-based violence, justice and healthcare.

Any structural solutions for closing the gender gap in our region must be built on a scaffold of identifying, understanding and tackling gender as a power relation. This includes how structures/institutions are set up to enable or hinder progress. Our research highlighted key activities for meaningful change in gender norms in the Australian context:

- Shift how gender is communicated in early childhood
- Encourage men to be active fathers
- Prevent the portrayal of harmful stereotypes in media
- Remove workforce and sole trader disincentives for women
- Adopt equitable recruiting and promotion practices
- Apply a gender lens to decision-making
- Promote role models who go against the status quo

These are not homogenous activities; these pillars instead influence the development of contextualised and localised strategies.

An International Gender Equality Strategy should consider the funding and support of regional activities and partnerships which work to radically change the expectations of women and men in a culturally safe and trauma informed way. In seeking to achieve this, certain gender roles and responsibilities that are important to the preservation of traditional culture should be considered and respected.

Leading from the ground up, preference should be given to working with and by agency of women's organisations for international development, not just for specific equality activities. Critical to this is supporting women's involvement in decision-making from the highest strategic levels down to community, working with traditional holders and brokers of power in Indo-Pacific communities in a nuanced and locally-led approach.

The nature of these activities mean adopting innovative approaches to program design and management, to overcome the short-term nature of planning cycles, acknowledging that change to gender norms is a long term, often inter-generational process.

*“Each action only plugs a leak  
which springs up elsewhere.  
We need to turn the tap off.”*

- Sruthi Srikanthan  
Lead Gender Economist, Deloitte Access Economics



# Locally led development

Genuine partnership and ownership for sustainable development.

Combined with our work in gender norms in Australia, we know that the key to [equitable approaches to development is being locally led and informed](#) and Deloitte draws upon critical lessons learned from our Indigenous Services Group's work with industry and regional partners to inform our locally-led ways of working. Apart from the human right to self-determination, the degree to which local knowledge can be embedded in gender transformative programming is directly correlated to the extent to which local and Indigenous people play a leadership role in the design and delivery of programs. An International Gender Equality Strategy should prioritise:

- The intentional recruitment of local female leaders with relevant expertise, contextual credibility and/or status
- Working with local women's rights organisations and power brokers to deliver contextually-relevant approaches to supporting women's participation in formal decision-making processes in government and business
- Adaptive programming and management that reflects appropriate political-economy analysis and is able to pivot with changing community needs
- Moderating or modifying the reporting requirements attached to any investment funding – including how gender-disaggregated data is collected and reported – to ensure that the community has the capacity and capability to provide feedback and is not over-burdened by reporting demands. Additionally, requirements for reporting should be mindful of any cultural sensitivities
- Understanding the unmet community needs and gender dynamics across social, economic, cultural and spiritual domains, as well as the external dimensions surrounding those needs and the pathways to achieving them, such as restoration of respect, self-determination and capability building

The key to regional gender equality is the increased investment in locally led approaches, supporting key change makers in the region to design contextually relevant and effective approaches. This means Australia's understanding of design, delivery modality, and timeframes may be challenged. For example, objectives and milestones may be process or event bound, rather than time bound.

By internationally centering and sharing local knowledge for national and regional programs – we can find better solutions, together.

*"It's our belief, that through incorporating principles and processes of Indigenous Knowledge systems, business and governments can be more efficient, more effective, more profitable, better problem solvers, better agents of change and better servers of customers and citizens alike. This is not a process of reconciliation but of First Nations people, culture and knowledge taking their rightful and respected place as the voice of Country and the vehicle through which we will achieve transformative success for society, economy, and the landscape."*

- Deloitte Access Economics





# Climate and Resilience

## The case for gender equitable climate action.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. Deloitte's Climate and Sustainability practice is leading efforts to address these challenges in Australia and working with our International Development Practice and other service areas to address climate challenges across our Indo-Pacific region.

Women are disproportionately impacted by climate change and as the impact and severity of climate change increases, progress for gender equality may reverse without immediate action.

Climate change significantly impacts household food and water security, where women have a central role, yet gender norms frequently result in women being sidelined in decision-making around land stewardship and management for climate adaptation. Shifts in land use, crop cycles and the scarcity of natural resources including water also affect women's ability to participate in the economy and the labour market, for example by reducing women's time available for productive work as droughts increase the time taken to collect water for household needs.

Because of structural barriers to resources and available information – for instance, lower literacy rates globally and fewer leadership roles outside of the home – women are less likely to survive climate-related natural disasters as they lack access to information on how to respond when crises occur.

Recognising these gender differentials in the experience and impact of climate change, Deloitte have [made the case for equitable climate action](#), with [our international work on climate equity and a just transition](#) detailing effective approaches.

*“The negative impacts of climate change have the potential to overwhelm the gains of current [gender] equity efforts.”*

- Monitor Institute by Deloitte



Deloitte's experience in Australia and further afield suggests that an International Gender Equality Strategy must address the gendered impacts of climate change as a key priority, underpinned by robust approaches to address the informal and formal norms that perpetuate these gendered impacts. Such approaches might include:

- Democratising knowledge to support women's adaptive capacity to adjust to climate change, climate variability and extremes, and to cope with adverse consequences
- Promoting greater involvement of women in climate decision-making across multiple domains (food systems; ocean ecosystems; disaster and emergency management systems; industry and infrastructure; etc), from the highest governmental and inter-governmental levels to the household level
- Supporting women's collective action and leadership on climate change
- Ensuring social protection systems address women's specific vulnerabilities in response to climate-related shocks and stressors
- Ensuring meaningful incorporation and use of gender-responsive data in climate change actions, and vice versa, to support transformative ways of addressing multi-layered vulnerabilities.
- Prioritising local and indigenous knowledge for gender-responsive climate adaptation

# Summary

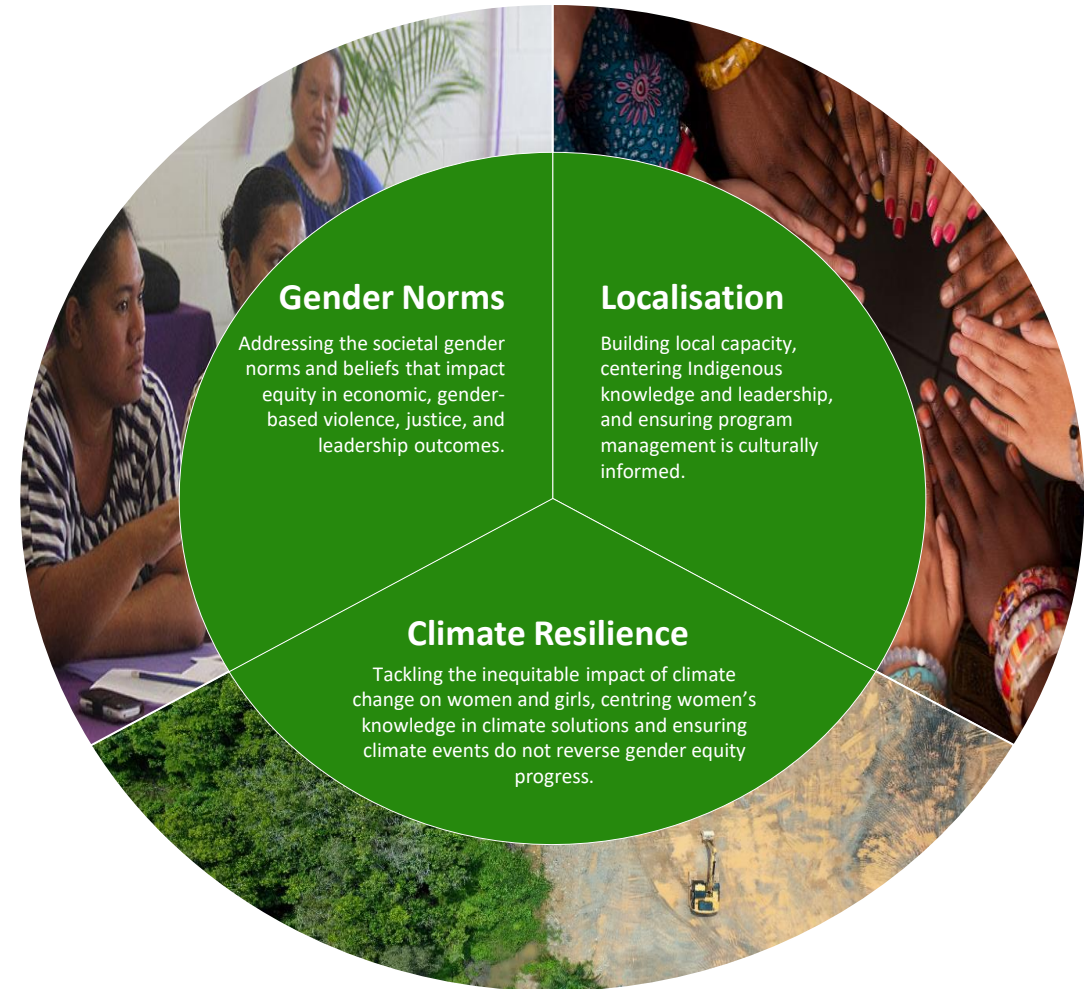
Bold change, big impact.

The forthcoming International Gender Equality Strategy should centralise shifting gender norms as the foundation for all subsequent activities.

Through our experience and analysis in Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, we have seen that shifting power structures and social norms, working with local actors and embedding approaches in indigenous power structures, is critical to achieving meaningful positive progress for women and girls.

We recognise that women and girl's experience of and response to climate change – the defining issue of our time – is shaped by gender norms, and the Strategy should tackle the inequitable impact of climate change, noting the potential to reverse gains for gender equality if this is ignored.

We are committed to supporting the Australian Government and its regional counterparts, as well as businesses and Non-Government Organisations in the urgent development and implementation of bold reform towards gender equality.



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