



AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY: SUBMISSION FROM HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

Australia's role in supporting gender equality includes an important focus on humanitarian aid programming in the region. The development of this strategy provides an opportunity to outline Australia's key priorities in supporting best practice approaches for strengthening gender equality in humanitarian crisis contexts. This will also inform and support the development of the forthcoming Humanitarian Strategy.

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

Humanitarian Horizons 2021 – 2024, our partnership-based research programme funded by the Australian government, produces analysis, 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. Some of the common issues and themes that have emerged from our work are outlined in this submission.

REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

Australia maintains a strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in its aid investments. However, evidence continues to highlight that representation and engagement in decision making of marginalised genders, women's rights organisations (WROs) and women-led organisations (WLOs) is under-prioritised and under-invested in.ⁱ This includes their participation and engagement in the design and implementation of humanitarian programming, policy decisions and determining priorities for response.

Australia can work with donors and partners to support increased gender sensitivity and representation of marginalised and gender diverse groups in decision making. This includes recognising and drawing on the expertise of WROs and WLOs in program design and implementation, supporting their engagement in decision making forums, and addressing barriers to their safe and meaningful participation.ⁱⁱ

Consideration 1: Clearly articulate how Australia's humanitarian aid will strengthen gender equality through ensuring the representation of and engagement of marginalised genders in decision making forums and spaces.

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Australia has a focus on supporting local leadership in humanitarian response. Evidence has shown that supporting women's leadership through quality partnerships with WROs and WLOs supports them to implement and lead response activities, however, this is currently under-resourced.ⁱⁱⁱ Australia should continue to strengthen partnerships with national or local WROs and WLOs through quality funding and long-term capacity support to enable them to lead responses and engage in decision making at local and national levels. Australia can work with partners and through large-scale investments to strengthen the effectiveness of partnerships with local women's organisations, including through accountability processes that track partnership quality.

Consideration 2: Prioritise strategic investments through long-term quality partnerships and funding for women's rights organisations (WROs) and women-led organisations (WLOs) in humanitarian response with a focus on strengthening their leadership.

ADDRESSING THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Australia's new International Development Policy includes a strong focus on climate change.^{iv} Evidence shows that the impacts of climate change exacerbate existing gender inequalities and disproportionately affect women and marginalised groups.^v Australia's climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts should work alongside the international gender equality strategy to address the gendered impacts of climate change. DFAT can work with other donors, international and national actors to elevate the focus on gender equality priorities in CCA and DRR programming, in particular in the Pacific region.

Consideration 3: Elevate gender equality as a strategic focus in climate change and disaster risk reduction programming.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION THAT SUPPORTS STRENGTHENED OUTCOMES

Australia's new International Development Policy is supported by a new performance and delivery framework. DFAT should consider how the new international gender equality strategy will interact with the new performance and delivery framework and how internal accountability and policy coherence will be supported through existing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes. The new strategy should establish clear indicators and benchmarks to assess progress in gender equality, including in humanitarian programs and investments.

Consideration 4: Establish clear indicators and benchmarks to assess progress in implementing the strategy and regularly evaluate and adapt strategies based on the data and feedback.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ HAG & UN Women (2023), *Leading from offstage: A regional synthesis of women's leadership and participation in COVID-19 response and Recovery in Asia*, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/leading-from-offstage-a-regional-synthesis-of-womens-leadership-and-participation-in-covid-19-response-and-recovery-in-asia/>

ⁱⁱ HAG & UN Women (2023), *Leading from offstage: A regional synthesis of women's leadership and participation in COVID-19 response and Recovery in Asia*, p.7, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/leading-from-offstage-a-regional-synthesis-of-womens-leadership-and-participation-in-covid-19-response-and-recovery-in-asia/>

ⁱⁱⁱ HAG & UN Women (2021), *Tracking the progress and impact of women's leadership in COVID-19 responses in the Philippines*, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/tracking-the-progress-and-impact-of-womens-leadership-in-coivd-19-responses-in-the-philippines/>; HAG & UN Women (2023), *Leading from offstage: A regional synthesis of women's leadership and participation in COVID-19 response and Recovery in Asia*, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/leading-from-offstage-a-regional-synthesis-of-womens-leadership-and-participation-in-covid-19-response-and-recovery-in-asia/>

^{iv} Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT, *Australia's International Development Policy*, p.48, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/international-development-policy.pdf>

^v UN Women, 'Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected,' 28 February 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected>