

World Vision Australia

Submission to DFAT's International Gender Equality Strategy

15/09/2023

ANGOs have a critical role to play in supporting sustainable, long-term gender equality and social norm change. World Vision's pivotal role lies in the trust and relationships it has built with communities through long-term investments such as its 10–15-year Area Programs and commitment to transformative development.

World Vision recognises the critical role of institutional donors in creating enabling environments for transformative and systemic change; by demanding effective, inclusive programming; and establishing funding requirements that prioritise Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). DFAT's Gender Equality Strategy will influence broader development norms and practice across the entire sector for development and humanitarian programming. Institutional donors influence our models, approaches, indicators and priorities and can act as a catalyst for both targeted programming and effective mainstreaming.

- **A rights-based approach** needs to be taken to gender equality and women's empowerment to counter the burden on women in achieving development objectives; this involves women's empowerment programs that do not solely rely on women's labour but engage institutions and men in care work, childcare, health, economic reform and promotion of gendered norms change.
- Central to achieving gender equality and women's rights are the **resourcing and partnership with local women's rights organisations and Organisations of People with Disabilities** – as a condition of funding.
- World Vision calls for an **increased investment in rural women**, especially those working in agri-food systems as an explicit area/group and recognise their role in alleviating the global food crisis.
- World Vision supports **greater investment in the intersection between gender-based violence, violence against children and the interplay of poverty, gender, disability and age**.

World Vision calls on DFAT to expand its internal technical expertise for gender, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and welcomes opportunities for further engagement.

Recommendations by Sector are outlined below in the following Annexes:

- *Annex A: Gender Equality and Child Protection*
- *Annex B: Women in Agriculture and Economic Empowerment, Care and Norms Change*
- *Annex C: Localisation and Long-Term Investment*
- *Annex D: Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness*
- *Annex E: Humanitarian Support*
- *Annex F: Intersectional Approach to Gender*

Recommendations by Sector:

Annex A: Gender Equality and Child Protection

- **Address violence against children inside households as an explicit target alongside intimate partner violence and violence against women.** Intimate partner violence and child abuse often co-exist inside families. Referral and response mechanisms that respond to intimate partner violence must be equipped to respond to the needs of children.
- **Mandate a gender lens in child protection and child wellbeing interventions,** including development of separate frameworks or theories of change for adolescent girls' and boys' empowerment. Gender equality and empowerment frameworks for women are not always directly relatable to girls (World Vision, 2021) and will not always consider the intersecting forms of discrimination heightened due to age, disability, sexual orientation and Indigeneity. Further, adolescent boys face their own barriers to experiencing life in its fullness that have not been given adequate consideration.
- **Further promote a focus on addressing the linkages between patriarchal gender norms and violence and abuse against children that isn't conflated with risk.** Safeguarding, child protection and 'do no harm' are insufficient to address underlying causes of violence towards children. Approaches need to be long-term and go beyond 'awareness-raising'.
- **Faith actors are key partners in the transformation of ideas and practices towards achieving gender equality and social inclusion. Effective approaches need multi-year investment and require time, building of trust and cultural sensitivity to avoid gendered backlash.** Faith-based organisations such as World Vision are well placed to work closely with religious leaders and communities, including activities such as home visits, child protection committees, and referral and response strengthening.
- **Male engagement is critical to transformative change.** Gender equality will not be achieved by women's efforts alone; programming must support change at the individual, household, community and systemic level and requires investment in approaches that transform masculinities, address power, and target perpetrators.

Reducing Child Marriage through positive masculinities in India

In India, formative research on the role of men and boys in preventing gender-based violence and child marriage led to the development of *A More Equal Future*, a manual to change the social norms that devalue girls. The program engages men to take on equitable responsibility for raising their children without violence, promoting positive masculinities, and contributing more to domestic housework. The *More Equal Future* manual has proven an effective strategy to overcome the traditional constraints of masculinity, influence positive behaviour change amongst men, and to mobilize communities against gender-based violence.

Annex B: Women in Agriculture and Economic Empowerment, Care and Norms Change

Women make up nearly half the agricultural workforce, where the world's poor are concentrated. Yet, they [produce 20 to 30 percent](#) less than men farmers and face significant challenges when it comes to livestock and land ownership, equal pay and participation in decision-making, and access to markets and credit. Investing in rural women as an explicit group is critical, especially those working in agri-food systems.

- **Recognise the links between the global food crisis and women's empowerment in the agricultural sector.** Supporting women in agriculture supports actors that are critical for the transformation of agri-food systems as part of the long-term response to the food crisis. In fact, it is estimated that equalising this gap could decrease [global hunger by 17 percent](#).
- **Promote the participation of women as producers, consumers and employees** within inclusive agricultural market systems by leveraging gender inclusive business models within private sector investment in agri-food systems. Invest in programs that promote systems change and gender inclusive business models.
- **Utilise the private sector to target poorer women who are often left out.** Prioritise partnerships with organisations with the expertise to work with both market actors and households/communities. A holistic approach significantly multiplies impact.

Value Chain Development (VCD) and inclusive Market Systems Development (iMSD)

World Vision's [meta-analysis](#) of 11 DFAT and EU-funded economic empowerment programs working on agri-food systems (USD 46 million) demonstrated that targeted WEE projects were more likely to achieve holistic WEE outcomes that include economic advancement, access, agency and equitable systems for women and better results for poor households. Furthermore, the meta-analysis demonstrated that although Value Chain Development (VCD) is key to income and productivity, an inclusive Market Systems Development (iMSD) approach is more sustainable and able to achieve impact at scale.

- **Hold the private sector and government to account for meeting labour and environmental standards and obligations.** Prevent the economic exploitation of women's labour through greater enforcement and awareness of labour laws and obligations amongst employees, government and the private sector.
- **Prioritise women-led partnerships and local markets, local finance institutions and local private sector actors that have the potential to employ women as producers and employees.** Implement gender transformative activities to promote women's decision making, manageable workloads and supportive social norms, such as gender inclusive financial literacy trainings for couples; leadership trainings for women; and behaviour-change for men.
- **Increase funding for targeted Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programming.** Australia's aid program ranks low on WEE spending, particularly compared with Canada and Sweden. Without the prioritisation by ANGOs through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, Australia would rank even lower on investment in WEE (agriculture). WVA has a proven, successful model of WEE that addresses both the economic and structural impediments to women's full participation and proven expertise addressing the post-COVID gender gap in the East Asia, Pacific and South Asia regions.
- **Specific and responsive programming regarding livelihoods and social protection is required for women and girls with disabilities, and women and girls who are primary carers for a person with a disability.** Support for quality disability care services is crucial in enabling women to enter and remain in the labour market, girls to reengage with education, and ensure persons with disability receive adequate care.

- **Maintain and build upon DFAT’s existing commitments** to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls with disabilities by ensuring access to economic and financial resources and promoting this priority in all livelihoods and economic equality and justice programming (CSW63).

Annex C: Localisation and Long-Term Investment

NGOs play a critical role in building gender equality globally through long-term community engagement, trust, recognition, mutual respect and solidarity building.

- **Increase core funding** to local NGOs, women’s rights organisations, gender equality groups and civil society organisations including funding non-traditional areas such as infrastructure, facilities, material costs and wages. Recognise the role of overheads in supporting programming effectiveness and increasing sustainability and capacity of local staff.
- **Enable appropriate risk sharing between ANGOs and civil society representing/led by marginalised groups**, and encourage development actors, contract and grant recipients to seek out diverse partners (not only ‘the usual suspects’). Donors can promote greater funding to local salaries, investment in program team/organisational skills, and permanent/long-term local positions to ensure that partnerships move beyond risk management and compliance.
- **Promote the establishment of accountability mechanisms to ensure equitable partnering.** Metrics may include: the impact, scale and reach of partnerships; including capable partners to sustain child well-being; strengthened civil society; sustained outcomes; the added value of partnerships; partnership health; and the funding passed to local partners.
- **Recognise the importance of long-term funding across all aid areas.** The fast pace of the grant environment constrains the ability to invest in building relationships. Humanitarian and emergency response programmes often have a short implementation timeframe which makes engaging in capacity strengthening of local partners challenging.

Area Programs - World Vision’s 15-year commitment to communities

World Vision’s Area Programs (APs) are a 10–15-year investment in a specific geographical area with particularly low child wellbeing outcomes. Through a long-term commitment, Area Programs support a generation of children, their caregivers and communities to transform health, nutrition and education.

Annex D: Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

All Australia-funded programming addressing climate change must take a gender-responsive, intersectional approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, recognising the impacts of climate change and disasters are exacerbated for people experiencing intersecting marginalisation.

- **Set expectations for meaningful engagement of diverse women and girls and their representative organisations** (including women’s rights organisations, organisations of people with disability, LGBTIQ+ organisations) in the design and implementation of all Australian-funded programming.
- **Recognise that there is a need to avoid categorising social groups, but rather apply an intersectional lens** to all climate, preparedness, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programming.
- **Ensure requirements for budgeting quality gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis** in all new climate adaptation, carbon, mitigation and DRR programming to inform design and implementation, and ensure gender-responsive budgeting for climate change and DRR programming.

Annex E: Humanitarian Support

People of diverse genders are differently affected by conflict and disasters. Humanitarian responses must build on human rights conventions, dedicated conventions on women, and dedicated conventions on children; each considered independently rather than conflating women's and children's issues.

- **Set expectations that local women's/gender working groups will be consulted in all humanitarian responses and nexus programming.** Meaningful engagement with women's groups rather than tokenistic consultation requires intentional commitments for decision making and leadership roles spanning the design, implementation and appraisal of response, recovery and rehabilitation phases, including programming in fragile contexts.
- **Integrate gender equality outcomes into long-term support to protracted crises.** Efforts to address root causes and build resilience are more effective and sustainable when gender equality is factored into programming. This includes ensuring women's leadership roles in peace and security efforts, including supporting the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.
- **Strengthen gender considerations and ensure material commitment in humanitarian design and in particular refugee and IDP architecture.** Poor design of infrastructure, and encampment processes (distributions, sanitation, access to electricity and water) may exacerbate tribal/contextual factors to the detriment of women, heighten risk of GBV and undermine humanitarian efforts to address GBV in the displaced populations.

Annex F: Intersectional Approach to Gender

An enabling environment for intersectional responses is critical to addressing the intersecting sources of discrimination and oppression experienced by diverse women and girls.

- **Ensure both targeted and mainstreamed social inclusion across all programs through the twin-track approach.** Resource dedicated initiatives for women and LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, children and youth, older persons, different cultures and First Nations.
- **Resource and support initiatives to prevent and respond to specific forms of violence against women with disabilities,** particularly recognising the insecurity and backlash that gender equality and women's rights work can trigger for people of intersecting identities.
- **Support collaborative movements for research and impact assessments, against gender and disability policy markers, for use to influence policy decisions** (women's rights organisations working with Organisations of People with Disability and LGBTIQ+ groups)
- **Draw on best practice within Australian First Nations context,** including across domestic violence policy agendas such as the [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children](#) and the [Wiyi Yani U Thangani](#) (Women's Voices) systemic change project.

Bringing together Australia First Nations Learnings with Solomon Islands

World Vision delivers the Channels of Hope for Gender (CoHG) Program in the remote Indigenous community of Lajamanu, 870kms northwest of Alice Springs. CoHG employs community facilitators in Lajamanu and uses a strengths-based approach that draws upon Christian faith and traditional culture. World Vision Australia also supports the COHG approach to prevent family violence in the Pacific. In July 2023, World Vision brought together the Pacific and First Nations teams to share learnings and best practice in their respective cultural contexts; and to receive training on a revised model with an increased recognition of a survivor-centred approach.