



# Submission to inform Australia's new development policy

results

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## ABOUT RESULTS

Results International (Australia) is part of a global non-partisan movement of advocates working to improve global health and end poverty. With our national network of volunteers, Results amplifies knowledge and expertise in global health and development. For more than 35 years, Results Australia has been working with federal parliamentarians and everyday Australians to help generate the public and political will to end global poverty.

## SHAPING THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER

A new development policy provides an exciting opportunity for Australia to rebuild relations with the region and transform systems that entrench inequality.

Over the past six months, the government has returned to the global stage and recognised that good relationships with countries in the region are critical for Australia's security. Advocates at Results are keen to see Australia model good international citizenship and help to build a decent and sustainable world. Australia's new development policy must:

- prioritise inclusion so that no one is left behind
- strengthen health systems so that health security risks are contained and communities have access to quality treatment and care
- invest in education so that children and young people have the skills and confidence to thrive.

This policy provides an opportunity to reset Australian priorities and re-focus on human development and poverty elimination. Through listening to our neighbours and long-term partnerships, Australia's development program should be rights-based and people-centred. With a foundation in health and inclusion, Australia should work to strengthen and transform systems.

Through this new policy, Results calls on Australia to:

1. Increase priority investments to improve health security and strengthen health systems through effective multilaterals and bilateral partnerships
2. Advance climate justice by extending financing opportunities for adaptation, mitigation and community resilience
3. Deepen engagement, investment and partnerships with civil society
4. Commit to a feminist foreign policy and expand programs that promote inclusion
5. Develop a food security strategy and increase investment in nutrition-specific programs in Southeast Asia and the Pacific
6. Improve transparency and develop a timeline to increase funding for Official Development Assistance
7. Prioritise young people and education.

# 1 Increase priority investments to improve health security and strengthen health systems through effective multilaterals and bilateral partnerships

Australia's new development policy should prioritise health, and recognise its foundational contribution to development.

Every year, hundreds of millions of people die from infectious diseases, and 1.5 million children die from vaccine-preventable diseases.<sup>1</sup> Deaths from tuberculosis have been increasing for two years, reversing decades of progress, with countries in our region among the hardest hit.<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 has stretched health systems and set-back progress. Routine immunisation programs have been disrupted and we have missed opportunities to expand preventive health measures and strengthen systems. The pandemic has provided valuable lessons about the importance of pandemic preparedness, strong workforces, connected information systems, laboratory capacity and community engagement in health. When the world comes together to collaborate with ambitious funding, great problems can be solved through research and development.

*Australia is now known as a leader in health security. The Health Security Initiative for the Indo-Pacific Region has boosted capacities to manage infectious disease threats across the region.*

Tuberculosis remains a global public health threat and is the leading killer of people with HIV. COVID-19 has reversed years of progress in the fight to end TB. In 2020, an estimated 63 per cent of children and young people with TB were not reached and did not have access diagnosis and treatment.<sup>3</sup>

The effectiveness of TB treatments is declining, which increases risks drug-resistant strains will become more virulent. TB continues to spread in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and threatens the nearby Torres Strait Islands. We've seen Australian investments in development and public health have massive benefits for our domestic health security.<sup>4</sup> Investments in TB programs have demonstrated benefits not just for people with TB but for health systems and pandemic preparedness.

Priority health security investments should continue, particularly to prepare countries to manage disease outbreaks and improve access to treatments and tools. The Centre for Health Security has provided balanced investments through bilateral partnerships, research pilots and large investment in product development partnerships and multilateral initiatives.

Through consultation — particularly with civil society and health experts in countries of the region — these investments should be extended to support long-term health systems strengthening and partnerships that enable strengths to be shared between countries. Global spending on TB services, research and development, is declining. In 2019 spending on services was approximately USD 6 billion and in 2021 it had fallen to USD 5.4 billion in 2021. This is less than half the global target of USD 13 billion set for the end of 2022.<sup>5</sup> In low and middle income countries, international donor funding remains crucial, and funders such as the US Government and Global Fund make the largest contributions.

For decades, Australia has provided strong support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations; and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Pooled funding mechanisms are the most effective solutions for tackling massive global challenges. Many of these mechanisms have found ways to embed country-ownership, prioritise domestic resource mobilisation, engage both the private sector and civil society, and ensure performance is closely monitored. Where practical, this inclusive approach should be replicated across Australia's development program.

In 2022, the Foreign Minister has spoken strongly about an Australia that is more engaged and involved in our region and in decisions that shape the world.<sup>6</sup> It is critical that Australia continues to commit its fair share to multilateral funding mechanisms, particularly as we approach 2030.

Australian researchers are world leaders. In public health and medical research, Australia has many great opportunities to share knowledge and tools critical for the fight against disease. The Centre for Health Security has made great strides in strengthening connections between Australian health researchers, governments and community groups in our region. Support for Product Development Partnerships (PDPs), particularly on research and access work related to TB, has helped to achieve impressive treatment outcomes in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>7</sup> Extending these programs will be important in the years to come.



*The climate crisis threatens to undo decades of progress in development, global health and poverty reduction, and to further widen existing health inequalities.*

## 2 Advance climate justice by extending financing opportunities for adaptation, mitigation and community resilience

Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. The climate crisis threatens to undo decades of progress in development, global health and poverty reduction, and to widen existing health inequalities.<sup>8</sup> After a decade of stalled progress, it is encouraging to see this government accepting the science and recognising the climate emergency. Australia needs to act to reduce emissions and address the impacts of natural disasters and rising sea levels, particularly in Pacific Island countries.

58% of all known infectious diseases can be aggravated by climate change. Increased temperatures and rainfall make it easier for mosquito-borne and waterborne diseases to spread.<sup>9</sup> Frequent heatwaves can be fatal to vulnerable populations, worsening air quality exacerbates respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, and disrupted weather patterns contribute to food security.<sup>10</sup> Low and middle income countries have the most to lose, and currently have the weakest protections.

Community leaders in the Pacific have called for additional financing and progress on the issue of loss and damage.<sup>11</sup> Many small island states in the Pacific have rising sea levels that present an existential threat; countries such as Vanuatu have been calling for support for loss and damage for 30 years.<sup>12</sup> Australia should step-up and increase climate programs and grants to low and middle income countries in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

At COP27 in November this year, it was positive to see Australia recognising climate justice and joining with world leaders to commit to developing and resourcing a scheme for loss and damage.<sup>13</sup>

Finance should be complemented with programs to share Australian expertise in climate infrastructure and renewable energy. Countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific need support for mitigation and adaptation, and programs for disaster risk reduction that build on local strengths and build community resilience. As many Pacific Islands are grappling with debt crises,<sup>14</sup> Australia should prioritise assistance through grants and technical support, rather than loans.

## 3 Deepen engagement, investment and partnerships with civil society

Long-established evidence shows that community participation and civil society actors are critical in the design and implementation of all development initiatives. The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, endorsed by Australia, highlights the importance of partnerships for development with diverse and complementary functions.<sup>15</sup>

Recognising the value of civil society engagement, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has mandated civil society representation on its board and in Country Coordinating Mechanisms.<sup>16</sup>

Consultation with civil society in Australia and in the region adds value to our development programming. By engaging more meaningfully with community and civil society, the Australian development program models a more inclusive and democratic approach.

NGOs are a great strength in Australia's aid program. In implementation, NGOs provide deep partnerships and reach, as well as the expertise and commitment needed to solve many of the world's great challenges. NGOs deliver at scale and provide great value-for-money.

The Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) is recognition of this, and the funding boost in October is a step in the right direction. Other practical measures, such as a greater role for civil society and NGOs as consultation partners for Australian missions, would demonstrate a commitment to decolonising aid and increasing local ownership. In Canberra, the creation of a civil society organisation (CSO) Hub would also facilitate stronger engagement with different partners across the development program. Such a measure could enable philanthropic funders, the private sector and the media to support Australia's development agenda too. A hub could also support work to deliver development education and increase awareness on the benefits of aid among the wider Australian public.



## 4 Commit to a feminist foreign policy and expand programs that promote inclusion

In late November we were encouraged to see Minister Conroy commit to a strategy for disability inclusion and rights. To reflect the values of a modern Australia, a new development policy should promote and enable gender equality (including gender minorities), the inclusion of people with disability, children and young people and a commitment to justice for First Nations peoples. The policy should be rights-based and work towards transformation of systems that fail to address disadvantage.

Diseases of poverty place a disproportionate burden on women and girls. An estimated 388 million women and girls live in extreme poverty. In our region, gender inequality holds communities back. 34.3% of all women in Pacific Islands countries live in poverty<sup>17</sup> and in the Pacific, levels of female political leadership are the lowest in the world.<sup>18</sup> In response to COVID-19, the livelihoods of women were disproportionately affected, with women experiencing greater unemployment and economic insecurity.<sup>19</sup>

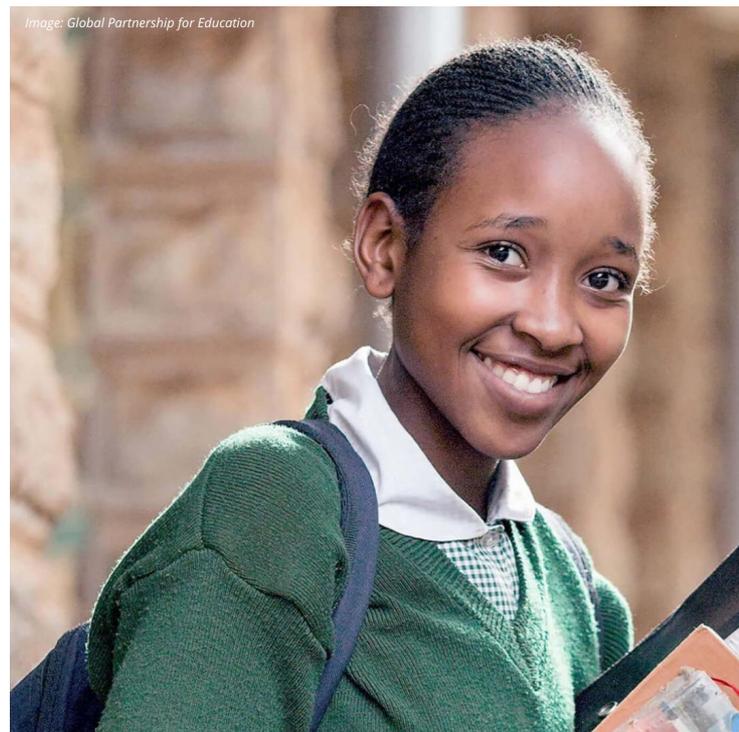
Australia's development policy should aim to promote and embed gender equality, particularly in the design and delivery of health programs. A feminist foreign policy — as Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Chile and Germany have implemented — could provide a framework for Australia to understand and transform the global systems that uphold and perpetuate inequality.<sup>20</sup>

The systemic barriers faced by women and gender-diverse people worldwide in accessing health services, quality education and employment opportunities increases risks of poverty, especially through crises such as natural disasters, climate change and COVID-19.

Australia has already committed to gender equality through the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the work of the Ambassador for Women and Girls and through programs such as Investing in Women and Water for Women. These provide a strong foundation to do much more.

### *Diseases of poverty place a disproportionate burden on women and girls*

Investments for gender equality must translate into meaningful empowerment of women and gender-diverse individuals in poor and marginalised communities, not merely a performative act of gender mainstreaming.



## 5 Develop a food security strategy and increase investment in nutrition-specific programs in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

results

A healthy community is one with equitable access to nutritious food. The world is facing a food security crisis of historic proportions, worsened by climate change, COVID-19 and the protracted conflict in Ukraine.<sup>21</sup>

Before the first COVID-19 outbreaks, rates of undernourishment were stabilising. Now, nutrition challenges are increasing. Up to 9.8% of the global population was undernourished in 2021, an increase from 8.0% in 2019. In the Indo-Pacific, this includes 331 million undernourished people in South Asia, 43 million in Southeast Asia, and 2.5 million in Oceania.<sup>22</sup>

*Australia needs to invest in nutrition-specific programs and health-based initiatives that address the root causes of malnutrition.*

The health effects of undernourishment can be dire, particularly for children under 5, who face the risk of stunting, wasting and ultimately mortality. Prematurity, pneumonia and diarrhoea are the Pacific's top childhood killers with undernutrition acting as a catalyst. Stunting and anaemia are the most prevalent forms of malnutrition in the Pacific.<sup>23</sup>

Australia has a proud history of support for nutrition and food security, through pilots and projects led by the

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and effective interventions delivered through bilateral health programs. In September, US President Biden held a food security summit and announced USD 2.9 billion in additional funding to strengthen global food security.<sup>24</sup> Following the model of the US government, a Food Security Strategy presents an opportunity to advance our own trade goals and demonstrate Australian leadership. A food security strategy would prevent humanitarian suffering before it reaches catastrophic levels and capitalise on Australian strengths in agricultural innovation.

In the coming years Australia needs to invest in nutrition-specific programs and health-based initiatives that tackle the root causes of malnutrition. To build resilience against famine and natural disasters, Australia should facilitate partnerships that build on local strengths and share learnings between countries of our region.

## 6 Improve transparency and develop a timeline to increase funding for Official Development Assistance

Australia should take concrete steps to improve the transparency of its development assistance. In the 2022 Aid Transparency Index, Australia was ranked 41 of 50 aid-providers.<sup>25</sup> Since 2013 there has been a steady decline in the proportion of projects with detailed information available, particularly those in the planning and implementation stages.<sup>26</sup> Greater transparency and visibility of the aid program will contribute to more effective aid, and deepen trust and confidence among Australians and our partners.

*The Budget released in October provided a welcome and dramatic shift ... this funding will help to stabilise the program and rebuild critical partnerships*

Minister Conroy has expressed his intention to improve transparency and accountability in the aid program,<sup>27</sup> and in the coming years we look forward to seeing more detailed listings on the DFAT website and evaluation learnings shared.

The past decade has seen savage cuts to the aid program, which have hampered our development capability, halted progress and affected relationships with partners in our region. The Budget released in October provided a welcome and dramatic shift, with an additional \$1.43 billion announced to increase ODA over the next four years. This funding will help to stabilise the program and rebuild critical partnerships. Over time, greater investments will be needed to offset global inflation and achieve the ambition agreed to through the Sustainable Development Goals. Fifteen years ago, Australia boldly committed to increasing ODA to 0.5% of GNI, and while that goal was forfeited, this government needs to regain that ambition and develop a staged plan to grow aid allocations over the next decade.

## 7 Prioritise young people and education

The UN estimates approximately 24% of the global population is aged between 10 and 24,<sup>28</sup> and with high population growth in Pacific Island countries; half of the Pacific region's population is younger than 23.<sup>29</sup>

As Minister Conroy noted at the ACFID Conference last month, youth voices are needed to inform development programming in our region. Given this policy is about impacts and transformation for the long-term, a youth agenda is critical. When it comes to the great challenges of our time — climate change, equality and inclusion — no one has more at stake than young people.

Access to education provides a pathway out of poverty and the right to education has been enshrined in human rights instruments for more than 75 years. Education is a powerful driver of development and one of the strongest levers we have for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.<sup>30</sup> Across the region, support for education will be critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, adult literacy rates are under 70%,<sup>31</sup> while the rate of young people not in education, employment or training in Kiribati and Marshall Islands is above 40%.<sup>32</sup>

Across the region, young people have faced unprecedented disruptions to their education through the pandemic. School closures affected more than 70% of young people in 2020, with young people in low-income countries facing a wider 'digital divide' and challenges accessing technology.<sup>33</sup>

Australia has great national strengths in education, with knowledge and innovations in curriculum that extend from early childhood development through to higher education.

Education programs are highly cost-effective, with cross-cutting impacts that manifest in health literacy, political participation and economic development. Informing parents of the importance of education, investing in pre-primary education, improving teacher quality and providing adaptive software are key interventions recommended by global experts.

Australian support for the launch and development of the Global Partnership for Education is an important foundation to build on. In Australia's bilateral partnerships with countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, education should be centre-stage.



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### For more information

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### NOTES

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