

inquiry into the role of Australia's international development program in preventing conflict.

Submission provided by :

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- 1. the role of Australia's international development program in building resilience in fragile states, including by strengthening community and civic participation, governance, security reform and human capital;**

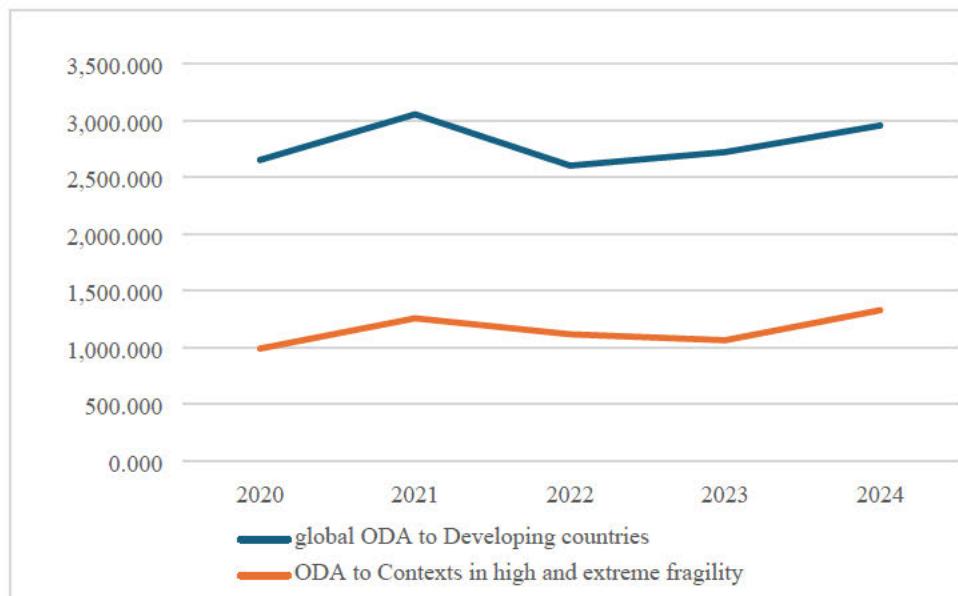
General evolution of ODA

Australia's ODA commitments in contexts of high fragility (countries labelled as facing high or extreme fragility in the OECD fragility framework, see [Compare your country by OECD](#)) has been following broadly the same trend as global ODA, actually increasing from 37% of total ODA in 2020 to 45% of total ODA in 2024 (see table 1 and graph 1)

Table 1 – Australian ODA to developing countries and to countries exposed to high or extreme fragility as reported to the OECD. (constant price USD 2023; USD million, disbursement)

Time period	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Recipient					
Developing countries	2,652.594	3,054.769	2,602.440	2,721.611	2,955.978
Contexts in high and extreme fragility	991.124	1,257.848	1,116.892	1,064.453	1,328.841

Graph 1 – Evolution of Australian ODA (global and to countries exposed to high or extreme fragility) fragility (constant price USD 2023; USD million, disbursement)



Australia's peace ODA

In the OECD system, “Peace ODA” is a sub-component of ODA and reflects the use of development spending to sustain peace – conceptualised by the United Nations in 2016 as a holistic approach towards preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict. Peace ODA spending corresponds to 18 ODA purpose codes in the OECD Creditor Reporting System as reported by Australia:

- 15110 (*Public sector policy and administrative management*),
- 15111 (*Public finance management (PFM)*),
- 15112 (*Decentralisation and support to subnational government*),
- 15113 (*Anti-corruption organisations and institutions*),
- 15130 (*Legal and judicial development*),
- 15150 (*Democratic participation and civil society*),
- 15152 (*Legislatures and political parties*),
- 15153 (*Media and free flow of information*),
- 15160 (*Human rights*),
- 15170 (*Women's equality organisations and institutions*),
- 15180 (*Ending violence against women and girls*),
- 15190 (*Facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility*),
- 15210 (*Security system management and reform*),
- 15220 (*Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution*),
- 15230, (*Participation in international peacekeeping operations*)
- 15240 (*Reintegration and SALW control*),

15250 (*Removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war*),

15261 (*Child soldiers (prevention and demobilisation)*).⁷

For more on peace ODA see [Peace and Official Development Assistance \(OECD, 2023\)](#),

The OECD acknowledges that spending to peace objectives also includes financing for certain activities in the security sector that are not eligible as ODA, as well as private development finance that contribute to peace objectives. This contribution focuses specifically on the evolution of Australia's peace ODA as a DAC member, which remains one of the larger sources of peace financing both in general and in countries exposed to high levels of fragility.

While Australia increased global ODA to fragility contexts, Australia's peace ODA in fragile contexts is decreasing both in absolute numbers and in share of ODA in these countries. (see table 2 below). Australia spent 20% of its ODA to fragility context to peace objective in 2020, and only 14% in 2024. While decreasing, Australia ODA to peace objective remain higher than the DAC average (The DAC average decreasing from 12% in 2020 to 10% in 2024) see tables in annex.

Table 2 – Australian peace ODA in countries exposed to high or extreme fragility as reported to the OECD. (constant price USD 2023; USD million, disbursement)

Time period	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sector					
ODA to all sectors	991.124	1,257.848	1,116.892	1,064.453	1,328.841

Government and civil society (subset peace)	182.789	201.880	184.728	158.700	172.498
% of government and civil society related to overall ODA in contexts of high or extreme fragility	18%	16%	17%	15%	13%
Public sector policy and administrative management	58.847	60.062	29.826	24.380	28.717
Public finance management (PFM)	4.874	4.468	11.778	0.177	1.459
Decentralisation and support to subnational government	0.150	0.546	17.444	16.375	25.268
Anti-corruption organisations and institutions	0.797	0.171	0.557	0.657	2.811
Legal and judicial development	66.600	57.575	57.602	48.842	40.765
Democratic participation and civil society	13.139	26.793	22.829	24.667	29.471
Legislatures and political parties			0.249	0.241	
Media and free flow of information	0.154	0.080	0.093	0.311	0.544
Human rights	13.806	24.772	17.995	8.097	7.428

Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions	7.151	3.600	4.104	9.413	11.413
Ending violence against women and girls	17.272	21.531	22.146	23.841	23.752
Facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility		2.282	0.106	1.700	0.871
Conflict, peace and security	12.023	10.710	21.151	7.181	8.927
% of Conflict, peace and security related to overall ODA in contexts of high or extreme fragility	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Security system management and reform	0.053	0.379	0.545	1.374	1.798
Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution	6.296	7.442	4.288	5.807	7.129
Participation in international peacekeeping operations	3.107	2.219	16.318		
Removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war	2.567	0.670			

total "peace ODA" as per OECD grouping (Australia)	194.812	212.590	205.879	165.881	181.425
% of peace ODA in contexts of high or extreme fragility (Australia)	20%	17%	18%	16%	14%

Because conflict prevention is not relevant exclusively in contexts exposed to the highest levels of fragility, this submission also looked at Australia peace ODA to all contexts. (table 3 below). it shows that **most of Australia direct support to security system and peacebuilding is engaged in contexts of lower level of fragility and that Australia's global peace ODA has been increasing overall** (while decreasing in contexts of high fragility, see above). The share of Australia's ODA that supports peace objectives has grown from 2020 reaching approximately 14.6% of total bilateral ODA in 2023. This is slightly above the DAC average of 12.2%.

For example, Australia continues its long-term support to peacebuilding in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines, combined with facilitating access to justice and education. Reflecting these priorities, in 2024, Australia also committed to increasing its contribution to the UN Peacebuilding Fund from AUD 4 million to AUD 15 million annually ([UN, 2024](#)).

Australia's support for peace objectives has historically focused on public sector policy and administration and legal and judicial development. Both sectors are important for state building and resilience, and correspond to the needs of Australia's partner countries, most of which are not in active conflict but face important dimensions of institutional fragility.

Table 3 : **Australia 's Peace ODA to all countries**

Time period	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sector					
All sectors	2,652.594	3,054.769	2,602.440	2,721.611	2,955.978

Government and civil society (subset peace)	328.692	361.596	348.459	371.350	420.375
% of government and civil society related to overall ODA - all countries	12%	12%	13%	14%	14%
Public sector policy and administrative management	104.270	124.220	91.968	92.834	136.016
Public finance management (PFM)	21.582	18.851	27.361	24.018	27.137
Decentralisation and support to subnational government	2.198	0.646	17.467	18.250	31.518
Anti-corruption organisations and institutions	3.504	2.450	3.372	3.170	5.693
Legal and judicial development	89.362	82.494	84.657	78.368	72.101
Democratic participation and civil society	17.261	37.669	34.663	34.506	35.428
Legislatures and political parties	1.838		0.499	0.482	
Media and free flow of information	2.215	0.314	1.135	9.707	2.585
Human rights	38.980	45.606	36.907	32.124	28.736
Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions	19.141	11.661	13.457	27.079	29.150
Ending violence against women and girls	28.341	35.403	36.626	47.637	44.367
Facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility		2.282	0.347	3.175	7.645

Conflict, peace and security, total	42.127	31.970	38.431	25.973	32.561
% Conflict, peace and security related to overall ODA in all countries	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Security system management and reform	0.801	3.941	6.719	9.604	11.030
Civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution	20.935	18.139	11.422	14.784	19.571
Participation in international peacekeeping operations	4.951	8.009	19.497		
Removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war	15.439	1.881	0.792	1.586	1.960

total "peace ODA" as per OECD grouping (Australia)	370.818	393.566	386.890	397.323	452.936
% of peace ODA total (Australia)	14%	13%	15%	15%	15%

2. the strategic use of Australia's international development program to prevent conflict in the Indo-Pacific;

The OECD DAC review of Australia in 2025 (meeting in Paris on 8 December 2055, publication upcoming Q1 2026) highlighted important considerations on Australia's use of its development cooperation programme toward peace and stability objective. These can be summed up as follow:

- Australia's international development policy recognises a more unstable and unpredictable international environment, particularly in the Asia Pacific, Australia's key priority. In response, Australia increasingly positions development cooperation as a key instrument to help partner countries address complex and interconnected challenges in a context of geopolitical competition. Most Development Partnership Plans integrate a security dimension, involving agencies such as the Department of Defence, the Australian Federal Police and the Department of Home Affairs. Compared to other DAC members Australia's approach adopts a broad understanding of security, extending beyond traditional defence to encompass climate security, human security, environmental and maritime security, transnational crime, and cybersecurity, including through investments in strategic infrastructure such as cyber connectivity. The review sees the approach making the best of development cooperation as a Foreign policy instrument.
- The articulation between instruments seems to work well. Drawing on its diplomatic, trade, defence and development cooperation tools, DFAT and other government agencies address drivers of fragility both individually and collectively, in line with partner-country priorities set out in Development Partnership Plans. This is primarily valid in the Indo-Pacific region. Beyond the Indo-Pacific, particularly in crisis settings, where it has a less granular understanding of political and security dynamics (and possibly less direct security or economic interest) Australia primarily channels its ODA through multilateral and non-governmental partners, with a strong focus on humanitarian assistance. Maritime security initiatives—such as the provision of patrol boats, aerial surveillance and training in Pacific Island countries—illustrate how ODA and non-ODA instruments can complement each other to deter illegal fishing and maritime crime. Australia also leverages long-standing relationships and expertise in police co-operation to reinforce bilateral partnerships and advance its broader security and stability objectives.
- Support for civic space and human rights has gained importance in Australia's neighbourhood, reflecting its state-building role and efforts to enhance government effectiveness, responsiveness and social cohesion. Recognising that civic space depends on the combined actions of governments. The review advised that a more integrated approach would strengthen Australia's response to rising autocratisation. In contexts such as Timor-Leste—one of the most democratising settings in Asia—targeted support for media freedom and civic education could usefully complement Australia's existing inclusion and civil society initiatives, particularly amid concerns linked to potential evolving policing practices following ASEAN accession.
- The review found that based on the good practice identified, DFAT could strengthen the organisation and accessibility of its conflict prevention expertise. The former conflict and fragility branch closed in 2020 left a vacuum that is now filled by individual expertise of staff and informal networks. Given the priority that conflict prevention represents for Australia and

its region, further structuring internal knowledge networks and integrating conflict prevention more explicitly into – for example - Diplomatic Academy training would help build a sustainable culture of conflict-sensitive development co-operation, particularly amid rising geopolitical tensions and high staff rotation.

- The review found that Australia is leveraging its diplomatic influence to defend International Humanitarian Law amid growing global impunity, actively supporting UN humanitarian reform and championing the protection of humanitarian personnel. Its leadership in securing the 2025 global Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel has increased Australia's credibility and capacity to shape outcomes in multilateral fora, with probably scope to further intensify efforts against impunity.
- The review also found that Australia's offshore processing and deportation of asylum seekers to Nauru remain highly contested, raising persistent concerns about compliance with international protection obligations. Despite government assertions that the policy balances border security and human rights, sustained criticism from civil society and the UN highlights ongoing policy coherence tensions for Australia as a vocal defender of human rights and the UN humanitarian system.