

JSCFADT Foreign Affairs and Aid Subcommittee
Inquiry into supporting democracy in the region

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 001: Inquiry into supporting democracy in the region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Types of metrics to measure strength of civil society and openness of civic space

Mr Josh Wilson MP

Question

1. What type of metrics could be used to measure the strength of civil society and the openness of civic space across Southeast Asia and the Pacific under the plan to promote effective, accountable states?
2. And how could those metrics be used to inform development assistance policy and programming in-future?

Answer

1. Alongside preparation of the new international development policy, DFAT is developing a performance and delivery framework to guide implementation of the policy. In developing performance indicators for the framework, we will consider how to utilise publicly available regional and country-level indicators to measure the strength of civil society and the openness of civic space across Southeast Asia and Pacific. Leading examples include: the Freedom House Index; the 'Voice and Accountability' indicator of the Worldwide Governance indicators (one of the six 'good governance' indicators); and relevant SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) indicators. These are high-level metrics which help describe the civil society and broader governance context in the key countries in which Australia's development cooperation program will focus. These contextual indicators will need to be complemented with a robust system of country-level and investment-level indicators across relevant investments.
2. These types of metrics on the 'health' of civil society can inform strategic and programming choices at the regional and country level and assist in targeting Australia's support for effective and accountable states by country and region.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 002 : Inquiry into supporting democracy in the region

Hearing date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Coordination of approach across country desks

Mr Josh Wilson, MP

Question

How does DFAT coordinate its approach on strengthening civil society across country desks?

Answer

DFAT's approach to governance is tailored to specific contexts and is informed by internal DFAT guidance on governance programming. The approach includes guidance on support to strengthen civil society, elections and women's participation in political processes. This is reinforced through regular coordination meetings between the Governance focal point and geographic areas. DFAT also runs a Governance 'Help Desk' which provides technical support to country desks on the design and evaluation of governance programming, including efforts to strengthen civil society. Governance programming is routinely considered by the Department's Aid Governance Board.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 003: Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing date: 24 November 2022

Topic: ODA

Josh Wilson MP

Question

In 2021-22, what was the (i) nominal amount and (ii) proportion as a percentage of Australia's overall ODA spent:

- o Directly to Australian NGOs;
- o Directly to Local NGOs; and
- o Any implementing NGOs under other contracts delivered through Australia's ODA programs such as, UN agencies, multilateral organisations and managing contractors?

Answer

The 2021-22 data has not yet been verified and will be published in Australia's Official Development Assistance: Statistical Summary 2021-22 in Quarter 1 of 2023.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 004 – Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 30 November 2022

Topic: Freedom House Index position/assessment

Mr Josh Wilson, MP

Question

1. Can the Committee please be provided with the Freedom House Index position/assessment for the 41 countries for which Australia provides ODA focused on democracy/governance, and
2. some indication as to whether the position has improved or declined in the last 10 years, and
3. any assessment by DFAT as to whether improved FHI positions have been influenced by Australian-funded projects.

Answer

1. The Freedom House Index position/assessment for the countries for which Australia provides ODA focused on democracy and governance is provided in the attached table. The table includes data on two measures for the 41 countries Australia provided governance assistance to in the last year: political rights scores and civil liberties rankings (for 2017 and 2022). This five-year interval data represents the most recent comparison interval possible. A ten-year analysis would require comparison of 2010 and 2020 data, which is not as current.
2. Of the 41 countries reported on, 12 regressed on one governance measure, 12 regressed on both governance measures, 14 improved or remained stable on both governance measures and data was unavailable for three countries (Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau) in the five years to 2022.
3. Improvements or regressions in global indices, such as the Freedom House Index, cannot be attributed directly to any single factor, including Australian-funded projects. This reflects the complex interplay of many driving forces and factors underpinning these scores, particularly the choices of other country governments.

Country	FHI - Global freedom score 2022	Status 2022	2017 Political rights (out of 40)	2017 civil liberties (out of 60)	2022 Political rights (out of 40). Please note that pink indicates a decline from 2017 scoring.	2022 civil liberties rankings (out of 60). Please note that pink indicates a decline from 2017 scoring.
AFGHANISTAN	10	Not Free	10	14	1	9
BANGLADESH	39	Partly Free	20	27	15	24
CAMBODIA	24	Not free	11	20	5	19
COOK ISLANDS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
FIJI	58	Partly Free	25	34	23	35
INDIA	66	Partly Free	35	42	33	33
INDONESIA	59	Partly Free	31	34	30	29
KENYA	48	Partly Free	22	29	19	29
KIRIBATI	93	Free	37	55	37	56
LAOS	13	Not Free	1	11	2	11
MALAWI	66	Partly Free	26	37	29	37
MALAYSIA	50	Partly Free	18	26	20	30
MALDIVES	40	Partly Free	17	23	19	21
MARSHALL ISLANDS	93	Free	37	55	38	55
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA	92	Free	37	56	37	55
MONGOLIA	84	Free	36	49	36	48
MOZAMBIQUE	43	Partly Free	20	33	14	29
MYANMAR	9	Not Free	14	18	0	9
NAURU	77	Free	35	46	34	43
NEPAL	57	Partly Free	24	28	25	32
NIUE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
PAKISTAN	37	Partly Free	21	22	15	22
PALAU	92	Free	37	55	37	55
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	62	Partly Free	26	38	23	39
PHILIPPINES	55	Partly Free	27	36	25	30
SAMOA	83	Free	30	50	32	51
SOLOMON ISLANDS	79	Free	27	44	30	49
SOUTH AFRICA	79	Free	33	45	33	46
SRI LANKA	55	Partly Free	24	32	23	32
SOUTH SUDAN	1	Not Free	-2	6	-3	4
SUDAN	10	Not Free	2	4	0	10
THAILAND	29	Not Free	7	25	5	24
TIMOR-LESTE	72	Free	29	36	33	39
TOKELAU	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TONGA	79	Free	30	44	30	49
TUVALU	93	Free	37	57	37	56
UGANDA	34	Not Free	11	24	11	23
VANUATU	82	Free	32	48	33	49
VIETNAM	19	Not Free	3	17	3	16
ZAMBIA	51	Partly Free	23	33	21	30
ZIMBABWE	28	Not Free	12	20	11	17

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 005 – Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing date: 24 November 2022

Topic: ODA - Categories of civil society organisation

Josh Wilson MP

Question

1. Can the Committee be provided with the categories of civil society organisation that Australian governance ODA supports, directly or indirectly.
2. Can the Committee be provided with a list of the labour movement or union or similar worker-focused organisations that are supported, and in which of the 41 countries this occurs?

Answer

1. Decisions about which organisations to partner with when implementing the development program are taken in the context of country or thematic programs. DFAT does not maintain a central list of these partners. Compiling an exhaustive list is not possible in the timeframe provided.
2. Examples of development programs that partner with labour movement and union organisations include:
 - the Tripartite Action to Enhance the Contribution of Labour Migration to Growth and Development (TRIANGLE) in ASEAN, which is a 12-year (2015–2027) \$24 million migrant worker program implemented by the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and co-funded with Canada;
 - the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) which partners with Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, working in partnership with local trade unions and community organisations in developing countries (\$1.29 million in 2020-21); and
 - core funding of \$7.89 million in 2020-21 to the International Labour Organization, which supports a social dialogue between trade unions and employers on social, economic and other issues.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

IQoN 006: Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 30 November 2022

Topic: ODA - USAID 'Locally Led Development Initiatives'

Josh Wilson MP

Question

What, if any, consideration has the Department given to the USAID 'Locally Led Development Initiatives' and lessons for Australia's approach to Australia's ODA program?

Answer

DFAT has been actively engaged in USAID's 'Locally Led Development Initiatives', including providing support to US and Norwegian led efforts to embed locally-led development principles into development programming across the international donor community. During 2022, DFAT has participated in senior level roundtables with USAID on localisation and covering issues such as measurement, procurement, and risk management. DFAT is also actively engaging with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on localisation. Ongoing work on a new international development policy provides an opportunity to further refine Australia's position on localisation and locally-led development.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

007 – Inquiry into supporting democracy in the region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Solomon Islands support - Elections

Senator David Van

Question

Mr Blazey: In terms of the timing, that's obviously a question for the Solomon Islands. We don't comment on their constitutional processes. But we stand ready to support their election efforts, through the AEC, through capacity-building and through community support to help their media sector increase its reach and hold the government to account. There's work being done in the gender space, to assist women to participate more effectively. So there's a broad range of activities to support the election and democratic process in the Solomon Islands.

ACTING CHAIR: Would you be able to take that on notice and itemise those actions for us?

Mr Blazey: What specifically? On the games?

ACTING CHAIR: Well, you listed a whole bunch of things, including gender, et cetera. Could you maybe look at a transcript of the answer you just gave and then itemise the things, being a bit more specific, rather than taking up time in this hearing.

Mr Blazey: Sure. I have some more information which I can provide now, but we're very happy to give it to you in writing.

ACTING CHAIR: Could you take it on notice, for brevity's sake. I'll pass the call to Nita. And, as chair is back, I'll now pass the chair back to him.

Answer

Australia's current electoral and media support to Solomon Islands is set out below.

- Funding the *Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Program* (SECSIP) delivered by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (current phase \$5 million, 2021-24). SECSIP is building institutional and operational capacity within the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC), building the capacity of national authorities and local networks to provide voter information and awareness and encourage civic engagement, strengthening legal frameworks relating to elections, and supporting women's political participation.
 - o In June 2022 SECSIP delivered an *Outstanding Women Training and Planning Workshop* in West Guadalcanal. Over 40 representatives from nine provinces including the electoral, development, and human rights sectors gathered to identify practical activities which can be undertaken to contribute to enhancing

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

008: Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Fiji - Multilateral Observer Group members

Senator David Van

Question

Mr Blazey: Yes, Senator, we are. Australia is, as has been the case in the past, one of three co-chairs of a multilateral observer group which includes Australia, India and Indonesia. That provides an overarching framework for the observer effort. But our own national observer effort will include six members of parliament and, of course, they'll work alongside other observers from other countries, and our High Commission there will do its reporting and observation as well.

ACTING CHAIR: Have those six been named yet? I've not seen—

Mr Blazey: It's not yet public.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have the names?

Mr Blazey: Not with me at the moment, but I understand the head of the group will be Josh Wilson—that's what I have here.

ACTING CHAIR: He's not here to answer for himself.

Mr Blazey: There's a group of six.

ACTING CHAIR: Right. Can you provide the names?

Mr Blazey: I'll have to take that on notice. I'm not sure if it's completely finalised or not. We'll get back to you.

Answer

Australia's observer effort includes five current and one former parliamentary observers, alongside twenty Australian officials, diplomats and experts who have also been accredited as observers.

The delegation of current and former parliamentary observers includes: Josh Wilson MP, Rebekha Sharkie MP, Matt Burnell MP, David Coleman MP, Senator Claire Chandler, and Former Senator Lisa Singh, CEO and Director of the Australia-India Institute.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

009: Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Fiji elections - ability for women to vote

Senator David Van

Question

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Goulding, on the Fiji elections, there was some speculation around some of the rules or regulation changes leading up to the proclamation of the election that might impact the ability for women to vote. Do you have any views that you would share?
Mrs Goulding: On that issue, I'd actually have to defer to my colleague. I guess I can say that Fiji has been the country that's probably had the largest representation of women in politics for a long time and is a real leader in the region around that.

ACTING CHAIR: I agree with that.

Mr Blazey: Sorry, Senator. I don't have the data on that, again we'll get back to you.

Answer

Fiji's Parliament passed the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2021 on 22 September 2021 and it came into force on 6 October 2021. The Amendment requires eligible Fijians to use their full name as it appears on their birth certificate to register as a voter.

Registered voters who had a different name on their Voter ID to that on their birth certificate, including women who may have changed their name at marriage, had to re-register with their birth certificate name.

Promoting awareness of the amendment was part of voter awareness activities implemented by civil society organisations, and the Fijian Elections Office (FEO). A [2022 pre-election readiness survey](#) conducted by the FEO showed 99 per cent of respondents agreed that the election process in Fiji provides equal opportunities for all voters to take part in elections.

[Fijian Elections Office](#) reporting from 28 October 2022 indicates 49.80 per cent of the total 692,918 registered voters are women. In 2020 (prior to the amendment) 49.86 per cent of registered voters were women.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

IQoN 010 –Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Development policy - parliamentarian consultations

Senator David Van

Question

ACTING CHAIR (Senator Van): You talked about consultations, and it sounds like you're going quite broadly. You doing any consultations with parliamentarians?

Ms Cohen: There's a written submission process which is currently under way. That is closing on 30 November and opened in late October. We're also undertaking consultations with a range of stakeholder round tables in a range of different cities around Australia. None of those include parliamentarians, but I would like to check with our team that's undertaking the consultations on how parliamentarians can engage. I'm sure that we have that factored in, but I don't have the detail here of how we're doing that. Both Minister Conroy and Minister Wong are engaging in some of the consultations too and meeting with lots of partners, but I'll need to check on how they're engaging with their fellow parliamentarians too.

Answer

Yes. The Department provided information about the new development policy to the JSCFADT Foreign Affairs and Aid Subcommittee on 15 September 2022 and 24 November 2022 and is scheduled to provide the Subcommittee with a more detailed private briefing on the new policy before the end of 2022.

All parliamentarians, including members of the Subcommittee, may also lodge written submissions to DFAT, consistent with related guidelines, by Friday 16 December 2022.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

IQoN 011 – Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

Hearing Date: 24 November 2022

Topic: Civil society metrics

Mr Josh Wilson, MP

Question

Mr JOSH WILSON: I'm interested in what kinds of metrics or other measurements we would use, even at the project level. It might be growth in membership of organisations, financial viability of organisations or their effectiveness in terms of achieving the legislative reform that they pursue—or any number of things like that. I'm interested in some detail about that and separately, but in a related way, whether we are implementing the OECD Development Assistance Committee recommendation on enabling civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

CHAIR: It is 12.30, so it would be very much appreciated if you could take that on notice.

Answer

Australia supported the process to develop the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Along with other DAC member countries, Australia has committed to actions under three pillars: respecting, protecting and promoting civic space (covering governance, human rights, and digital technology aspects); supporting civil society; and incentivising civil society organisation (CSO) effectiveness.

Australia engages closely with international, Australian, and partner country CSOs throughout the development program. Each year the Australian-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) supports over 55 Australian NGOs and over 2,000 local partners to deliver around 400 projects in around 50 countries. We will continue to work closely with CSOs and outline our approach to partnering with civil society as part of the Government's forthcoming international development policy (to be finalised in the first half of 2023).

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women's leadership and political representation in the country. The workshop provided practical tools and equipped the female participants with enhanced leadership skills and experience, helping them contribute effectively to decision-making in public, private and multilateral institutions.

- Funding the Australian Electoral Commission's (AEC) twinning partnership with SIEC (current phase \$700,000, 2022-23). Under the latest phase of this longstanding twinning partnership which began in 2001, AEC will build SIEC's electoral administration expertise in priority areas through ongoing mentoring; review and update key election delivery manuals, guides, forms, and training videos; and provide advice on the synchronisation of national and sub-national election events and out of constituency voting.
 - o AEC officials recently travelled to Solomon Islands in November to meet with SIEC and confirm their program of activities under the partnership, in preparation for Solomon Islands' next election in 2024.
- Supporting capacity building of local media through the regional *Pacific Media Assistance Scheme* (PACMAS) (current phase of regional program \$8.5 million, 2022-26). PACMAS is managed by ABC International Development and is supporting the development of a diverse, independent, and professional Pacific media sector. It promotes informed and meaningful public discourse and good governance, focusing on training, supporting high quality original content, and providing improved broadcasting infrastructure. The program has also helped expand professional networks of cooperation between Australian and Pacific journalists and helped to extend radio coverage across the region (the platform with the largest reach in the Pacific) by installing more transmitters and providing technician training and support.
 - o In 2021-22, PACMAS supported a review of Solomon Islands' 'Journalist Code of Ethics', in response to a changing media landscape. PACMAS also trained journalists to use mobile journalism in preparing content for publication and broadcast and increase familiarity with online content-sharing and distribution platforms. In 2022, PACMAS is supporting capacity development and practitioner networking in Solomon Islands through media training programs, including on sports reporters, court reporting and transiting to digital platforms.