



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

# **Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

ACFID Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Defence and Trade

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| About ACFID.....   | 2  |
| Introduction .....   | 3  |
| Summary of Recommendations.....  | 5  |
| 1. Delivering the SDGs’ promise of sustainable development for all: implementation, coordination and monitoring frameworks ..... | 6  |
| 2. Australia’s contribution to global achievement of the SDGs.....   | 10 |
| 3. Communicating the SDGs .....  | 15 |
| Annex A.....   | 17 |

## About ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in international development and humanitarian action. Our vision is of a world where all people are free from extreme poverty, injustice and inequality and where the earth’s finite resources are managed sustainably. Our purpose is to lead and unite our members in action for a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 124 Members and 21 Affiliates operating in more than 95 developing countries. The total revenue raised by ACFID’s membership from all sources amounts to \$1.9 billion (2015-16), \$930 million of which is raised from 1.9 million Australians (2014–15). ACFID’s members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations. A list of ACFID Member Organisations is at **Annex A**.

ACFID members must comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct, a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of signatory organisations. Covering 9 Quality Principles, 32 Commitments and 90 compliance indicators, the Code sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance and financial reporting. Compliance includes annual reporting and checks. The Code has an independent complaints handling process.

## Introduction

ACFID appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry and report on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ACFID believes this inquiry represents a significant opportunity to strengthen implementation mechanisms for the SDGs both in Australia and through our international aid program, and to increase awareness and understanding of the 2030 Agenda.

For the first time in global history, we have the opportunity to end the worst forms of poverty around the world. The last 15 years have already seen more than 1 billion people lifted out of extreme poverty. Far more could be achieved by harnessing the tremendous technological advancements of the last decade, through brokering new partnerships and mobilising new resources, and through innovative and effective government policy.

The SDGs are a landmark global paradigm to make this a reality. Agreed to by all 193 members of the United Nations in 2015, the SDGs aim to achieve peace, prosperity and sustainability for all people by 2030. The SDGs sit alongside an ambitious financing for development agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Together they form the 2030 Agenda, which recognises that to finally address poverty, the world must address the growing inequality within and between countries, the increasing strain on the world's resources and the global environment, and the burgeoning threats to peace and stability.

Unlike previous goals which applied only to developing countries, the SDGs apply to all countries equally. This means that Australia must find ways of aligning our domestic policies with the SDGs and set up systems and processes to coordinate action across all levels of government, as well as business and civil society. Further, Australia's region is home to many developing countries who continue to struggle with unacceptably high rates of poverty, violence and instability. As a technologically sophisticated, educated and compassionate nation Australia's task is not just to implement the SDGs for its own people, but to help achieve the SDGs for people across our region.

Business as usual will not be enough. We must increase our efforts and find new ways of tackling the challenges the world faces today if we are to meet the SDGs' vision. The UK's Overseas Development Institute found that even for the targets where progress is positive – like ending poverty and halting deforestation – current trajectories will take us barely more than half way to achieving them, and in some cases – like addressing climate change and reducing inequality – we are heading in the wrong direction altogether.<sup>1</sup>

At a policy level, we must reorient our models, programming, and our ways of working to set Australia on a course to deliver the SDGs over the next 12 years. In July 2017 Australia's Ambassador to the UN, Gillian Bird, announced that Australia would complete its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs at the UN's High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018. The VNR is an important chance to highlight the gaps and challenges that exist for Australia, and the areas of strength we can build upon. It will be imperative to develop a plan for how the challenges raised in the VNR will be addressed; this inquiry presents an important opportunity to do so.

The achievement of the SDGs relies on addressing each issue in the context of its interdependence with others. For example, decades of experience in gender equality have shown that gender equality outcomes are indivisible, and achievements in one area substantially improve a wide range of other

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<sup>1</sup>Susan Nicolai, Chris Hoy, Tom Berliner and Thomas Aedy. 2015. Projecting progress: Reaching the SDGs by 2030. ODI. Table 3, Pg 21. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9839.pdf>

opportunities. If you seek to promote a woman's leadership and participation in decision making for example, you must also address barriers to her receiving a quality education or having meaningful control over her reproductive health.

There are also trade-offs within the SDGs, for example between food security and environmental sustainability. Australia's approach must be equipped to make decisions that balance the interconnected outcomes of the Goals, including across international and domestic facing policy. To have any meaningful chance at achieving the SDGs, we must ensure policy is backed by political will and a renewed political commitment to Australia's international development efforts.

**ACFID's submission follows in three parts:**

1. Delivering the SDGs' promise of sustainable development for all: implementation, coordination and monitoring frameworks (*Recommendations 1-5*)
2. Australia's contribution to global achievement of the SDGs (*Recommendations 6-11*)
3. Communicating the SDGs (*Recommendations 12-13*)

## Summary of Recommendations

ACFID recommends to the Committee that to significantly accelerate progress towards, understanding, and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to deliver on the SDGs' promise of sustainable development for all, the Australian Government should:

**Recommendation 1:** *Develop a national implementation plan for the SDGs, outlining how Australia will achieve the Goals, both nationally and through our international development and humanitarian assistance efforts.*

**Recommendation 2:** *Establish an independent body to assess policies and provide advice on policy coherence against the SDGs.*

**Recommendation 3:** *Establish a multi-sectoral reference group comprising representatives from civil society, the private sector and to enhance transparency, collaboration and communication of Australia's implementation of the SDGs.*

**Recommendation 4:** *Fund a coordination hub to drive commitment and action on the SDGs and coordinate multi-sectoral input into government processes.*

**Recommendation 5:** *Resource regular reporting of Australia's progress against the SDGs, including through cross-sectoral collaborations such as the National Sustainable Development Council.*

**Recommendation 6:** *Rebuild Australia's aid program to reach 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030 and make eliminating poverty and achieving the SDGs the primary purpose of Australia's aid program.*

**Recommendation 7:** *Ensure Australia's approach to implementing the SDGs domestically and through our aid program centres on the commitment to leave no one behind, with concrete strategies to support inclusion of disadvantaged groups in design, delivery, and monitoring/evaluation and reporting on services and programs.*

**Recommendation 8:** *Invest in new measurement capacity to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data, and continue to support capacity building in this area in the Pacific.*

**Recommendation 9:** *Use existing systems analysis frameworks to inform the aid program's implementation of the SDGs.*

**Recommendation 10:** *Work with middle income partner countries, particularly in Asia, to identify areas where Australia can make the most strategic interventions to help them to progress the SDGs, supporting their own development priorities, and specifically addressing inequality and the precarious position of "strugglers".*

**Recommendation 11:** *Adopt new and innovative blended finance approaches that allow Australia to leverage investment from multiple sources to achieve the SDGs.*

**Recommendation 12:** *Establish small grants schemes through each of the Government departments on the IDC to enable their stakeholders to access funding for communicating the SDGs.*

**Recommendation 13:** *Initiate a public awareness campaign to increase engagement and commitment to the SDGs.*

## 1. Delivering the SDGs' promise of sustainable development for all: implementation, coordination and monitoring frameworks

*Addressing terms of reference b, c & d*

This section sets out options for governance mechanisms that would enhance Australia's ability to implement the SDGs, including addressing the gaps and challenges. Of utmost importance is the development of a national implementation plan (recommendation 1). Recommendations 2 to 5 – which outline options to increase multi-sectoral engagement with the SDGs, from policy design and delivery to reporting – would further support implementation efforts.

### 1.1 Develop a national implementation plan

The SDGs apply equally to all nations, and Australia's contribution to their achievement extends to all areas of our international engagement and domestic policy. In an interconnected world, challenges and opportunities don't stop at national borders, and policies in one area of government can have an impact on outcomes in another. The SDGs touch on all facets of the Australian Government's work, and it follows that a whole of government strategy for implementation should be developed.

A whole of government, national implementation strategy for the SDGs will enable consistency and coherence between departments and policy priorities. It will also require Australia to ensure it is taking appropriate domestic efforts to meet the Goals through our economic and trade policies, through migration and taxation policies, through defence and energy policies, and importantly for the poorest and most marginalised people in Australia.

To build on the baseline that will be established by the 2018 VNR, Australia must develop a plan for implementing the SDGs and the related Addis Ababa Action Agenda including:

- our domestic efforts to meet the Goals for all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- aligning our aid policy and program to the SDGs and increasing our ODA investment to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI);
- ensuring policy coherence for development across all aspects of our international engagement, including trade, migration diplomacy, and tax cooperation; and
- meeting our carbon and climate finance commitments under the Paris Agreement, reaffirmed in Goal 13 of the SDGs.

A national plan should give a mandate to political and bureaucratic mechanisms to coordinate and drive SDG action, and include shorter-term targets as stepping stones to enable consistent progress towards the 2030 deadline, supported by specific financial commitments. Oversight of the National Action Plan should sit within a central agency such as the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure integration across Government.

Further, efforts to achieve progress across the SDGs should be integrated with existing cross-government coordination mechanisms and action plans. For example, action to achieve Goal 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) should be integrated with existing efforts to implement the Australian National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2018)<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2012. Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018. Accessed 3 April 2018. Available at: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/aus\\_nap\\_on\\_women\\_2012\\_2018.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/aus_nap_on_women_2012_2018.pdf)

the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022.<sup>3</sup> Cross cutting efforts to meet the SDGs’ commitment to leave no one behind should be integrated with the annual Closing the Gap report and efforts to eliminate the gap in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

**Recommendation 1:** *Develop a national implementation plan for the SDGs, outlining how Australia will achieve the Goals, both nationally and through our international development and humanitarian assistance efforts.*

## 1.2 Take urgent action to address gaps in domestic implementation of the SDGs

Despite Australia’s level of wealth there are significant gaps in our progress against the SDGs. The SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017 ranks Australia 26th in terms of progress in achieving the SDGs. The report highlights areas such as inequality, health, and climate change action as areas where Australia is performing poorly relative to other wealthy countries.<sup>4</sup> Over 3 million Australians live in poverty, despite our wealth, and our social protection systems are failing them; Newstart payments have not increased in real terms in 24 years, and over half of Newstart recipients are living in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Further, progress on the SDGs is not uniform across Australian society, and without corrective action we will fail on the SDGs’ core principle of leaving no one behind. The 2018 Closing the Gap report found that just 3 of the 7 targets to address Indigenous disadvantage in Australia were on track to be met.<sup>6</sup>

ACFID endorses the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)’s submission to the Inquiry and supports their recommendations to address the gaps in Australia’s domestic implementation of the SDGs.

## 1.3 Increase policy coherence

Governance mechanisms for the SDGs should be carefully designed to enable greater policy coherence across different departments and levels of government. Given the interconnected nature of the 17 goals, lack of progress in one area has the potential to undermine the whole. Implementing the 2030 Agenda will entail breaking down traditional silos for more cross-sectoral decision-making solutions<sup>7</sup>. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda can be a catalyst for a renewed effort to promote policy coherence.

The SDGs provide a common framework against which to test policies from different areas of government, to ensure efforts made in one area are not undermined by another. For example, the Australian Government’s new defence export strategy demonstrates the potential for disconnect between policies from different areas of government. The strategy starkly contradicts the Foreign

<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2010. Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022. Accessed 3 April 2018. Available at:

[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2014/national\\_plan1.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Durand-Delacre, D. and Teksoz, K. 2017. SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017. Accessed 12.04.18. Available at: <http://www.sdgindex.org/#full-report>

<sup>5</sup> ACOSS. 2017. Raise the Rate Fact Sheet. Accessed at 12.04.18. Available at: [https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Raise-the-rate\\_fact-sheet\\_4-Apr-2018.pdf](https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Raise-the-rate_fact-sheet_4-Apr-2018.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2018. CLOSING THE GAP: PRIME MINISTER’S REPORT 2018. Accessed at 12.04.18. Available at: <http://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf?a=1>

<sup>7</sup> Peter Hazlewood and Mathilde Bouyé. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals: Setting a New Course for People and Planet. Accessed 13 March 2018. Available at: <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/09/sustainable-development-goals-setting-new-course-people-and-planet>

Minister's and Defence Minister's declarations of support for the Women, Peace and Security agenda,<sup>8</sup> which urge international actors to consider the gendered differences inherent in conflict when developing peacebuilding solutions. This includes introducing special measures to address the differential effects of armed conflict on women, such as gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Importantly, beyond incorporating the needs of women during conflict, the agenda recognises the need to increase women's participation in peacebuilding processes.<sup>9</sup>

An independent body would support the delivery of a national implementation plan by considering policies from different areas of government against the SDGs to ensure a coherent approach. By virtue of its independence, this body would be in a position to provide advice on the degree to which longer-term threats to national and regional achievement of the SDGs and associated agendas are being adequately addressed – an aspect of the agenda which poses a challenge to typical, electorally-based policy cycles. It would also be well placed to consider cross-cutting issues including gender equality, inclusion and partnership. This body could report to the existing interdepartmental committee and its reports should be made public.

**Recommendation 2:** *Establish an independent body to assess policies and provide advice on policy coherence against the SDGs.*

#### **1.4 Enhance transparency, collaboration and communication**

For Australia, delivering the SDGs will require Government to develop strong partnerships with civil society organisations, the private sector and academia at home and through our international development and humanitarian program.

Goal 17 of the SDGs provides a picture of the kinds of partnerships required to deliver the Goals, stating that the SDGs can only be realised with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation. *"We recognize that we will not be able to achieve our ambitious Goals and targets without a revitalized and enhanced Global Partnership and comparably ambitious means of implementation. The revitalized Global Partnership will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources"*<sup>10</sup>

Government efforts towards the SDGs are currently coordinated by an interdepartmental committee (IDC), co-chaired by the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Foreign Affairs and Trade. However, mechanisms are needed to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the Committee, including its ability to engage with other sectors in line with the commitment of Goal 17.

ACFID recommends that at a minimum a multi-sectoral reference group comprising representatives from civil society, the private sector and academia be formally established to sit alongside the IDC. Given the cross-cutting and integral nature of gender equality to achieving the SDGs, the terms of reference for this group should reflect the following:

<sup>8</sup> Minister for Foreign Affairs. 28 October 2014. Media Release: Increasing women's participation in preventing conflict and building peace. Accessed at 12.04.18. available at: [https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2014/jb\\_mr\\_141028.aspx](https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2014/jb_mr_141028.aspx); Minister for Defence. 8 March 2018. WPS 2018: Defence's commitment to women, peace and security. Accessed at 12.04.18. Available at: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/defences-commitment-wps-agenda/>

<sup>9</sup> UN Women. Women, Peace and Security. Accessed 5 April 2018. Available at: <https://unwomen.org.au/our-work/focus-areas/women-peace-and-security/>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations. 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accessed 12.04.18. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



- Gender balance and gender expertise in membership
- Involvement of organisations representative of marginalised groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disabilities, supported by funding to enable their participation
- Australia’s progress on the cross-cutting issue of “leaving no one behind” as a standing agenda item.

**Recommendation 3:** *Establish a multi-sectoral reference group comprising representatives from civil society, the private sector and to enhance transparency, collaboration and communication of Australia’s implementation of the SDGs.*

Additionally, a funded secretariat would greatly enhance the ability of these sectors to both engage with Government to coordinate action on the SDGs, and input into Government processes. Beyond Australia’s voluntary national review on the SDGs in July 2018, there will be an increased need to focus on implementing the Goals.

A national coordination secretariat for the SDGs, linking Federal and state governments, civil society organisations, business and academia could assist by reducing transaction costs, increasing cross-sectoral collaboration, and clarifying action on the gaps and challenges identified by the VNR. As part of the Secretariat’s mandate, it should facilitate regular engagement with women’s organisations and networks (with a domestic and an international focus), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ organisations and disabled people’s organisations.

Practical models that have been used in the past include the C20, which was funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to streamline engagement of civil society when Australia hosted the G20.

**Recommendation 4:** *Fund a coordination hub to drive commitment and action on the SDGs and coordinate multi-sectoral input into government processes.*

### 1.5 Reporting on progress

Appropriate frameworks for monitoring and reporting Australia’s progress on the SDGs are an essential component of implementation – and one of the key opportunities of the SDGs. Such frameworks provide an impetus for action (‘what gets reported gets done’), ensure accountability, provide feedback on implementation success, create a coherent story on wide-ranging actions, and provide an opportunity for ongoing public engagement.

Regular reporting on the SDGs requires adequate resourcing. While the ABS is in the best position to support collecting and reporting on this data, it is crucial to have cross-sector contribution and community engagement in the reporting and analysis of the results. A good model to build on is an independent body like the National Sustainability Council, which produced the *Sustainable Australia Report 2013*. The Government could also build on the work of the independently established National Sustainable Development Council, which has experts from business, civil society and academia who have considerable experience in assessing Australia’s sustainability performance and in communicating the SDGs.<sup>11</sup>

**Recommendation 5:** *Resource regular reporting of Australia’s progress against the SDGs, including through cross-sectoral collaborations such as the National Sustainable Development Council.*

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<sup>11</sup> This Council is currently finalising a comprehensive baseline report on Australia’s progress in achieving the SDGs. A preliminary version of this report can be accessed at [sdgtransformingaustralia.com](http://sdgtransformingaustralia.com).

## 2. Australia's contribution to global achievement of the SDGs

*Addressing terms of reference e & f*

### 2.1. Rebuild Australia's aid program

ACFID strongly advocates for the SDGs to be affirmed in the purpose of Australia's aid program, and integrated across its thematic and geographic policies, programs, reporting, and performance benchmarks. The SDGs provide internationally consistent goals that should be at the heart of Australia's overseas development assistance. In order to work with development countries to achieve the SDGs, the Australian aid program must be rebuilt.

Target 17.2 of the SDGs commits "Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries." The aid program should be rebuilt on a trajectory towards 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030, in line with the commitment Australia made when signing on to the 2030 Agenda in 2015. This trajectory will require yearly increases to the budget.

The 2015-16 Federal Budget cut Australia's aid budget by \$1 billion or 20 per cent. Over four years to 2017-18, Australia's aid budget was cut by \$3.7 billion, equivalent to axing a quarter of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>12</sup>. These punishing cuts on Australian aid since 2014 means Australia is less able to help people affected by conflict and natural disasters. It restricts Australia's ability to tackle emerging threats such as disease pandemics and rising extremism, and to help build more peaceful and prosperous societies.

The aid program's contribution to our national prosperity has been well established, compounding the short-sightedness of the cuts. Recent analysis of Australian export and aid data from 1980 to 2013 by Australian National University (ANU) researchers has demonstrated that every dollar spent on Australian aid resulted in an average of \$7.10 in Australian exports to aid recipient nations over the period in question<sup>13</sup>. In addition, the aid program is ranked highly against international measures of aid quality, even despite a decline in aid transparency at the project level.

Aid is most effective when it is predictable and stable. Delivering aid dividends takes time through building relationships with local partners and adapting to local contexts. A lack of predictability is hard for recipients to plan around and has been shown to make aid less effective. Any approach to delivering on this commitment which delays budget scale-up to the out years, or freezes and unfreezes the trajectory year on year, is unlikely to be viewed as a principled commitment to effective aid delivery. While there is any number of possible pathways to 0.7 per cent GNI, a credible approach should be planned, stepped, and predictable.

In the first instance, the Australian Government should commit to growing the aid budget by 10 per cent each year for the next six years, to the 2024-25 financial year. On current assumptions, that trajectory will restore Australia's aid budget to 0.33 per cent of GNI, as a minimum first step towards reaching the SDGs goal of 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030.

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<sup>12</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2014. Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2014-15. Accessed 5 April 2018. Available at: [http://www.budget.gov.au/201415/content/myefo/html/03\\_part\\_3.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/201415/content/myefo/html/03_part_3.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Dornan and Sabit Otor, 29 September 2017. How does Australian foreign aid impact Australian exports? Devpolicy Blog. Accessed 5 April 2018. Available at: <http://devpolicy.org/australian-foreign-aid-impact-australian-exports-20170929/>

**Recommendation 6:** *Rebuild Australia’s aid program to reach 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030 and make eliminating poverty and achieving the SDGs the primary purpose of Australia’s aid program.*

## 2.2 Leaving no one behind

Underpinning the SDGs is the commitment to ‘leave no one behind:’ *“In committing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States recognized that the dignity of the individual is fundamental, and that the Agenda’s Goals and targets should be met for all nations and people and for all segments of society. Furthermore, they endeavoured to reach first those who are furthest behind.”*<sup>14</sup> This commitment recognises that not everyone has benefited equally from development efforts to date, and that aggregate measures of progress often fail to capture those who are furthest behind.

The Australian Government must take care in implementing its commitments under the SDGs to ensure the inclusion of all groups. To achieve the SDGs’ vision of ending poverty and injustice for all, we need to accelerate efforts to reach those who are hardest to reach – such as people with disabilities or indigenous populations, for example – and those with intersecting forms of disadvantage. Our overall delivery of the 2030 Agenda will likely be enhanced by understanding the limitations of current practice in reaching these hardest to reach populations.

Australia is a recognised world leader on disability inclusive development and is well placed to ensure consideration of the needs of people with disabilities is mainstreamed across aid investments, particularly by implementing its strategy Development for All: 2015–2020. The strong commitment to gender equality embedded through Australia’s aid program also provides a foundation for achieving gender outcomes through all aspects of the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, the Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019 provides a framework for promoting indigenous rights and ensuring inclusion across aid investments. However, policies and strategies such as these must be backed up by continued efforts to shift Government practice – as well as appropriate levels of funding – until inclusive practices are mainstreamed across the entire aid program.

Ensuring that these commitments are translated into effective action requires a precise understanding of target populations. The disaggregated data needed to address all vulnerable groups as specified in the 2030 Agenda, are sparse.<sup>15</sup>

In actioning the principle of leaving no one behind, measuring change at an individual level is paramount. The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) facilitates the collection of individual intersectional and intrahousehold data, filling the gap left by current approaches to measure poverty and gender disparity, which do not produce the type or amount of data that policy makers and the global community need to chart progress against the SDGs.<sup>16</sup> The Australian Government has already invested in the development of the IDM; now we need to ensure it is widely used.

At the regional level, the Australian Government can play a role to support and build the capacity of National Statistics Offices in our region to collect disaggregated and intersectional data and to facilitate sharing of common learnings regionally to enable regional reporting on SDGs, reduce the

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. 2016. The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2016. Accessed 3 April 2018. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. 2016. The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2016. Accessed 3 April 2018. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind>

<sup>16</sup> IWDA. Measuring Poverty. Accessed 15 March 2018. Available at <http://www.individualdeprivationmeasure.org/measuring-poverty/>

burden on National Statistics Offices, and identify issues and trends relevant across countries. Australia should continue its support to the Pacific in this area, as an area of particular need.

**Recommendation 7:** *Ensure Australia’s approach to implementing the SDGs domestically and through our aid program centres on the commitment to leave no one behind, with concrete strategies to support inclusion of disadvantaged groups in design, delivery, and monitoring/evaluation and reporting on services and programs.*

**Recommendation 8:** *Invest in new measurement capacity to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data, and continue to support capacity building in this area in the Pacific.*

### 2.3 A transformational approach to SDG Implementation

A key feature of the 2030 Agenda is the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages existing within and across the Goals; progress in one goal can enhance and compound the success of others. New partnerships are now being designed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs by looking closely at how targets under one goal may affect targets under other goals, or how individual targets could serve multiple goals<sup>17</sup>. Gender equality for example is recognised as an enabler and accelerator for all the SDGs and the recent HLPF on Sustainable Development Thematic Review of SDG 5 identified progress on gender equality as critical to delivering on all the SDGs. Achievements in empowering women and girls (Goal 5), for example, will contribute significantly to the eradication of poverty and inequality (Goals 1 and 10), improvements in education and health outcomes (Goals 3 and 4), and will increase the productive capacities of economies (Goal 8).

In the same way that progress against one goal can enhance and compound the success of others, the pursuit of a few goals at the expense of the balance may undermine the achievement of the sustainable development agenda. Approaches to implementation need to be pragmatic but the principles of integration and indivisibility must be upheld.

Practical tools to facilitate this approach exist. For example, ACFID has developed an SDGs Toolkit<sup>18</sup> designed to help individuals and organisations explore and test systems change and collaborative responses as a way of working differently to achieve the SDGs. The toolkit is the result of a partnership between ACFID and Collaboration for Impact and was supported by CSIRO and ACFID’s Development Practice Committee and provides resources to support integrated approaches to SDGs implementation.

**Recommendation 9:** *Use existing systems analysis frameworks to inform the aid program’s implementation of the SDGs.*

At the same time, changing geopolitics, economic growth and the rise of middle income countries in Asia, a region where Australia has increasingly focused its aid program, will require Australia to think differently about how it approaches development partnerships in the future. There is some evidence that this thinking has already begun; Australia’s Aid Investment Plan for Indonesia recognises the

<sup>17</sup> ECOSOC. 2016. Issues Note, 31 March 2016: Breaking the silos: Cross-sectoral partnerships for advancing the Sustainable Development Goal. Accessed 13 March 2018. Available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/partnership-forum-issue-note1.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> ACFID. 2018. ACFID’s SDG Toolkit. Available at: <https://acfid.asn.au/learning/sdg-toolkit>

significant economic and development gains that have been made, while acknowledging that poor health outcomes, rising inequality and slowing growth have the potential to undermine Indonesia's progress.<sup>19</sup>

It is also important to understand that while absolute poverty is in decline, relative poverty remains widespread across Asia. Leading development thinker Nancy Birdsall, Senior Fellow at Washington's Centre for Global Development, has pointed out that around 60 per cent of people living in developing countries today are "strugglers" – living above the poverty line of \$1.90 per day or less, but below the threshold enjoyed by the secure middle class (on at least \$10 a day in household income per capita, PPP).<sup>20</sup> Strugglers might have middle class aspirations, but lack security and resilience – a health crisis, unemployment, natural disaster or other household-level economic crisis is sufficient to push this group back into poverty. Strugglers are heavily concentrated in middle-income countries, including the countries of Asia, to which Australia's present and future peace, security and prosperity remain intrinsically tied.

As more Asian countries move towards middle income status, there is an opportunity for Australia to move towards a development cooperation model, which leverages and amplifies the areas where partner countries can support their own development, while making strategic interventions to target populations who are at risk of being left behind. Systems thinking approaches can provide the analysis required to identify these areas, including those in which intervention via the aid program can create an enabling environment for Asian middle-income countries to consolidate their economic gains.

Some key areas that underpin achievement of the SDGs in these contexts are public pension and health insurance programs, better and more democratic governance, personal security, liberty and human rights, supports for higher productivity achieved through work and study, better public transport and climate-resilient urban infrastructure in the Asian delta cities in which many strugglers live and work. This approach aligns with the commitments outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which recognises the role of ODA in consolidating the development gains of middle income countries.<sup>21</sup> It also aligns with the Australian Government's Foreign Policy White Paper, which discusses aid as one important strand in Australia's multifaceted engagement with the Indo-Pacific, in pursuit of important Australian values such as security, prosperity, peace, trade and exchange.

This transition need not include a scaling back of finance, but rather a re-allocation to areas of more strategic impact and a reformulation of the role of aid in a changing world, away from simply "charity" for people in need abroad, to an important platform for collaboration with our neighbours in everybody's mutual interest. It must also be balanced by a continued focus on low income countries, small island developing states and conflict affected countries, where climate and other forms of vulnerability are so heavily concentrated.

**Recommendation 10:** *Work with middle income partner countries, particularly in Asia, to identify areas where Australia can make the most strategic interventions to progress the SDGs, supporting their*

<sup>19</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2015. Aid Investment Plan Indonesia: 2015-16 to 2018-19. Accessed 4 April 2018. Available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/aid-investment-plan-aip-indonesia-2015-16-to-2018-19.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> Nancy Birdsall. 2018. Strugglers: the new poor of the 21st century. Devpolicy Blog. Available at: <http://www.devpolicy.org/strugglers-new-poor-21st-century-20180315/>

<sup>21</sup> United Nations. 2015. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Accessed 5 April 2018. Available at: [www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

*own development priorities and specifically addressing inequality and the precarious position of “strugglers”.*

One important arena in which to reframe the values and priorities of the Australian aid program so it connects with social and economic change in the Asia Pacific is that of new and innovative blended finance approaches that allow Australia to partner with regional governments and multilateral banks.

Developing such approaches will allow Australia to lead the region in mobilising the trillions of dollars required to respond to specific strategic challenges that threaten to push vast numbers of people back into poverty, such as climate adaptation across the Asia Pacific, for example. Such approaches might include developing intermediary financial instruments so that public aid funds can be used to leverage additional investment from private and philanthropic sources, so that regional governments working collaboratively can mobilise the billions of dollars required, within the authorising environment created by the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Roadmap to US \$100 Billion, as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda itself. The amount of funding that needs to be mobilised from all sources worldwide to meet the adaptation needs of vulnerable communities in developing nations, including those of the Asia Pacific, have been estimated (in 2017) at up to \$429 billion annually by 2050.<sup>22</sup>

This approach to climate finance is in keeping with the Australian Government’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, which has named climate diplomacy as an essential strand of Australia’s engagement with the “Indo-Pacific” that it seeks to build along with its Quad partners, and with the European Union through the Framework Agreement. Any blended finance approaches adopted by Australia should be accompanied by strong aid assistance in the areas of governance, regulatory oversight and financial and institutional capacity-building to avoid pushing risky public-private partnerships onto taxpayers in developing nations.<sup>23</sup>

**Recommendation 11:** *Adopt new and innovative blended finance approaches that allow Australia to leverage investment from multiple sources to achieve the SDGs.*

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<sup>22</sup> Nina Hall. 2017. What is adaptation to climate change? Epistemic ambiguity in the climate finance system. *International Environmental Agreements* 17, pp. 17-37.

<sup>23</sup> Jomo KS, Anis Chowdhury, Krishnan Sharma, Daniel Platz. 2016. Public-Private Partnerships and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Fit for purpose? DESA Working Paper No. 148. Accessed 12.04.18. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2288desaworkingpaper148.pdf>; Jomo Kwame Sundaram. 28 November 2017. Beware Public Private Partnerships. InterPress Service. Accessed 12.04.18. Available at: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/11/beware-public-private-partnerships/>



### 3. Communicating the SDGs

#### *Addressing terms of reference a*

#### **3.1 Increasing public engagement and commitment**

Organisations across civil society, business and academia are already engaged in communicating the SDGs. These groups have their own sets of stakeholders that they can communicate to, reaching different segments of the Australian public.

Resourcing these communication efforts via the Government departments with responsibility for the SDGs, as allocated through the IDC, would enable communications that are issue specific and outcomes focused. Focussing on what the world would look like if the SDGs were achieved creates a way to engage people around the things that matter to them. For example, the Department of Agriculture could support farmers' groups to communicate the SDGs via the importance of ensuring Australia's food and water security; the Office for Women could fund women's organisations to highlight the links between the SDGs and ending violence against women.

Working with NGOs can significantly increase the government's ability to communicate to the Australian public. 14.9 million – about 80% of the adult population – give to charities across Australia.<sup>24</sup> This represents a significant reach and ability to communicate with everyday Australians.

**Recommendation 12:** *Establish small grants schemes through each of the Government departments on the IDC to enable their stakeholders to access funding for communicating the SDGs.*

ACFID is focused on building support and understanding for the SDGs and ensuring their integration into Australia's aid and development policy. The core message of the SDGs aligns with established values of the Australian community such as cooperation, a fair go, and being a good neighbour. Aligning communication of the SDGs with the values of the Australian public will allow the public to engage with the agenda in a way that affirms Australia's place in the world. While there is no narrative that will appeal to everyone, Australia has mainstream values – such as a fair go and being a good neighbour – that can resonate with a wide cross-section of the population.

Between 1984 and 2011, successive reviews have recommended that AusAID (now DFAT) increase its efforts to communicate the value of Australia's aid program to the Australian public. Nevertheless, with AusAID's merger into DFAT, its blog, magazine and social media channels were lost, and these communication channels have not been re-established. As a result, despite the proliferation of accessible platforms and reduced transaction costs in performing digital work, official efforts to communicate the benefits of the aid program have been limited. The Foreign Policy White Paper has recognized the value of digital engagement as a channel for Australian soft power, and DFAT is now in the second year of its Digital Media Strategy, which outlines the value of specialist recruitment, content generation and multimedia engagement.<sup>25</sup>

ACFID believes Australia should scale up its efforts to communicate the value of its aid program to Australian and international publics and embed aid and development communication at the heart of

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<sup>24</sup> Giving Australia. 2016. Giving Australia Factsheet: Individuals.

[http://www.philanthropy.org.au/images/site/blog/Giving\\_Australia\\_2016\\_Individuals\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.philanthropy.org.au/images/site/blog/Giving_Australia_2016_Individuals_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. 2016. DFAT Digital Media Strategy 2016–18. Accessed 13 March 2018. Available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/aboutus/publications/corporate/Documents/digital-media-strategy-2016-18.pdf>

its efforts to upgrade its digital diplomacy.<sup>26</sup> Working with ACFID and its members to reach their 1.6 million donors can increase the Government's efforts to communicate the value of aid to the public.<sup>27</sup>

**Recommendation 13:** *Initiate a public awareness campaign to increase engagement and commitment to the SDGs.*

We would be happy to provide additional clarity on any of the statements contained within this submission.

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<sup>26</sup> Ashlee Betteridge. 2016. Communication post-integration: reloading Australia's efforts. ANU Development Policy Centre Policy Brief 15. Accessed 13 March 2018. Available at: [http://devpolicy.org/publications/policy\\_briefs/PB15CommunicationPostintegration.pdf](http://devpolicy.org/publications/policy_briefs/PB15CommunicationPostintegration.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> ACFID. 2016. Annual Report 2015-16. Pg 32. Accessed 12.04.18. Available at [https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/G2300\\_ACFID\\_ANNUAL%20REPORT%202016\\_WEB%204.pdf](https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/G2300_ACFID_ANNUAL%20REPORT%202016_WEB%204.pdf)



## Annex A



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

### List of ACFID Members

#### Full Members

- ACC International Relief
- Act for Peace - NCCA
- ActionAid Australia
- Action on Poverty
- Adara Development Australia
- ADRA Australia
- Afghan Australian Development Organisation
- Anglican Aid
- Anglican Board of Mission - Australia Limited
- Anglican Overseas Aid
- Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia
- Asia Pacific Journalism Centre
- Asian Aid Organisation
- Assisi Aid Projects
- Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine
- Australia for UNHCR
- Australia Hope International Inc.
- Australian Business Volunteers
- Australian Doctors for Africa
- Australian Doctors International
- Australian Himalayan Foundation
- Australian Lutheran World Service
- Australian Marist Solidarity Ltd
- Australian Medical Aid Foundation
- Australian Mercy
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Respiratory Council
- AVI
- Beyond the Orphanage
- Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia)
- Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation
- Bright Futures Child Aid and Development Fund (Australia)
- Burnet Institute
- Business for Development
- CARE Australia
- Caritas Australia
- CBM Australia
- ChildFund Australia
- CLAN (Caring and Living as Neighbours)
- Credit Union Foundation Australia
- Diaspora Action Australia
- Diplomacy Training Program
- Door of Hope Australia Inc.
- Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)
- EDO NSW
- Engineers without Borders
- Every Home Global Concern
- Family Planning New South Wales
- Fairtrade Australia New Zealand
- Food Water Shelter
- Foresight (Overseas Aid and Prevention of Blindness)
- Fred Hollows Foundation, The
- Global Development Group
- Global Mission Partners
- Good Shepherd Services
- Good Return
- Grameen Foundation Australia
- Habitat for Humanity Australia
- Hagar Australia
- HealthServe Australia
- Heilala
- Hope Global
- Hunger Project Australia, The
- International Children's Care (Australia)
- International Christian Aid and Relief Enterprises
- International Needs Australia
- International Nepal Fellowship (Aust) Ltd
- International River Foundation
- International Women's Development Agency
- Interplast Australia & New Zealand
- Islamic Relief Australia
- KTF (Kokoda Track Foundation)
- Kyeema Foundation

- Lasallian Foundation
- Leprosy Mission Australia, The
- Live & Learn Environmental Education
- Love Mercy Foundation
- Mahboba's Promise Australia
- Marie Stopes International Australia
- Marist Mission Centre
- Mary MacKillop International
- Mary Ward International Australia
- Mercy Works Ltd.
- Mission World Aid Inc.
- MIT Group Foundation
- Motivation Australia
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- MAA (Muslim Aid Australia)
- Nusa Tenggara Association Inc.
- Oaktree Foundation
- Opportunity International Australia
- Our Rainbow House
- Oxfam Australia
- Palmera Projects
- Partner Housing Australasia
- Partners in Aid
- Partners Relief and Development Australia
- People with Disability Australia
- PLAN International Australia
- Quaker Service Australia
- RedR Australia
- Reledev Australia
- RESULTS International (Australia)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Salesian Missions
- Salvation Army (NSW Property Trust)
- Save the Children Australia
- School for Life Foundation
- SeeBeyondBorders
- Sight For All
- So They Can
- Sport Matters
- Surf Aid International
- Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation Australia
- TEAR Australia
- Transform Aid International (incorporating Baptist World Aid)
- UNICEF Australia
- Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

- UnitingWorld
- WaterAid Australia
- World Vision Australia
- WWF-Australia
- YWAM Medical Ships

#### **Affiliate Members**

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
- Australian National University – School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences
- Charles Darwin University – Menzies School of Health Research
- Deakin University – Alfred Deakin Research Institute
- James Cook University – The Cairns Institute
- La Trobe University – Institute of Human Security and Social Change
- Murdoch University – School of Management and Governance
- Queensland University of Technology – School of Public Health and Social Work
- Refugee Council of Australia
- RMIT – Centre for Global Research
- Swinburne University of Technology Centre for Design Innovation
- Transparency International Australia
- University of Melbourne – School of Social and Political Sciences
- University of New South Wales- International
- University of Queensland – Institute for Social Science Research
- University of Sydney – Office of Global Engagement
- University of the Sunshine Coast – International Projects Group
- University of Technology, Sydney – Institute for Sustainable Futures
- University of Western Australia – School of Social Sciences
- Vision 2020
- Western Sydney University- School of Social Sciences and Psychology

\* Denotes Interim Full Members