

CARE Australia
Foreign Policy White Paper Submission

1.1 Introduction

CARE Australia seeks a world of hope, tolerance and justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live with dignity and security. Formed in 1987 by former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, as a humanitarian aid organisation, CARE Australia has a special focus on gender equality to bring lasting development to communities. CARE Australia has earned an international reputation for our innovative, sustainable and effective long-term development projects and our ability to respond quickly to emergency situations. CARE Australia is a member of the CARE International confederation of 14 autonomous members working in 94 countries undertaking development assistance and disaster relief. The primary geographic focus of CARE Australia is the Pacific and South-East Asia where we manage all programs and activities of the CARE International confederation in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Vietnam. In addition, CARE Australia undertakes development assistance and disaster response activities in another 16 countries in the Middle East and Africa.

The development of a third White Paper for Australia's Foreign Policy is an opportunity to identify Australia's values and approaches, and to clarify our role in the world. This White Paper is being developed in a time of significant geo-political turbulence and declining trust in government and institutions across the western world.¹ Australia is already responding by reaffirming our commitment to an open society and a rules-based democratic order. As the Foreign Minister has noted "more prosperous, inclusive societies are more stable ones – which drives regional and Australian prosperity, and supports regional and our security,"² therefore "Australia's aid program continues to evolve as a crucial tool to advance our national interest, which is best served through regional stability and prosperity."³

CARE Australia commends this approach and considers the White Paper an opportunity to identify Australian values and establish a long term strategic narrative, which will together guide our international engagement.

1.2 Summary of Recommendations

1. Articulate a set of values to guide Australia through the swiftly flowing currents of international relations.
 - These values should focus specifically on gender equality, inclusive growth and recognition of the value of civil society.
2. Scale up the requirements to conduct gender analyses to inform all international engagement, including, for example, in developing and investment plans, negotiating trade deals and engaging in military operations or training exercises; explicitly monitor progress; and regularly report publicly.
3. Work to address all elements of gender inequality in an integrated way, including ensuring adequate resourcing for sexual and reproductive health and rights.
4. Commit to implementing the SDGs with strong targets of our own to contribute to this agenda, and to support the countries of the Indo-Pacific region.

¹ The Economist 25 January 2017 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/01/daily-chart-20>

² Julie Bishop speech at 2017 ANU Australasian Aid Conference: http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/Pages/2017/jb_sp_170215.aspx

³ Julie Bishop speech at 2017 ANU Australasian Aid Conference: http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/Pages/2017/jb_sp_170215.aspx

5. Explicitly champion the role of civil society organisations by:
 - promoting the role of, and the need to support, non-government organisations in countries across our region;
 - recognising the particular role of Australian non-government organisations in international affairs, particularly development and foreign policy;
 - encouraging and supporting the engagement and participation of Australian and developing country NGOs in multilateral fora.
6. Develop a detailed strategy to achieve the target established by the G20 in 2014 to reduce the gap between women's and men's labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025.
 - As an element of this strategy advocate with our diplomatic partners for reforms to discriminatory labour laws, the extension of legal protections to those who are not currently covered as workers, and promote safe and secure working environments, especially for women in precarious employment (in line with SDG 8).
7. Recognise the central value of the international development program to our future stability and prosperity and ensure the focus is on effective development, never short term transactional outcomes.

2.1 Australian values to guide international engagement

As a middle power in a region that will be affected directly by the outcomes of changing relations between the world's major powers, such as the USA and China, it is vital Australia establish a set of principles to guide engagement in what is re-emerging as a multipolar world. In times of uncertainty, it is in Australia's interest to have a clear strategic direction and a set of values guiding our international engagement. In addition, identifying a set of values consistent across all Australia's international engagement will amplify the outcomes of the work. This has not been the approach traditionally taken by most foreign services, which see themselves as responsive to the direction of the government of the day, with a primary need to react quickly, eloquently and flexibly. Yet Australia, in particular, can be seen to have taken consistent positions across many decades on a range of issues. This amounts to a strategic and values-based direction. For example, our position on human rights has been largely stable for several decades. Our commitment to gender equality has strengthened. Australia might modify the level of commitment to multilateral systems over time, but has generally been committed to being a good global citizen.

It is now timely to make these values explicit. CARE Australia recommends three values be enunciated that would help Australia make decisions about particular international directions and responses.

Recommendation: Articulate a set of values to guide Australia through the swiftly flowing currents of international relations.

- These values should focus specifically on gender equality, inclusive growth and recognition of the value of civil society.

2.2 Empower women and promote gender equality

In identifying these values the White Paper must recognise gender equality as a core Australian value and a central strategic priority. Greater gender equality delivers stronger economic growth and prosperity. It is

strongly correlated with greater peace and stability. It is beyond doubt that supporting gender equality internationally, and particularly in our Indo-Pacific region, is in Australia's national interest.

While studies show greater gender equality supports sustainable development, economic development does not automatically promote gender equality.⁴ Women's economic empowerment should not be viewed as a technical fix or a matter of filling gaps in access to resources. "We must acknowledge that social, political and market systems are not neutral, but structured in a way that reflect and reinforce the societal inequalities that shaped them."⁵ Without directly confronting and acknowledging the issues of power and social justice — transforming the political, social and structural dimensions of gender inequality—gender injustice will continue to exacerbate poverty and hinder social development.⁶

No country has achieved true gender equality because no country has deliberately and explicitly devoted the attention or resources to transforming these deeply embedded norms and power relations. Despite the clear evidence in support of promoting gender equality, and notwithstanding tremendous progress, the international community has not yet fulfilled the commitments it made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, nor fully achieved the targets under Millennium Development Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women.

To support our region to prosper, and in line with our values, particular attention needs to be given to the ongoing issues impeding access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Australia must continue to support education programs, access to health services, and an end to gender based violence. "Strengthening women's and girls' reproductive rights, health service provision, access to family planning, and freedom from violence is a global imperative for equitable development."⁷

Within all our international engagement, whether in foreign policy, trade or development, Australia can promote gender equality consistently, deliberately and explicitly. DFAT's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* makes a good start in this direction. The White Paper can advance this endeavour by requiring more explicit and public gender analysis and reporting of progress across the development program, foreign policy and trade. It should also recognize how interconnected are the elements of gender inequality and commit to a comprehensive response using all international engagement.

Recommendation: Scale up the requirements to conduct gender analyses to inform all international engagement, including, for example, in developing and investment plans, negotiating trade deals and engaging in military operations or training exercises; explicitly monitor progress; and regularly report publicly.

Recommendation: Work to address all elements of gender inequality in an integrated way, including ensuring adequate resourcing for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

2.3 Inclusive Development

CARE contends inclusive development is an enduring Australian value. The White Paper must recognise the importance of vertical equality for creating stable, peaceful, prosperous societies. The current approach of the Australian Government places less focus on inclusive development than it should. The White Paper is an opportunity to address this omission.

⁴ Eg Kabeer and Natali 'Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is there a Win-Win?' IDS Working Paper 2013:417

⁵ Emily Hillenbrand, Nidal Karim, Pranati Mohanraj and Diana Wu *Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices* CARE, October 2015 http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/working_paper_aas_gt_change_measurement_fa_lowres.pdf

⁶ Emily Hillenbrand, Nidal Karim, Pranati Mohanraj and Diana Wu *Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices* CARE, October 2015

⁷ Agnes Oztelberger, *Choice, not control: Why limiting the fertility of poor populations will not solve the climate crisis*, CARE International, 2014

Development can be inclusive - and reduce poverty - only if all groups of people contribute to creating opportunities, share the benefits of development and participate in decision-making.⁸

It is important the White Paper align towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), and particularly to reflect on the significance of Australia's domestic implementation of the SDGs for our international reputation. The SDGs present us with a roadmap towards a universally agreed vision of the world we want to live in by 2030. They exemplify a collective ambition, representing the aspirations of nations of the Global North and the Global South, as well as individuals and organisations around the world.

Recommendation: Commit to implementing the SDGs with strong targets of our own to contribute to this agenda, and to support the countries of the Indo-Pacific region.

2.4 A healthy, engaged civil society

It is crucial that civil society is able to operate freely around the world. A healthy engaged civil society is critical to democratic processes and inclusive development. Australia has long advocated for ensuring civil society has a voice in multilateral processes even when there is considerable resistance to this by some nations. CARE Australia commends the Australian Government for its support to civil society organisations – such as in recommendations from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's *Empowering Women* report;⁹ commitments in DFAT's *Humanitarian Strategy*¹⁰ and *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*,¹¹ and in Australia's commitment to contribute more humanitarian funding to local and national responders following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.¹² However, support for civil society is not an explicit strategic priority for Australia.

As is increasingly recognised around the world, strong civil society organisations provide the foundations for good governance, the recognition of human rights, and the provision of essential services. A study of over 70 countries over 40 years, for example, found the presence of strong women's movements was more effective in progressing women's rights than the number of women legislators or national wealth.¹³ Also, "robust democratic and equitable social development is more likely to be obtained when civil society functions well in terms of both advocacy and service delivery."¹⁴ Those countries with more active and engaged civil societies are more likely to have healthy democracies. On a multilateral and on a local level, Australian civil society organisations or NGOs, of which CARE Australia is one, play a crucial role in supporting people-to-people links and communicating with the Australian population the importance of aid to the national interest.

Recommendation: Explicitly champion the presence of civil society organisations including by:

⁸ UNDP http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_inclusive_development.html

⁹ Australian Parliament, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Empowering women and Girls: The human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean–Asia Pacific region*, December 2015. Especially recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government prioritise aid investment in relevant local women's legal aid organisations, advocacy bodies and law reform commissions in the Indo–Pacific region where laws that disadvantage women and girls are in place. And Recommendation 23: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should: (ii) take a stronger stance in the protection of high profile women and organisations advocating for the human rights and empowerment of women and girls; (iii) fund women's advocacy organisations working in the Indo-Pacific region where women leaders are most at risk.

¹⁰ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Humanitarian Strategy* May 2016 which commits to 'build the capacity of national governments, civil society and local communities to prepare for and respond to disaster.'

¹¹ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* (February 2016) which commits to 'support civil society organisations to promote equality and increase women's participation in conflict prevention, peace-building, conflict resolution, and relief and recovery'.

¹² World Humanitarian Summit *The Grand Bargain* (23 May 2016, Istanbul)

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf

¹³ S. Laurel Weldon and M Htun, 'Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women' *Gender & Development*, volume 21, 2013 – Issue 2 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2013.802158>

¹⁴ V. Heinrich and L. Fioramonti (eds) *CIVICUS Global Survey of the State of Civil Society: Comparative perspectives*, 2008 p 363.

- promoting the role of, and the need to support, non-government organisations in countries across our region;
- recognising the particular role of Australian non-government organisations in foreign policy;
- encouraging and supporting the engagement and participation of Australian and developing country NGOs in multilateral fora.

3.1 Bringing it all together – ensuring coherence

This is the first White Paper to be developed since the integration of the aid program into Australia’s foreign service. This presents an opportunity not available before – to consider all the tools at our disposal; not just foreign policy, but also aid. Australia’s trade policy and negotiations should also be seen as instruments at our disposal.

Having these instruments work effectively and coherently together will ensure Australia is consistent and focused in our international affairs. Too often it appears our aid program can be working at cross-purposes with trade policy; that multilateral commitments are not fully supported in all our regional engagement. The identification of values, as set out above, will support the development of policy coherence in our approach to foreign relations. However, more should be done. The White Paper should require coherence between Australia’s work in foreign affairs, development, trade and security and identify processes for achieving this.

International development cannot be seen as a siloed issue, but rather an essential ingredient of Australia’s international engagement. In our increasingly interconnected world, in which problems arising in developing countries may have repercussions far beyond their borders, nations must jointly address ever-changing transboundary issues such as migration, environmental degradation, crime, conflict, and financial flows.¹⁵ As the OECD argues, these are the issues that will shape countries’ development prospects into the future¹⁶ and Australia’s engagement around them must ensure sustainable development outcomes are progressed, not hindered, in the process.

International development, foreign policy and trade will work together more effectively if the White Paper articulates how each fits within a clear definition of Australia’s national interest. Australia’s current Aid Policy¹⁷ already identifies how the international development program contributes to our national interest, and CARE does not suggest the policy be reopened. It is still less than three years old, and the development program has not yet had sufficient time to put the policy into full effect. However, this White Paper process provides an opportunity to link the development program with foreign policy and trade and ensure they work together effectively and consistently to advance Australia’s national interest and values.

It is important that trade promotion, policy and negotiations be included in this discussion. Trade is often seen as value neutral — however, it is clear the decisions a nation makes about where it negotiates trade deals; the sectors it chooses to focus on; the interests it seeks to advance through negotiations are all underpinned by values.

So, for example, in looking to grow a strong regional market, Australia’s development program should support initiatives and policy directions delivering decent and dignified work **through** reforms to discriminatory labour laws. Trade negotiations should endeavour to deliver agreements promoting women’s rights as workers without adding other impediments to communities working to escape poverty. Australia can continue to be a leading champion for women’s economic empowerment in the Asia-Pacific region

¹⁵ Alan Hudson and Linnea Jonsson. ‘Beyond Aid’ for Sustainable Development. OECD, ODI Project Briefing no.22, May 2009.

¹⁶ Alan Hudson and Linnea Jonsson. ‘Beyond Aid’ for Sustainable Development. OECD, ODI Project Briefing no.22, May 2009.

¹⁷ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australian Aid: Promoting prosperity, reducing poverty and enhancing stability*, <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/australian-aid-promoting-prosperity-reducing-poverty-enhancing-stability.aspx> 2014.

through our bilateral partnerships, engagement at regional fora, and collaboration with region actors such as ASEAN, APEC, and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Recommendation: Develop a detailed strategy to achieve the target established by the G20 in 2014 to reduce the gap between women's and men's labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025.

- As an element of this strategy advocate with our diplomatic partners for reforms to discriminatory labour laws, the extension of legal protections to those who are not currently covered as workers, and promote safe and secure working environments, especially for women in precarious employment (in line with SDG 8).

3.2 International Development as an instrument of foreign affairs

Australia is in a region surrounded by developing country neighbours and we will thrive or founder depending on the ability of the globe to continue to lift developing nations, and vulnerable communities around the world, out of poverty.

There is no doubt Australia's international development program supports Australia's characterisation as a good global citizen. In supporting good governance, gender equality and effective service delivery, it helps Australia to advance our values and our national interest across our region. In addition, thanks to Australia's bilateral and multilateral development initiatives, we have helped suppress transboundary threats – such as transnational crime, terrorism, human trafficking, environmental degradation, and the spread of deadly diseases.

In this regard, our international development program is instrumental. However, it is important it should not be seen to be transactional – if our neighbours and peers consider that Australia is using aid for short term transactional ends, Australia will lose the reputational benefit of its program. Effective development can deliver foreign policy aims of advancing our reputation internationally and presenting ourselves as a good global citizen, but it should never be directly harnessed to our short term transactional foreign policy objectives; it must always be based on sound development principles.

Recommendation: Recognise the central value of the international development program to our future stability and prosperity and ensure the focus is on effective development, never short term transactional outcomes.

4. Conclusion

Australia's particular history, geography and broad networks and alliances mean we need to establish clear and agreed values and strategic approaches to our international engagement within an expansive understanding of our national interest. Australia will need to maintain a strong focus on being a good global citizen. In a multipolar world, this approach in the White Paper will help Australia to navigate a strong and coherent course.