



Supporting women.
Defeating poverty.

Priorities for the 2021 Federal Budget

In this submission CARE Australia¹ proposes that the Federal Budget increase resources for Australia's development and humanitarian aid in Asia and the Pacific, in recognition of the significant and multi-faceted challenges facing the region. Crucially, this submission recommends the prioritisation of gender equality and locally-led activities as the most effective and efficient methods for achieving Australia's development and humanitarian objectives.

Executive Summary

The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated and compounded the ongoing development needs in the region. Asia and the Pacific remains the world's most disaster-prone region, at risk from both sudden and slow-onset disasters.² Changes in climate are increasing death, injury and ill-health; risk of food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems, particularly for poorer populations; and the loss of rural livelihoods due to increased clean water scarcity.³ Lack of gender equality is a significant issue in the response to and management of climate related changes — including humanitarian disasters — across Asia and the Pacific. These shortcomings lead to greater risk of death and injury for women and children during disasters and their aftermath,⁴ but can be addressed through how Australia chooses to prioritise the expenditure of Official Development Assistance.

Gender inequality is a key driver of poverty and one of the most widespread forms of injustice in the world. By supporting women and girls, and addressing gender inequalities, the root causes of poverty can be addressed, and human rights realised. Greater gender equality is strongly correlated with greater peace and stability, as well as delivering stronger economic growth and prosperity. It is beyond doubt that supporting gender equality internationally, and

¹ CARE Australia seeks a world of hope, inclusion and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. Formed in 1987 by former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, and part of a global movement founded in 1945, CARE Australia has a strong focus on gender equality as an essential component in bringing lasting development to communities. 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, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. In addition, CARE Australia undertakes development assistance and disaster response activities in another 17 countries in the Pacific, Middle East and Africa.

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 2019 [Global Humanitarian Overview 2019](#)

³ As referenced by CARE International, 2014 *2015 and beyond: Action for a just, gender-equitable and sustainable future*

⁴ CARE Climate Change and Resilience Platform, 2020 [Evicted by Climate Change - Confronting the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement](#)

particularly in our region, is in Australia's national interest. Simply put, greater gender equality saves lives and builds stronger, more resilient economies — especially when it is done in partnership with local actors.

Locally led partnerships can have a great impact supporting saving lives in emergencies, and overcoming long term poverty.⁵ Local actors are often the first responders when disaster strikes, with best access to local populations, intimate knowledge of the local context, and long-term presence.⁶ The Australian Government, working with private and bilateral donors, as well as Pacific government and international organisations, can play an important role by increasing core and multi-year funding for women-led organisations, and gender-responsive programs, supporting locally led decision making and programming.

Despite progress in terms of policy frameworks and commitments at the international level, there has been a collective failure by donors and UN agencies to prioritise gender equality and the leadership of women and women's organisations in crisis- affected countries. This Federal Budget is an opportunity for Australia to take further action on our current commitments, demonstrating leadership and building long lasting solutions with our neighbours in the Asia and Pacific region.

Recommendations

1. Scale up financial support for women's organisations to engage in policy advocacy at the global, regional and national levels. This means actively championing women's and girls' leadership and participation in humanitarian responses by ensuring they are meaningfully represented in decision-making bodies.
2. Introduce investment targets measured against the OECD DAC gender marker, that 20 per cent of Australia's aid budget is dedicated to investments that list gender equality as their primary objective and 65 per cent list gender equality as their secondary objective (85 per cent overall). This recognises the cross-cutting benefits of gender equality programming to the goals of the development policy and raises the ambition for aid programs to integrate gender equality.

⁵ Raud, W 2017 [Gender and Localising Aid - the potential of partnerships to deliver](#)

⁶ Raud, W 2017 [Gender and Localising Aid - the potential of partnerships to deliver](#)

3. In looking to enable positive outcomes for gender equality, the significant gains from projects supported under the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative must be acknowledged and embedded, with ongoing resources for projects (beyond the current timeframe for Pacific Women).
4. Explicitly commit to the funding targets from the World Humanitarian Summit High Level Roundtable on Women and Girls (including targeting at least 4 per cent of humanitarian funding at local women's rights organisations, movements and institutions) and develop a time-bound plan to meet the targets, with annual public reporting on progress.

The Survival Gap

Climate change and disaster impacts are not gender neutral. The Pacific is facing a significant rise in the frequency and severity of extreme weather and climate-related disasters,⁷ which directly and negatively impact vulnerable people. Unequal access to resources, rights, and opportunities between men and women mean they experience the impacts of climate change and disasters differently.⁸ The effects of COVID-19, coupled with the growing impacts of climate change have increased the number of people in need globally by 40 per cent⁹ — the single largest increase ever recorded in one year.

Women displaced by disasters face an increased risk of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, forced marriage and trafficking. Women and children are up to 14 times more likely to be killed than men by a climate-fuelled disaster, such as a hurricane, typhoon, cyclone, or flood.¹⁰ However, while

*there is strong evidence that women and children are more likely to die, be injured, or die sooner, from disasters than men, ...this effect is drastically reduced if women's socio-economic status is improved.*¹¹

⁷ WHO, 2015 [Human health and climate change in Pacific Island countries](#)

⁸ UNDP, 2013 [Overview of linkages between gender and climate change](#)

⁹ UN OCHA, [Global Humanitarian Overview 2021](#), Inter-agency coordinated appeals

¹⁰ CARE Climate Change and Resilience Platform, 2020 [Evicted by Climate Change - Confronting the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement](#) p 8

¹¹ Kate Morioka, UN Women 2016 [Time to Act on Gender, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction](#) p 23

When Cyclone Harold swept across Vanuatu and Tonga in April 2020, there was significant concern about the direct impact the cyclone would have on communities already feeling the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns. Any cyclone in Vanuatu creates difficulties for the population, particularly in relation to food security for a country where 75 per cent of the population live in rural areas and are reliant on subsistence agriculture.¹² Women are also primarily responsible for securing food for the household.¹³ Restrictions due to COVID-19 were impacting on transport and access to markets, and the increasing scarcity of food and pressure to perform productive labour to secure food and essential items during a crisis was recognised as a potential trigger for domestic violence within families.

As reported by Ofakilevuka ('Ofa) Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Director of the Women and Children's Crisis Centre in Tonga:

My immediate thoughts took me to the additional burden that would pile up on our women. Women were already having to deal with surplus demands from family members during lockdown: cooking, cleaning, washing, tending to the sick, helping children with homework, weaving to cover for pay cuts, calling for family prayers, managing family conflict, and so on. Now they were faced with having to deal with the unexpected arrival of TC Harold: facilitating the move to evacuation centres, preparing and cooking food for the family for the cyclone period, ensuring elderly and young members of the family were in safe locations. Not to mention its exit: immediately cleaning up, assessing damage, facilitating relocation of family members, feeding the family, and keeping up with family demands. All this, while making sure that family members kept to strict hygiene rules because of COVID-19.¹⁴

Supporting locally led responses to help close the Survival Gap

In looking to address the disadvantages brought about by gender inequalities, and the increased impact of climate change, there is increasing evidence of the need for locally led responses.¹⁵ Locally led partnerships can have a real impact to support saving lives in

¹² Megan Williams CARE International In Vanuatu, 2020 *Tropical Cyclone Harold Rapid Gender Analysis*

¹³ Anna Cowley, CARE International, 2015 *Food Security and Livelihoods. Gendered Situation analysis Tafea*

¹⁴ Ofakilevuka ('Ofa) Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Director of the Women & Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) May 2020 [Tonga's Double Whammy: COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclones](#) ANU Devpolicy blog

¹⁵ See for example Webb, J et al 2017 [Does gender responsive disaster risk reduction make a difference?](#) and Sutton, K et al 2018 [Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation](#)

emergencies, and to overcome long-term poverty.¹⁶ Local actors are often the first responders when disaster strikes, with best access to local populations, intimate knowledge of the local context, and long-term presence.¹⁷

The benefits of preparedness in the disaster response were tracked and reported after Tropical Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu, 2015). Investing in disaster risk management (DRR — Disaster Risk Reduction), and involving women across all stages of preparedness and response is vital. A key finding of the 2015 research is that receiving early warnings is not enough, and people need knowledge of appropriate actions and ongoing support to keep this knowledge up to date.¹⁸ Also

*the communities that had DRR programming before Pam experienced less damage and loss than those that had not had DRR support, even when they experienced the comparable wind strength.*¹⁹

CARE Australia's work on women's leadership in community based disaster committees found that where gender equality training had been delivered and women had taken up leadership roles, the community as a whole worked together more effectively.²⁰ Research in Tafea province specifically found greater involvement of women in disaster leadership contributed to more inclusive preparedness and responses.²¹ Having this DRR programming led by local agencies can lead to great efficiency and achieve impressive speed and coverage in the response phase, by leveraging networks and logistics in-country.²² Gender equality must also occur outside of DRR activities to truly transform dangerous gender norms within a society.

Civil society is highly effective in promoting the rights of women and girls, and as such, support for local civil society needs to be made a more explicit strategic priority for the Pacific. Meaningful engagement of local civil society — especially women-led organisations — is necessary at all levels of decision making, to ensure humanitarian and development

¹⁶ Raud, W 2017 [Gender and Localising Aid - the potential of partnerships to deliver](#)

¹⁷ Raud, W 2017 [Gender and Localising Aid - the potential of partnerships to deliver](#)

¹⁸ Webb, J et al 2017 [Does gender responsive disaster risk reduction make a difference?](#) p 39

¹⁹ Webb, J et al 2017 [Does gender responsive disaster risk reduction make a difference?](#) p 40

²⁰ Webb, J et al 2017 [Does gender responsive disaster risk reduction make a difference?](#)

²¹ Webb, J et al 2017 [Does gender responsive disaster risk reduction make a difference?](#)

²² Sutton, K et al 2018 [Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation](#)

efforts and response are not further excluding those most at risk. Including women and men in decision-making adds value to informing services that are more responsive, draws from the knowledge, perspectives and ideas of diverse communities, and ultimately helps realise rights more effectively for a broader set of people.²³

The Australian Government, working with private and bilateral donors, as well as Pacific government and international organisations, can play an important role by increasing core and multi-year funding for women-led organisations, and gender responsive programs, supporting locally-led decision making and programming. The financial stability that comes with this funding enables women's organisations to respond flexibly to changes in context and facilitates the medium- and long-term advocacy, planning, and programming needed to keep gender equality at the centre of development implementation and monitoring.²⁴

Recommendation 1

Scale up financial support for women's organisations to engage in policy advocacy at the global, regional and national levels. This means actively championing women's and girls' leadership and participation in humanitarian responses by ensuring they are meaningfully represented in decision-making bodies.

To enable civil society organisations to continue their work promoting the rights of women and girls, and to demonstrate the positive outcomes this investment brings, Australia still needs to meet our previous commitment that 80 per cent of Australia's development program effectively addresses gender issues in their implementation.²⁵ In 2018, only 55 per cent of Australia's development spending targeted gender equality as a principal or significant goal, under OECD guidelines.²⁶ The need to prioritise gender must not be lost with the shifts within the aid program to focus more on large facilities and infrastructure. Complementary investment targets, ensuring Australia's international development cooperation efforts are directed towards gender equality initiatives, are also needed. This would not only support progress towards the gender target, but improve effectiveness overall, as DFAT performance data has shown that programs with a gender focus outperformed the average across all six previous performance criteria including effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.²⁷

²³ CARE International 2019 [Gender Equality and Women's Voice Guidance Note](#) p 13

²⁴ UN Women, 2018 *Turning Promises into Action - Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* p 256

²⁵ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014 *Making Performance Count*

²⁶ Donor Tracker [Gender Equality Australia](#) accessed January 2021

²⁷ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018 *Performance of Australian Aid 2016-17* p 14

Recommendation 2

Introduce investment targets measured against the OECD DAC gender marker, that 20 per cent of Australia’s aid budget is dedicated to investments that list gender equality as their primary objective and 65 per cent list gender equality as their secondary objective (85 per cent overall). This recognises the cross-cutting benefits of gender equality programming to the goals of the development policy and raises the ambition for aid programs to integrate gender equality.

Dedicated funding pools delivered through DFAT such as the Gender Equality Fund and Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development need to be continued, focused on supporting civil society and women-led organisations, and even expanded to prioritise funding for ending gender-based violence (GBV) across our region, including in Middle Income Countries. DFAT’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy supports women’s representation, noting “it is particularly crucial for ensuring women’s perspectives are heard”²⁸ and that the presence of strong women’s organisations is a key factor in delivering legislation that criminalises violence against women.

Recommendation 3

In looking to enable positive outcomes for gender equality, the significant gains from projects supported under the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative must be acknowledged and embedded, with ongoing resources for projects (beyond the current timeframe for Pacific Women).

Focus on the Frontline

Even in Pacific communities where women hold traditional titles and where matrilineal ownership of resources, such as land, exists, community decision making tends to be dominated by male traditional leaders.²⁹ Women are often found in small numbers on community decision-making bodies and in consultations on disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. This underrepresentation makes them less likely to receive critical information for preparedness and to be able to influence decisions.

*Until we better enable [localisation and feminism], women and girls in crisis — and especially the most vulnerable subgroups — will continue to be left behind.*³⁰

²⁸ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016 *Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy* p 7

²⁹ Charlie Damon et al CARE, 2020 [CARE Rapid Gender Analysis COVID-19 Pacific Region](#) [v1] p 6

³⁰ Kharas et al (eds), 2020 *Leave No One Behind* p 36

Funding to frontline women’s organisations in fragile and conflict-affected areas globally remains at a paltry 0.2 per cent of total bilateral aid, despite an upward trend of increased total aid committed by OECD donors to support gender equality efforts.³¹ A focus on gender equality in development programming should continue to inform gender transformative humanitarian programming. Incorporating immediate gender-conflict analysis, and identifying and then supporting local partners are key components of humanitarian response. These components, applied through the nexus framework as articulated at the World Humanitarian Summit³² in 2016, can support longer term development outcomes.

CARE has reviewed OECD spending to understand how the global community is responding to the benchmarks on achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in humanitarian crises, as outlined at the High Level Roundtable on Women and Girls at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.³³ These benchmarks and commitments represent the most concrete set of global gender-specific goals for funding and leadership in humanitarian contexts. Australia committed to a range of actions as part of the World Humanitarian Summit, including five core commitments outlined at the High Level Roundtable, and an additional three in support of gender equality.³⁴

³¹ CARE International [pending] *Collective Failure: How the aid system shortchanges women and girls*

³² UN OCHA [Humanitarian Development Nexus](#) accessed January 2021

³³ CARE used OECD data to analyse donor funding, which requires OECD members to report on gender equality programming and on funding to women’s rights organisations, movements, and ministries. All OECD data is from 2018, published at the end of 2019. The data on funding to women’s rights organisations, movements and institutions – analyses this as a percentage of all Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). The data on “gender principal” and “gender significant” programming, respectively, analyses for humanitarian funding only.

³⁴ UN OCHA, [Agenda for Humanity](#) Extract from *Australia’s Commitments From WHS 2016*

15. Australia commits to empower women and girls as change agents and leaders, including by increasing support for local women-led groups to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.

16. Australia commits to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome documents of their review conferences for all women and adolescent girls in crisis settings.

17. Australia commits to implement a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender based violence in crisis contexts, including through the Call to Action on Protection from Gender based Violence in Emergencies.

18. Australia will ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive.

19. Australia will fully comply with humanitarian policies, frameworks and legally binding documents related to gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights.

20. On behalf of the MIKTA group of countries – Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Turkey, Australia commits to work closely with local and national women’s groups to provide them with practical support to increase their capacity to deliver in humanitarian settings.

21. As a founding member of the Call to Action, Australia reaffirms its commitment to the Call to Action and its ‘Roadmap’ for implementation.

22. Australia commit to apply a gender marker to all humanitarian funding providing by the Australian Government – to ensure gender issues are considered at all stages of the program cycle

Most of the top 10 OECD donor countries have failed to significantly increase funding to women's groups in fragile and conflict affected states and do not sufficiently fund gender-equality programs, despite some promising multilateral, individual donor, and UN agency initiatives.³⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic also threatens reversing even modest gains made to date.³⁶ CARE's analysis shows Australia, along with the significant majority of other OECD donors,³⁷ is not meeting commitments to gender equality and women's participation and leadership in humanitarian response. While Australia is demonstrating commitment to gender equality, with 19.19 per cent of humanitarian funding coded as gender principal, only 0.009 per cent of Australian aid to fragile states is allocated to women's rights organisations, movements and institutions — well below the 4 per cent target.

Despite progress in terms of policy frameworks and commitments at the international level, there has been a collective failure by donors and UN agencies to prioritise gender equality and the leadership of women and women's organisations in crisis- affected countries. According to the UN OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview, 235.4 million people are in need of lifesaving assistance in 2021, requiring an unprecedented total of \$US 35.1 billion to provide aid.³⁸ This Federal Budget is an opportunity for Australia to take further action on our current commitments, demonstrating leadership and building long lasting solutions with our neighbours in the Asia and Pacific region.

Recommendation 4

Explicitly commit to the funding targets from the World Humanitarian Summit High Level Roundtable on Women and Girls (including targeting at least 4 per cent of humanitarian funding at local women's rights organisations, movements and institutions) and develop a time-bound plan to meet the targets, with annual public reporting on progress.

³⁵ CARE International [pending] *Collective Failure: How the aid system shortchanges women and girls*

³⁶ CARE International [pending] *Collective Failure: How the aid system shortchanges women and girls*

³⁷ CARE International [pending] *Collective Failure: How the aid system shortchanges women and girls*

³⁸ UN OCHA 2020 [Global Humanitarian Overview 2021](#)

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