



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 14 May 2015

**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub-Committee**

*Chair: The Hon Philip Ruddock MP
Deputy: Senator Anne McEwen*

Empowering women and girls: what works well in our region?

The Government's new aid effectiveness targets for women and girls—what has worked and what are the future priorities in the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific region—will be investigated by the Human Rights Sub-committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on Friday in Canberra.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will appear before the Sub-committee, which is holding final hearings for its inquiry into the challenges facing women and girls in the Indian Ocean–Asia Pacific region.

The Committee will focus its investigation on inquiry Terms of Reference 2 and 4, to discover:

- How to decrease the prevalence and impact of family and sexual violence?
- What is and what can be done to empower women in public life and promote women in leadership?
- How can economic growth provide new opportunities for women's empowerment?
- How effective are current Australian programs in delivering measurable human rights improvements for women and girls in the Indian Ocean– Asia Pacific region.

The Committee will also hear from representatives of the international human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW). Ms Liesl Gertholtz, Executive Director of the Women's Rights Division, will be accompanied by Australia Director Ms Elaine Pearson.

Human Rights Watch will update the Committee on its work on child marriage, on evolving issues such as 'virginity testing' for students in Indonesia, as well as HRW's recent reports on labour abuses in the Cambodian garment industry and sexual violence in post conflict Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Public Hearing Information

Date/Time: Friday 15 May, 8.45 am – 11.00 am

Location: Committee Room 1R4, Parliament House, Canberra

The public hearing program and further information on the inquiry is available on the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt

The proceedings will be audiocast live on <http://www.aph.gov.au/News and Events/Watch Parliament>.

For media comment: Contact the Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP via Mr Jeremy Greenwood on 0413 280 799. For all other inquiries, contact the Inquiry Secretary on (02) 6277 4318