

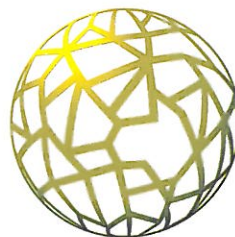


Submission No 14

**Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste**

Organisation: Australian Council for International Development

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



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

26 March 2013

Mr John Carter  
Inquiry Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Foreign Affairs sub-committee  
Parliament House  
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Dear Mr Carter,

### **Australia's relationship with Timor Leste**

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) welcomes the inquiry into Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste by the Foreign Affairs sub-committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (the sub-committee). ACFID's interest in the inquiry is in regard to the term of reference: "aid, including support with governance issues".

#### **ACFID**

ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty. Our vision is of a world where gross inequality within societies and between nations is reversed and extreme poverty is eradicated.

ACFID's purpose is to provide leadership to the not-for-profit aid and development sector in Australia in achieving this vision and to fairly represent and promote the collective views and interests of our membership.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has over 90 members operating in more than 100 developing countries, including Timor Leste. ACFID's membership expends \$1.2 billion on humanitarian and development activities and raised \$850 million from over 2 million Australian households (ACFID sector statistics 2009/10). 86% of funding is from non-government sources. 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.

ACFID maintains a Code of Conduct, which is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. Covering over 50 principles and 150 obligations, 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. Over 120 organisations have signed the ACFID Code. Signatories can be viewed at <http://www.acfid.asn.au>.

**united against poverty**

ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty

### ***ACFID and Timor Leste***

A list of 26 ACFID members which are currently working in Timor Leste is below.

Indicative ACFID members country spend for the financial year 2010-11 was \$28,281,021

This comprised funds raised from the Australian community in 2010-11 of: \$9,314,008

Funds from AusAID to ANGOs were \$4,013,535 in the same period. The remainder of funds spent by ANGOs came from other sources including, multilateral bodies, UN, philanthropic and corporate donations.

#### ACFID members working in Timor Leste:

- Act for Peace
- Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific
- Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Relief and Mercy Services
- Baptist World Aid Australia
- CARE Australia
- Caritas Australia
- ChildFund Australia
- Global Development Group
- International Women's Development Agency
- The Leprosy Mission Australia
- Marie Stopes International Australia
- Mary MacKillop International
- Mercy Works Ltd
- Motivation Australia Development Organisation
- Oxfam Australia
- PALMS Australia-Volunteering for a Global Mission
- Plan International Australia
- Quaker Service Australia
- Salesian Society (Vic)
- Save the Children Australia
- TEAR Australia
- Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA
- UnitingWorld
- WaterAid
- World Education
- World Vision Australia

ACFID member projects cover agricultural development, water supply and sanitation, education and vocational training, health, reproductive health, and energy production.

#### ***Strengthening Civil Society***

ACFID is firmly of the view that supporting a vibrant civil society is a key to sustainable and equitable development in Timor Leste and recommends that the sub-committee pays particular attention to strengthening civil society as a key component of aid to Timor Leste.

challenge harmful gender norms, and foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men should be prioritised.

In the past five years, ACFID members have made significant progress in integrating gender more fully into their programs in Timor Leste and elsewhere.

Also see enclosed ACFID research papers "*Now we feel like respected adults*" – *Positive change in gender roles and relations in a Timor-Leste WASH program* and *Closing the gender gap: Gender and Australian NGOs*.

### **Conclusion**

ACFID notes that it has been 13 years since the last wide-ranging inquiry into Australia's relationship with Timor Leste. In the 10+ years since Timor Leste gained independence, ACFID members have played an active role in the development of this new nation. ACFID looks forward to the outcome of the inquiry which it trusts will contribute to Australia's efforts to support this fledgling nation and its people in their endeavours to eradicate poverty.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Purcell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Marc Purcell**  
**Executive Director**

**ACFID also recommends that the sub-committee visit Dili to carry out public hearings.**

ACFID members would be able to assist the Committee in meeting with their field staff, partner organisations and representatives of civil society in Timor Leste.

Civil society actors - such as in-country non-governmental organisations (NGOs), large and small community groups, voluntary associations, faith-based groups, trade unions and human rights defenders - are key development actors. This was acknowledged in the Busan Declaration in 2011. Civil society actors work in a variety of distinctive ways to improve the conditions of those living in poverty, including strengthening the ability of communities in 'recipient' countries to hold their governments, aid agencies and private sector actors to account.

Strong civil society organisations are the hallmarks of free and democratic nations everywhere. They advocate on people's behalf, provide essential services and create robust debate about important issues. Civil society harnesses the power of citizens to participate in decision making processes that will affect them.

ACFID Code of Conduct signatories commit to partnership approaches which can help strengthen civil society in Timor Leste. Signatory organisations strive to ensure that their purpose and processes are shaped by stakeholders and that their work is open to review and comment by partners and participants alike. In all instances those directly affected by aid and development activities are considered the primary stakeholders and their views afforded the highest priority

Working with civil society organisations is crucial in helping communities overcome poverty. ACFID members have been working in partnership with civil society organisations in developing countries for decades, supporting them in their work with people in overcoming poverty and injustice. Supporting the development of robust civil society organisations takes time and requires a commitment to deal with and understand the diversity of organisations engaged in different aspects of development. Australian NGOs usually commit to working with their partner civil society organisations long-term and have a focus on building the capacity of these organisations to advocate and work within communities.

Evidence suggests that if we are to improve development effectiveness then, amongst other things, changing accountability mechanisms, engaging in domestic discussion and building citizens' demand for better services all need to be part of that strategy. This of course means recognising, and attempting to address, at least in some way, the power relations inherent between different actors.

The AUSAID Civil Society Engagement Framework rightly recognises that the blossoming of an informed and engaged civil society within a developing country is a positive outcome in its own right. AusAID heavily consulted with ACFID while drawing up this framework.

**Gender Equality**

ACFID maintains a strategic focus on gender equality which it sees as an essential prerequisite for a fair, just and equitable world. Gender equality is a human right, with every woman and girl entitled to live in dignity and with freedom from fear. It is also a development goal in itself, and a means of achieving other development goals. ACFID recommends the strengthening of gender analysis in aid to Timor Leste.

The ACFID Code of Conduct notes that gender-sensitive, gender-focussed and gender transformative strategies can enhance the impact of development projects. Achieving gender equality may require targeting programs specifically at women, engaging with men as champions to promote gender equality and challenging the broader social relations that inhibit claims for human rights. Social relations between women and men, among women, and among men change over time and vary in different cultures. Gender-transformative approaches that address the root causes of injustice,