



## **Submission No 18**

### **Inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific**

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**Submission to the**

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

**Human Rights Sub-Committee**

**Inquiry into Australia's Aid Program  
in the Pacific**

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## Introduction

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific. ACFID is an independent association of Australian non-government overseas aid and development agencies. Fifty ACFID member agencies are currently engaged on Pacific Island activities (see Appendix A). Most have been involved with their Pacific counterpart agencies for 20-30 years. In the case of the major churches, these relationships have been active for seven or more decades. Their combined pool of Pacific expertise and relationships is one of Australia's major assets in seeking to assist the region.

There is considerable potential for Australia to make greater use of this asset. Other developed countries provide much higher levels of official development assistance (ODA) through non-government organisations (NGOs). For example, the average OECD country funding through NGOs is twice that of Australia, while the USA and Canada use NGOs to deliver ODA at four times the level Australia does. The Australian public strongly supports overseas aid. This is reflected in their donations to aid and development NGOs being the second highest per capita worldwide. Despite there being a high level of confidence in the effectiveness of NGO aid delivery, the 2006-07 Federal Budget saw a further decline from 4.4% to 3.8% in the share of Australian ODA through NGOs. Notwithstanding the large increase in the 2006-07 aid budget, the principal mechanism for Government-NGO partnership, the AusAID/NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), declined from 1.1% to 0.9% of ODA.

Our neighbouring countries face acute challenges, particularly in terms of strengthening their civil society base. The NGO sector has high levels of Pacific expertise, long-term relationships in Pacific Island countries, and is more cost effective relative to "for profit" contractors. Hence, the effectiveness of Australia's aid program, would be increased if it drew more on NGOs for program delivery and in policy dialogue, to pursue the goals of political stability and economic and social development in the region over the next 30 years.

This Submission draws on the lessons from our members' experience in the region. It is divided into two parts: Part A - Recommendations and Part B - Commentary. In making this submission, we have followed as closely as possible the topic areas set out by the Inquiry's terms of reference. In Part B, Sections 1-2 outline what we believe are effective aid delivery approaches with Sections 3 -7 providing input under the Inquiry's five focus areas.

## **Part A: Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1: Partnerships, regional integration and Pacific Islander expertise**

The following steps should be taken to make greater use of existing partnerships, forge new partnerships, support regional integration, and draw on and strengthen Pacific Islander expertise in the aid program:

- Greater use of Pacific Islander expertise in program delivery assisted through, amongst other things, establishment of a *Pacific Islander Consultancy Register*.
- A substantial increase in the use of accredited Australian NGOs and their local Pacific partners in the delivery of the official program, thereby improving program quality, development effectiveness and cost effectiveness.
- Demonstrable long-term planning and budgetary commitments to reflect the aid White Paper recommendations on partnerships and long-term engagement, e.g. for the PNG Church Partnership Program.
- Use of a flexible “group partnership” model which would link AusAID accredited professional development NGOs and domestic specialist agencies with Pacific partners. Proposed group partnerships:
  - (i) *Partnership to Support Pacific People with Disabilities* - a substantial disability program to assist Pacific service providers, trainers and client support groups and utilising Australian development and disability expertise
  - (ii) *Pacific Reproductive Health Partnership Program* which brings together Australian development and reproductive and sexual health practitioners and Pacific reproductive health workers
  - (iii) *Partnership for Pacific Civil Society Strengthening* involving Australian NGOs and Regional/National Pacific civil society groups.
  - (iv) *Partnerships (mentoring) between Australian and Pacific Island Professional bodies*, e.g. doctors, dentists, nutritionists, teachers, agriculturalists, etc. to build capacity of sister associations in the Pacific. It will be important to provide development context training to the Australian professional or peak body.

This approach builds on existing networks and informal partnerships, especially from the NGO sector, to develop practical mechanisms for program funding and delivery. It is consistent with the White Paper's overall approach<sup>1</sup>.

### **Recommendation 2: Building Stronger Leadership**

(Strengthening Pacific political governance and enhancing gender equality)

#### **Pacific Youth Ambassadors Program**

- ACFID recommends that the Government initiates a *Pacific Youth Ambassadors Program* (linking to and drawing on the experiences of the *Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development [AYAD] Program*) for the

next generation of Pacific Island leaders, especially women, to gain first hand work and social experience of Australia's public, private and civil society sectors.

This recommendation relates directly to the long-term challenge identified in the aid White Paper to strengthen political governance<sup>ii</sup> and to address the very substantial gender inequality in the region<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Recommendation 3: Getting the AFP/ADF prepared for Pacific deployments**

(Focus area: Strengthening law and justice)

- Greater interaction be supported between Australian-funded law and justice strengthening programs and the Pacific's own legal training institution (University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus in Vanuatu) to ensure that:
  - culturally relevant "restorative" justice approaches are taken into account alongside the westernised "retributive" justice approach;
  - community awareness-raising programs about the law and justice system are developed with a focus on people's rights in domestic violence situations.
- Recognising that the Australian Federal Police and Australian Defence Force and Corrective Services are likely to deploy personnel into Pacific Island settings for many years to come, more substantial pre-deployment training in language and culture should be put in place to overcome evident weaknesses in current interactions with Pacific Islanders. This should include in-country training on related issues of child protection, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and in-depth village-based cultural immersion to learn about community norms and values.

### **Recommendation 4: Informal sector, land tenure, forestry and labour mobility**

(Focus area: Improving economic management and public accountability institutions)

- **Informal sector support:** The 'informal' sector of Pacific Island economies needs greater attention within aid program planning.
- **Land tenure:** *Pacific 2020* notes the importance of customary ownership and the sensitivity of land tenure reforms and that each country will need to work out its own solution. We support the four general directions for change in *Pacific 2020* (p.5) while advising extreme caution and extensive in-country consultation.
- **Forestry:** There have been many inquiries into corruption within Forestry in PNG. If this sector's corruption problems could be addressed, it would provide enormous confidence that corruption elsewhere can be overcome. Australian support to be provided to PNG to conduct a high-level inquiry (through an Independent Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Commission) to examine and solve persistent problems of the large-scale logging industry and the role it plays in undermining governance and perpetuating human rights infringements.
- **Pacific Labour Mobility:** A pilot Pacific Labour Mobility program to be developed targeting unskilled workers, addressing shortages in particular areas of the Australian labour market and, whilst being careful not to create an elite, make linkages with the proposed Australia-Pacific Technical College (on the assumption as implied in the White Paper<sup>iv</sup> that it has community-based campuses).

### **Recommendation 5: Basic health services**

(Focus area: Ensuring access to basic services, especially Health)

#### **Health (separate from HIV support)**

Recognising the high level of Australian funding for HIV, there is now a need to redress program weakness in other health services and system development, especially:

- **Disability:** implementation of a substantial disability program (see Recommendation 1) including substantial support for civil society health and disability groups in demanding better upward accountability of their local, regional and national governments;
- **Institutional strengthening:** capacity strengthening for institutions addressing malaria, tuberculosis, diabetes, heart disease and other major diseases;
- **Domestic violence and sexual abuse:** behavioural change programs related to the high incidence of domestic violence and sexual abuse;
- **Reproductive and sexual health:** strengthened support for reproductive and sexual health (see also Recommendation 1).

#### **Mainstreaming HIV**

Recognising that Australia is providing strong support to PNG to address HIV, ACFID further recommends that it is also important to:

- Strengthen PNG civil society and church networks to enable them to raise awareness about HIV, especially through peer education programs.
- Include HIV mainstreaming in Australia's program support across major sectors, including transport, correctional services and education.
- Support efforts to encourage use of HIV curricula in PNG schools.
- Target traditional healers for HIV awareness raising.
- Support Pacific Regional AIDS organisations in their awareness raising and capacity building efforts.

### **Recommendation 6: Building demand for anti-corruption and good governance**

(Focus area: Anti-corruption and good governance measures)

- Given the disposition of some governments against expanded civil society capacity to demand good governance, Australia needs to institute an annual consultative process in each Pacific country. This would ensure that views beyond those of an often self-interested elite are taken into account in determining an appropriate "anti-corruption and good governance" approach.
- In implementing its "Anti-Corruption for Development" strategy under the White Paper, Australia should look to best international practices, such as the National Integrity System (NIS) and provide support to Pacific island national chapters of Transparency International (TI) to implement this or another appropriate approach.
- In addition the annual, bi-lateral aid consultations of Pacific Island countries should, as a matter of course, include senior NGO representation.

**Recommendation 7: Supporting Pacific civil society development**

(Focus area: Supporting peace-building and community and civil society development)

- The Government should make much greater use of accredited Australian NGOs with decades of Pacific experience in delivering relevant civil society programs with their local partners (see also Recommendation 1).
- Australia should join with other donors to promote and support the capacity building work of Pacific Regional NGOs.

## Part B: Commentary

### Effective aid delivery approaches

#### Section 1: Partnerships, Regional Integration and Pooling

(Commentary on Recommendation 1)

##### 1.1 Australian NGO - Local Pacific Partner Relationships

The White Paper acknowledges that Australia is moving towards a more inclusive and effective way of working with local partners and calls for an acceleration of this change. It states that a fundamental tenet of the aid program is that assistance should be aligned with partner government priorities, be championed by local people, and involve beneficiaries in design and implementation.<sup>v</sup> It also acknowledges the importance of very long timeframes.<sup>vi</sup> The distinctive features of Australian NGO relationships in the Pacific mean that they are well placed to assist the government with these more inclusive and effective aid implementation arrangements based on:

- **Partnerships** – not only “twinning” but long-term institutional, associational and individual mentoring to strengthen existing Pacific Islander skills
- **Well-established networks** - a track record of long-term engagement and consistent support to counterparts (church and secular), which enables Australian NGOs to draw on networks inside specific countries and across the Pacific Islands region as well as their own ACFID networks which give strength through pooling a wide range of agency skills
- **Relationships** – based on respect and reciprocity through acknowledgement that Australians can also learn from Pacific Islanders
- **Pacific Islander self-reliance** - encouragement of self-help, local ownership without pre-packaged solutions
- **Emphasis on cultural, historical and contextual understanding** – including dialogue through “listening” and learning local languages

This set of distinctive qualities, together with cost efficiencies are not as readily available through the work of “for profit” contractors, even although they may well fully meet the short-term project performance criteria.

The White Paper stresses Australia’s commitment to maximising aid effectiveness which we believe can be assisted by drawing upon the strength of NGO relationships with the Pacific to improve both program design and delivery. Community-to-community engagement has a very important role to play, especially in Melanesian countries where rural communities form the major part of the demographic makeup. Based on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessment in 2005 and a recent Australian government evaluation of NGOs<sup>vii</sup>, it is fair to assume that such a shift in aid delivery would lead to better program performance along the lines of other OECD donors.

##### 1.2 Use of Pacific Islander Expertise

ACFID has welcomed the Government’s decision to untie its aid spending from sole use of Australian and New Zealand goods and services. However, the apparent consequence of this change in the Pacific has been that expatriate-owned Australian companies located in Pacific Island countries and other donor country nationals have



taken up much of the new opportunity. Typically, non-Pacific nationals have been employed.

Australia should identify how Pacific Islanders with relevant professional or technical skills can be drawn upon more substantially, bearing in mind the large number of Pacific Islanders who have received tertiary or technical training in the USA, New Zealand, Australia and the UK over the last 20 years.

In terms of regional ventures, Pacific Island expertise is an established practice under the policing aspects of RAMSI and serves as a good model for greater utilisation of existing Pacific Islander skills. Instead of automatically calling on an Australian consultant, there is scope for proactively honing the consultancy skills of trained Pacific Islanders and Pacific civil society groups and establishing within AusAID a *Pacific Islander Consultancy Register*.

### **1.3 Group Partnership Model**

The White Paper calls for more effective aid delivery. ACFID believes that there is potential to draw upon and further refine an existing model, the "group partnership" implementation aspects of which serve as one example of effective aid delivery. AusAID initiated an innovative "group partnership" in PNG several years ago. The PNG Church Partnership Program (CPP) brought together a group of Australian churches with their PNG counterparts. While still in an early phase, the CPP is already seen as an effective mechanism for capacity building, including leadership development in health and education service delivery. Significantly, the flexibility allowed within the CPP design has enabled it to overcome local perceptions of much Australian aid delivery that is seen as top-down, short-term quick projects which do not draw on local experience and advice.

Because in PNG the churches are the major non-government agencies to have a truly national health and education service delivery reach, an additional benefit of the CPP is that it is helping to forge a greater sense of national NGO leadership among those who actually implement significant service programs. This, in turn, is sure to promote the emergence of a small cadre of national leaders over time that have a genuine interest in service to their people.

Apart from the church links, there is potential for other forms of "group partnership" to deliver significant advantages for the aid program in the Pacific. The form of such arrangements would depend on individual country interest and the strength of pre-existing NGO relationships with Australia. These linkages are well established in the areas of disability, reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS, NGO capacity building, to name a few. These are areas in which Australia has very strong technical expertise coupled with extensive aid delivery experience and is well placed for Pacific capacity strengthening. For example:

- In disability work ACFID members are linked to ACROD (domestic disability peak body) members to provide a solid body of best-mix domestic and development expertise to work with Pacific disability groups.
- In reproductive and sexual health, ACFID members who work in developing countries on reproductive and sexual health are linked to domestic sexual/reproductive health practitioners and in turn work with Pacific health workers.
- AusAID's HIV Taskforce is already investigating the potential to draw on the best mix of Australian domestic and development sector expertise and experience to implementing the White Paper's *HIV/AIDS – Leadership in the Region* through its proposed Research and Capacity Building Programs.

- Pacific NGOs already have established linkages with Australian NGOs and there is potential for strategic partnerships in line with the White Paper's *Building Demand for Better Governance Program*<sup>viii</sup>.

Both AusAID and ACFID regard the AusAID NGO accreditation system for professional development NGOs as a very robust system, ensuring that aid and development are being effectively delivered by these NGOs in the often-challenging overseas development environment. In order to be considered for AusAID accreditation, an agency must be a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, which promotes good governance practices, in particular a high level of accountability and transparency.

While welcoming the White Paper's proposal of *Mobilising New Australian Links to the Region*<sup>ix</sup>, ACFID emphasises its members' views on the need to ensure that all Australian NGOs working in aid and development employ good governance practices, are highly competent in their sector of work, and have a strong understanding of the development context in which they are engaged.

Australia's reputation as an effective aid deliverer depends on it maintaining existing high standards. ACFID will be more actively promoting the adoption of the Code of Conduct to all NGOs seeking to work in aid and development. Domestic agencies with areas of specialty useful to particular development programs and wishing to work within the official development program, but which do not have AusAID accreditation, should link with an appropriate AusAID accredited NGO, where there is synergy to be made. In this way the high professional standards associated with accreditation will be maintained in development work. The long experience of the development agencies has shown that it is not enough to be well-meaning in aid delivery. Pacific Islanders have long memories where often well-meaning outsiders have failed to produce effective aid outcomes.

An aid program delivered more substantially through "group implementation" by Australian partnerships and building upon existing Australian/Pacific NGO relationships should achieve effective results through the best possible mix of expertise, experience and local Pacific partnerships.

## **Section 2: Building Stronger Leadership**

(Commentary on Recommendation 2)

Promotion of gender equality should be a basic element in all Australian aid programs and ACFID is pleased to note that the White Paper stresses its importance, not only with regard to building stronger leadership but as a core principle of Australia's aid program.

ACFID stresses the importance of developing the current leadership cadre in the Pacific and especially the need to focus on the next generation of regional leaders in order to build the demand for better governance. ACFID is cognizant of the White Paper's proposal to build stronger leadership through implementation of its *Pacific Leadership Program* and *Building Demand for Better Governance Program*<sup>x</sup> and we recommend inclusion of a *Pacific Youth Ambassadors Program* within either of these with a focus both on strengthening Pacific political governance and enhancing gender equity.

While Australia is committed to bringing Pacific Island students to Australia under its enhanced scholarships program, there is a significant weakness in our approach to inviting Pacific Islanders to Australia for other learning and work opportunities. On a

similar principle to DFAT's "Special Visitor" program, Australia needs a program, which brings prospective Pacific leaders from the public, private, and civil society sectors to be more exposed to Australia. The Pacific Islands Forum is promoting a ***Pacific Volunteer Program***. This concept could be enhanced through linkages with the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) in a ***Pacific Youth Ambassadors Program*** – a twinning arrangement which would build mutually respectful relationships and would give a strong message to Pacific Islanders that Australians also are keen to learn from the Pacific. This would build a healthier balance in cross-cultural links. Given the Pacific's notably poor gender indicators, including some of the lowest levels of female parliamentary representation in the world, such a program should ensure a proportionately high level of female participation.

## Focus areas

### **Section 3: Strengthening law and justice** (Commentary on Recommendation 3)

Australia's immediate neighbourhood is one of particular political volatility, reflecting the challenges of post-colonial societies seeking to adapt to challenging internal and external circumstances. In the case of some Pacific Island countries, the poor match between traditional decision-making structures and modern political institutions exacerbates these challenges.

ACFID recognises the importance of strengthening law and justice processes in a culturally appropriate and sustainable way. We note in the White Paper that the AFP will broaden its role beyond enforcement to longer-term institutional capacity building<sup>xi</sup> which we agree is important. ACFID believes that there is little community understanding in some Pacific Island Countries (especially in parts of Melanesia) about the westernised law and justice system. Greater interaction between Australian law and justice strengthening programs and the Pacific's own legal training institution (University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus in Vanuatu) is encouraged to ensure that culturally relevant "restorative" justice approaches are taken into account alongside the metropolitan "retributive" justice approach and that community awareness about the law and justice system is raised. In this regard, particular emphasis should be placed on raising awareness about people's rights in domestic violence situations.

Lack of access to education and high youth unemployment also has a significant impact on law and justice issues, highlighting the need for law and justice to be examined within a development context. In this regard, ACFID acknowledges the effective work of the AusAID-funded PNG Community Law and Justice Unit (CLJU).

The acute situations that have arisen in Solomon Islands and East Timor in recent months reinforce the need for Australia to provide "law and justice" support where appropriate. The ADF and AFP are likely to be involved directly well into the medium term, providing valuable services particularly in times of crisis, but they cannot be a substitute for the development of effective local capacity.

Given the probability of ongoing cases of political volatility in our neighbourhood and the huge resources involved in deploying the ADF and AFP, we need to consider whether a greater Australian pre-emptive investment in development would reduce the high cost to Australia of such commitments. There is no simple formula on the

issue of “development investment” versus “sending in the troops”, but a broadly based program of development clearly has many advantages over a recurring series of crisis interventions.

ACFID believes the recent aid White Paper has set out a sensible framework for new investment and one that, for the first time, is committed to a “very long timeframe”. Without a 20-25 year frame of reference, Australia cannot expect to see its aspirations for regional countries achieved, particularly for stable, democratic and prospering nations. In short, substantial new Australian investment, paralleled by other donor investment, is likely to reduce the grounds for youth alienation, high unemployment and violence. This is also an area where Australia can draw more effectively on the significant Australian NGO expertise in income-generating programs at the local level.

A notable weakness of current deployment of uniformed personnel is that they generally have little affinity with local communities. This is despite the efforts of the AFP and ADF to carry out pre-deployment briefings. Apart from presenting Australia in a much poorer light than most Australians would wish the general lack of cultural or linguistic appreciation by such short-term staff does not assist Australia’s broader purpose.

Simple steps to redress this weakness include intensive **in-country** training involving:

- In-depth language training for AFP, ADF and Corrective Service officers
- Cultural immersion for at least a two-week period (**living in a village** prior to work placement);
- In-depth awareness raising (**in-country and in association with local counterparts**) on child protection, domestic violence and HIV.

Such training would not only help these personnel to understand the context in which their local counterparts are operating but would also demonstrate that Australians recognise that they too have something to learn.

A model for cultural/language exposure exists through the work of some ACFID member agencies. For instance, Australian Volunteers receive in-country language training and cultural immersion. Other donor countries also provide their aid and development workers with similar orientation programs.

#### **Section 4: Improving economic management and public accountability institutions**

(Commentary on Recommendation 4)

##### **Informal sector economy**

ACFID notes that most aid programs privilege economic management at government and institutional level over the informal economic sector level despite the large size and critical importance in Pacific Island countries of rural subsistence activities. Basic infrastructure such as roads and boats to enable rural access to markets is a major constraint and access to rural banks is a particular problem. The well-established rural banking system of PNG is now a memory of the past and many people have to travel long distances in order to access funds and savings associated with marketing their goods. Local savings banks providing security of funds and small-scale credit could have a major impact on rural economies and development.

### **Land tenure**

The White Paper's *Pacific Land Mobilisation Program* has attracted concern in the Pacific region. The history of logging agreements demonstrates dangers of promoting individual rights within collectivist cultures. There is a particular concern that land tenure reform could create a landless class resulting in absolute poverty, urban drift and social alienation. It will be important that, in using its significant donor influence on Pacific Island governments for this new initiative, Australia fully respects local sensitivities and only proceeds with land tenure reform where there is demonstrable evidence of local support. This would be a case where an annual consultative framework involving senior Pacific NGO representatives (proposed by ACFID in Section 6) would be appropriate.

### **Forestry**

Human rights abuses and corruption are entrenched in the forestry sector of many Pacific Island countries. These have undermined development assistance and aid support significantly, because powerful logging interests represented by a number of unscrupulous foreign logging companies have continued to undermine governance and development efforts. While there have been a series of attempts through loans and grants to PNG to reform the forestry sector, these have largely failed as none have dealt with the core issue of corruption. Serious efforts are urgently needed in these countries at different levels of government and at community level, with the support of countries such as Australia, to solve the root causes of human rights violations, mismanagement and corruption in the forestry sector.

ACFID notes that in the White Paper Australia has identified *Implementing/strengthening environmental regulatory regimes* as one of its three focus themes under its Environment Strategy<sup>xii</sup>. Under this theme, Australian support to PNG is needed to conduct a high-level inquiry to examine the persistent problems of the large-scale logging industry and the role it plays in undermining governance and perpetration human rights problems. An Independent Anti-Corruption Commission and an Independent Human Rights Commission should be established to handle these serious issues.

The Australian Government could also support organisations that help landowners with independent legal advice, conflict resolution and developing alternatives to large-scale forestry, and help PNG make the transition to community-based forest management and timber production. As long as the forestry sector is left in its current state, development assistance will be limited in realising its goals and objectives.

### **Pacific Labour Mobility**

The Pacific 2020 report concludes that it is no longer appropriate to separate out goods and labour markets in a development context. ACFID endorses this view and believes that the Australian Government needs to at least pilot a carefully designed program for seasonal work by unskilled Pacific Islanders. In addition to the specific request by all Pacific Island heads of government for Australia to initiate such a program, several thousand Australian businesses, especially in the fruit sector, are simply unable to find Australians willing to do this work. The National Farmers Federation, Australia's bilateral business councils with the region and ACFID all believe that a pilot program can be designed to ensure that payment and conditions are at Australian standards; that employers provide training and skills development and that workers definitely return to their country at the end of a 3-6 month period.

Whilst being careful not to create an elite, such a pilot scheme could have linkages with the proposed Australia-Pacific Technical College, assuming that it has community-based campuses as suggested by the White Paper. Incidentally this college would benefit from a more appropriate Pacific name.

## **Section 5: Ensuring access to basic services (especially health)**

(Commentary on Recommendation 5)

Pacific Island countries have both high rates of infectious diseases and escalating "lifestyle" diseases. We welcome the Government's intention, as identified in the White Paper<sup>xiii</sup>, to substantially increase its support for health systems development in PNG and other Pacific Island countries and welcome its focus on the needs of women and children.

### **5.1 Disability**

It is very unfortunate that disability did not rate a single mention in the White Paper on aid. The quantity and quality of support for people with a physical, mental or intellectual disability in the region is distressingly low. Considerable stigma attaches to disability in Pacific Island communities. For instance, children with physical and intellectual disabilities are often hidden away from visitors and rarely attend school. Mental disability is largely ignored. Apart from the human distress to people with disabilities who are not receiving assistance and to their carers, the loss in economic productivity is large.

ACFID members are in partnership with the Australian domestic disability peak body, ACROD, and together they are well placed to provide support to Pacific disability groups. Recognition of the importance of resourcing the disability area is urgently required through a *Pacific Program of Support to People with Disabilities*.

This is one field where Australia can make a major difference on its own within 3-5 years, drawing on Australia's world-class disability expertise and the capacity to use selected Australian development NGOs and others in delivery. The time is right to rectify the anomaly that Australia's aid program has had virtually no focus on disability despite the pressing needs among regional neighbours.

### **5.2 Institutional strengthening**

The health sector requires substantial ongoing support to address diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, diabetes and heart disease in an already overburdened system due to the HIV epidemic and increasing sexually transmitted infections.

### **5.3 Domestic violence and sexual abuse**

Domestic violence and child abuse are increasing and significant efforts are required to educate about protection and to promote child and human rights against sexual abuse.

### **5.4 Reproductive and sexual health support**

The incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the Pacific is alarmingly high. This contributes to the increasing HIV infection rates. As well, maternal and infant mortality is very high in some Pacific Island countries. Australian reproductive health professionals from the development and health sectors are well placed to provide substantial capacity building support to their Pacific reproductive health colleagues, e.g. midwives through a *Pacific Reproductive Health Support Program* (see Recommendation 1).

## **5.5 Addressing HIV**

ACFID welcomes the significant support that Australia is providing to PNG to address HIV and acknowledges the work of the AusAID HIV Taskforce in consulting with Australian HIV and development organisations with regard to the White Paper's *HIV/AIDS – Leadership in the Region Program*.<sup>xiv</sup>

ACFID recognises that PNG civil society groups and church networks have a critical role to play in awareness raising of HIV and that they will need ongoing capacity building support. Australian NGOs have a crucial role to play in this regard with their PNG and other Pacific partners. Whilst in PNG the majority of cases are in the 15-30 year group (the most economically productive age group) and are mostly women, there are also some disturbing trends in other age groups that imply the need for greater awareness raising and increased peer education. For instance, the increase in cases of 0-4 year olds suggests maternal transfer. The increasing incidence in 5-9 year olds suggests sexual abuse and the increase in older men raises the need for peer education, especially around domestic violence issues. There is considerable scope for mainstreaming HIV awareness across workplaces (transport, education, corrective services, police, political leadership, etc.). HIV school curricula have already been developed and ongoing support to ensure their use should be encouraged.

Traditional healers continue to be used in Pacific Island countries. Recognising that, in some remote areas, these provide are the only accessible health services, it is important to open dialogue with such healers and to raise their awareness about HIV infection.

Pacific Regional AIDS organisations, such as Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF) will have an increasingly important role to play in Pacific-wide awareness raising and could be drawn upon in partnerships to build local civil society capacity.

## **Section 6: Anti-corruption and good governance measures**

(Commentary on Recommendation 6)

ACFID recognises the importance placed by the Australian Government aid program on anti-corruption and good governance measures. At the same time, ACFID notes that there are several important differences between Australian and Pacific perceptions of these concepts. An action that an Australian would consider as 'corrupt' might well be viewed by a Pacific Islander as family or clan responsibility; western systems of election, based on political parties, do not necessarily fit in countries where party system do not automatically emerge; and the role of the State does not fit well in countries where people do not identify nationally (as a Papua New Guinean or a Solomon Islander) but rather have allegiance to a village or clan.

In light of these differing perceptions, ACFID believes that greater dialogue needs to be entered into with Pacific Island civil society to ascertain what people regard as a viable "anti-corruption and good governance" approach. There is no doubt that Pacific Islanders are concerned to keep those in power (whether politicians, civil society leaders, government officials) accountable and no doubt that traditional structures were once effective in achieving this. In implementing the White Paper strategy to counter corruption especially through support to build demand<sup>xv</sup> ACFID believes that Australia should build on the work being done internationally on community based performance monitoring and other forms of participatory local

governance to facilitate greater accountability of aid expenditure. For instance, the National Integrity System (NIS) approach promoted by Transparency International (TI) is a holistic approach to countering corruption. While there is no one blueprint for an effective system to prevent corruption, there is a growing international consensus as to the salient features of anti-corruption systems that work best. The Australian Government could assist Pacific Island countries, as the New Zealand Government has done, through support for TI Chapters and other civil society organisations to implement the NIS approach. ACFID believes that this would fit well also under the White Paper's "Building Demand for Better Governance" program.<sup>xvi</sup>

ACFID is aware that the Australian Government aid program is developed through a strong government-to-government consultative process. However, ACFID believes that greater civil society consultation and dialogue from the outset on an equal footing is also required. Increased up-front consultation with civil society by the Australian Government would have a powerful demonstration effect to support the increased interaction of Pacific governments and civil society.

### **Section 7: Supporting peace-building and community and civil society development**

(Commentary on Recommendation 7)

The most effective guard against corruption is a more confident and articulate citizenry. This requires an understanding of government budgetary and expenditure processes, basic literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge of basic rights. It does not involve creating new bodies but building on existing assets (local community structures) and assisting Pacific Islanders, many of whom live in community groupings on a subsistence basis, to have their voices heard.

Civil society development is crucial in Pacific Island countries where the majority of people are community and rural-based. ACFID members provide capacity building to their local partners and communities for a wide range of community development activities (water and sanitation, agriculture development, micro-finance, basic services such as education and health, to name a few). Some of this Australian NGO work with local partners is undertaken with Australian Government funding, some with Australian public support. But there is much more that could be done and Australian NGOs are well placed to provide this assistance.

As well, the Pacific Regional Non-Government Organisations are providing national civil society capacity building support (e.g. through bodies such as the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs, PIANGO, as well as a range of other Pacific Regional NGOs). These bodies are mostly under-resourced and it is important that Australia's aid program, through measures such as the "Building Demand for Better Governance" program, effectively strengthen these organisations in order to facilitate greater local participation in governance and accountability.

Recent moves by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat have increased recognition of the role civil society bodies can play. The Government of New Zealand also provides strong Pacific civil society support and the European Union plans to expand its direct support for Pacific civil society organisations. In the EU case, it has not been able to match its program funding with the needs of the many emerging civil society groups. Australia has an important role to play in providing both funding and technical assistance to ensure a vibrant civil society in the Pacific.



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## Appendix A

- 1 Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA)
- 2 AID/WATCH
- 3 Anglican Board of Mission (ABM)
- 4 AngliCORD
- 5 Austcare
- 6 Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM)
- 7 Australian Business Volunteers (ABV)
- 8 Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)
- 9 Australian Doctors International (ADI)
- 10 Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)
- 11 Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP)
- 12 Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS)
- 13 Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA)
- 14 Australian Red Cross (ARC)
- 15 Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA)
- 16 Australian Volunteers International (AVI)
- 17 Baptist World Aid Australia (BWAA)
- 18 Burnet Institute (Centre for International Health)
- 19 Care Australia
- 20 Caritas
- 21 ChildFund Australia
- 22 Christian Blind Mission International (CBMI)
- 23 Christian World Service/ National Council of Churches in Australia (CWS/NCCA)
- 24 Community Health and Tuberculosis Australia (CHATA)
- 25 Credit Union Foundation Australia (CUFA)
- 26 Diplomacy Training Program (DTP)
- 27 Fred Hollows Foundation
- 28 Foundation for Development Cooperation (FDC)
- 29 Habitat for Humanity Australia (HFHA)
- 30 International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
- 31 Leprosy Mission Australia (LMA)
- 32 Live and Learn Environmental and Development Education
- 33 Marie Stopes International Australia (MSIA)
- 34 Marist Mission Centre (MMC)
- 35 Mission World Aid Incorporated (MWA)
- 36 Oxfam Australia
- 37 Oz Green
- 38 Palms Australia
- 39 Quaker Service Australia

- 40 Salesian Society Incorporated (SSI)
- 41 Salvation Army
- 42 Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited (SP)
- 43 Save the Children Australia (SCA)
- 44 Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA)
- 45 UNICEF Australia
- 46 Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA
- 47 Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA)
- 48 WaterAid Australia
- 49 World Vision Australia (WVA)
- 50 World Wide Fund for Nature, South Pacific Programme (WWF)

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>ii</sup> White Paper, p.xii
- <sup>iii</sup> White Paper, p.43
- <sup>iv</sup> White Paper, p.39
- <sup>v</sup> White Paper, p.22
- <sup>vi</sup> White Paper, p.29
- <sup>vii</sup> ANCP Cambodia Cluster Evaluation Report (June 2005), AusAID, 2006
- <sup>viii</sup> White Paper, p.43
- <sup>ix</sup> White Paper, pp. 64-65
- <sup>x</sup> White Paper, p.43
- <sup>xi</sup> White Paper, p.46
- <sup>xii</sup> White Paper, pp.41-42
- <sup>xiii</sup> White Paper, p.49
- <sup>xiv</sup> White Paper, p.50
- <sup>xv</sup> White Paper, pp.61-62
- <sup>xvi</sup> White Paper, p.43