



Submission No 7

Inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific

Organisations: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit

Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD & UNESCO

Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF

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14 June 2006

The Secretary
Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600.

Dear Sir or Madam

**ENQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM
IN THE PACIFIC**

Please find attached our Submission to the Joint Standing Committee into Australia's Aid Program in the Pacific. In order to reach you before the deadline an email version has already been sent.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to your Enquiry.

We look forward to hearing from the Committee in due course.

Yours Sincerely

Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinator



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ENQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM IN THE PACIFIC

We are pleased to have the opportunity to put forward our comments and would like to draw the Enquiry's attention to the need to include women at all levels of peace processes.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was one of the instigators of the Open Session of the Security Council in October 2000 that resulted in Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

SC 1325 is the first formal and legal document from the Security Council that requires parties to a conflict and the international community to respect women's rights and to support their participation at all stages in peace negotiations, conflict prevention and post conflict reconstruction. It makes women relevant to negotiating peace agreements, peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies. It makes *gender* perspective and *gender* equality relevant to all Security Council actions.

The Resolution builds on a number of resolutions and frameworks that set out international commitments to women's full involvement in decision making, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

The Resolution also mandated a major study by the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security. This was conducted in 2002 and looked at the impact of armed conflict on women and their role as peacebuilders,

particularly at the grassroots level. AusAID partially funded the cost of this study.

AusAID is also contributing to the cost of a regional Pacific workshop "Implementing 1325" to be held in Fiji from 15-17 June. On the anniversary of the Resolution, in October each year, the Secretary-General reports to the Security Council on progress in implementing the Resolution. Every year, the Australian Ambassador to the UN makes a statement reiterating Australia's support for the resolution and the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report.

AusAID's Peace, Conflict and Development Policy focuses on conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding and says that support will also be provided to those elements of society – at all levels – which work for the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances. It asserts that the demonstrated role that women can play as peacebuilders is a particular focus of the policy and that encouraging women as peacebrokers is one of the critical responses to conflict situations. In the Section of the Policy on Maximising Operational Effectiveness it states that given the importance of ensuring the active engagement of women in peacebuilding processes, the integration of gender principles into aid responses will be improved.

Clearly, Australia supports SC 1325 and the increased involvement of women in peace processes. However, we can see little evidence of it being put into practice through the aid program. For example, in accordance with the Resolution, the mandates of all UN peacekeeping missions now include a gender unit. We would expect, therefore that Australia's regional missions would also do so. The Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI), however, does not have a gender unit. In addition, the RAMSI headquarters are located far from the centre of Honiara in a secure compound. It is not accessible or encouraging to Solomon Islands women who may want to put forth their ideas for assisting with peace processes.

In addition, we have seen a report from the General Secretary of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women, Ella Kauhue, that related that she and Hilda Kari (the President of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (NCW) – and formerly a Member of Parliament –and two other women, at the outbreak of violence in April, went to Parliament House in Honiara to see what they could do as women. To their surprise, RAMSI personnel did not allow them in.

To the women, this was a clear example of the existing barriers preventing women from actively engaging in the formal peace process. The women feel that they have been forgotten. They said "In the case of RAMSI not allowing the women to go in parliament, especially for women from NCW not to be allowed to go in is very surprising because NCW is the focal point for the women of Solomon Islands, and they are a very important organisation that represents the voices of women, and they are supposed to be in the frontline of brokering peace. Maybe RAMSI or whoever gave the order, did not know what importance women of Solomon Islands had and will always have in any peace negotiations or resolving conflicts."

Perhaps the RAMSI personnel were only trying to protect the women but it is important to understand that at the height of the original "ethnic tensions", it was the women who crossed borders between the conflicting parties, to talk to their children, on both sides of the conflict. It was their negotiations between conflicting parties that brought peace and it has been very disappointing for them that when peace came, they have been left out.

The women of Bougainville were similarly involved in instigating peace processes in their province and have similarly been left out since.

In studying the AusAID programs in the Pacific, particularly in those countries that have suffered violent conflict, there is little evidence that any effort is being made to include women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. The programs consist almost entirely of state institution building – good governance, economic management, etc. There is no recognition of the need for healing and reconciliation processes that help to build trust and connect rather than divide society. There is little recognition that there needs to be community building as well as state building. In some societies, women are the backbone of their communities. An aid program that does not address their needs or include their ideas is not going to lead to balanced outcomes.

A recent FemLINKPACIFIC Statement: "A Step Further for 1325" asked why women are still under-represented in decision-making for the security sector, in particular. It states that women bring special skills and abilities to foster a culture of peace. Women are peace educators both in their families and in the broader society. It asks that tangible ways be found to ensure more women are empowered politically and economically, in order to be represented adequately at all levels of decision-making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction.

We ask that the Enquiry recommend that the aid program provide greater assistance to women, and ultimately to achieve peaceful and productive societies, through the implementation of SC 1325. The recent White Paper on the Australian Aid Program stresses that greater emphasis will be put on the effectiveness of the aid program. Implementing SC 1325 will assist in improving the effectiveness of the aid program.

We thank you for the opportunity to put forward our comments.



Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinator