



Women and Children Crisis Centre

Submission to AusAID Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness

The Women and Children Crisis Centre is a NGO that works to eliminate gender based violence in the Kingdom of Tonga by providing free counseling, transitional housing and performing community education to raise awareness about abuse in all its forms. The centre's work is based on the human rights framework and aims to achieve gender equality in all sectors of Tongan society.

As Gender equality is an overarching theme of Australian Aid, the WCCC sees the role that AusAID plays in the region as vitally important.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the development of the effectiveness of Australia's aid program, and we urge that the focus on Gender equality is maintained.

The need for Gender Based Violence Aid to be distributed to Polynesian countries

The majority of Australia's Aid to eliminate Gender Based Violence in the Pacific is focused on Melanesia. WCCC urges the Australian Government to expand aid for GBV into Polynesia, as the resources to combat GBV are only in their infancy stage.

Resources to combat GBV in Melanesia are far more developed than Polynesia. Several established organizations that exemplify best practice exist in Melanesia, including the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and the Vanuatu Women's Counseling Center. These organizations collect statistics, publish reports and advocate for the rights of women in their respective states. As a result the significant costs to society of Gender Based Violence in Melanesia are highly visible.

The flip side of this is that it can appear that GBV is a huge problem in Melanesia, while it incorrectly appears as and a relatively insignificant problem in Polynesia. Those who work in relevant industries in Polynesia would stress that GBV certainly takes place, although the majority of it goes unreported.

Without reporting or relevant mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress, Polynesia faces a challenge of visibility.

Aid is required to build the resources within Polynesia that would make it possible to address GBV in a comprehensive manner that integrates all the relevant services in the community. Inherent in this is also the ability to record statistics, publish reports and monitor and evaluate progress, so that the problem of GBV is no longer hidden from sight.

Previously New Zealand Aid has supported efforts to address GBV in Polynesia. However the changes in NZ Aid's overarching priorities have indicated that they will no longer be providing aid to support GBV. This increases the need for AusAID to expand into Polynesia.

Moving away from project specific aid to core funding

As WCCC provides an essential service for the Tongan community working to eliminate GBV, the most suitable provision of aid is via long term core funding which enables WCCC to devise and implement 5 year strategic plans.

Project specific funding creates an unstable environment which is not conducive to the nature of the work that WCCC performs, particularly when providing ongoing counseling support and advocacy. This unstable environment is heightened by the limited skills base in Tonga. The work that WCCC performs needs to be ongoing and possess the ability to respond instantly to community needs.

The nature of the industry that the aid is being provided within should be assessed, so that the most suitable form of funding can be found.

Clarity about the different branches of AusAID and channels of communication

WCCC is aware that Australia has a large amount of foreign aid available to achieve the overarching goal of gender equality. However upon contacting the AusAID office based locally in Tonga, the organization was informed that there are no budgets based locally for addressing gender equality. From here separate approaches were made to AusAID Regional, and to the AusAID Canberra office.

From an organizational perspective, significant confusion exists about the appropriate channels to contact AusAID to apply for funding or other assistance. Confusion also existed about the type of communication that would be considered appropriate.

Suggestions for identification of ideal service delivery points

1. Scoping exercise

In order to identify the most appropriate (and genuine) bodies to receive and administer AusAID service delivery programs, a scoping panel should be sent directly to the country in which the aid is to be administered. This scoping exercise should be conducted in country, to avoid hearsay and allow the AusAID representatives to see first hand the challenges that organizations face when providing service

delivery. The scope should include trips to remote areas to incorporate geographical constraints – for example in Tonga, significant difficulty exists in providing services to all 52 inhabited islands.

The scoping exercise should also include a human rights based framework checklist that uses as a reference best practice models such as the FWCC and Vanuatu Women’s Counseling Centre.

2. Mentoring Program

Recommendations of the most appropriate organizations should be taken from organizations who already work closely with AusAID, or who are established and respected in the region. Experienced organizations working in the same industry will be able to provide the best references and quickly identify genuine organizations.

The role of established organizations can also be extended to provide a mentoring role for organizations that are working in new areas or establishing themselves. The mentoring program can provide an immeasurable resource – these established organizations can assist in the provision of services, negotiating the requirement of AusAID reporting and . In the case of WCCC, we have been working closely and successfully with the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre. We would like to see this practice expanded within the broader AusAID program.

Moreover these organizations can be used as a type of reference advisory group to AusAID for GBV projects seeking funds in the Pacific.