



AUSTRALIA

**YWCA Australia Submission to the Independent Review of
Aid Effectiveness**

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Introduction3
Gender Matters.....4
Supporting Civil Society Organisations6
 Tendering and Contracting7
 Volunteer Programs.....9
Gender Monitoring and Reporting..... 11
Summary of Recommendations 13

Acronyms

AWID	Association for Women’s Rights in Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EVAW	eliminate violence against women
HO	Host Organisation
INGO	international non-government organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PLP	Pacific Leadership Program
SINPA	Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement

Introduction

YWCA Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the review of the AusAID program. Comments in this submission are focused on the structure of the program and the YWCA's understanding of the impact and scope for improvement within the program.

YWCA Australia is the national association of YWCAs in Australia and is part of the world YWCA movement. We are a women-led organisation that achieves positive change by providing advocacy, programs and services for women, families and communities. YWCAs undertake advocacy and deliver programs and services that develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls; support individuals, their families and communities at critical times; and promote gender equality and community strengthening.

We are part of the World YWCA, a global membership movement of women and young women who have been leading social and economic change in 125 countries, for over 150 years. World YWCA advocates for peace, justice, human rights and care of the environment, and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women for over 150 years.

YWCA Australia is a smaller Australian-based NGO which is not currently accredited to deliver ODA, though we have been in the past. Through our global membership movement we are connected to YWCAs in countries targeted by the Australian aid program. The current structure of AusAID accreditation and funding precludes effective engagement of the YWCA Australia and our sister YWCAs with AusAID as a funder. These experiences inform the submission.

YWCA Australia is particularly concerned at how the AusAID program can be refined to provide a greater focus on gender issues and supporting women (and young women in particular), recognising that developing women's social, economic, political and social status positively affects the outcomes of general development projects. We are also interested in how the AusAID program can be used to develop women as leaders within their countries, particularly across the Pacific.

Gender Matters

A more targeted, institutionally supported permanent approach to gender and development is required to improve the effectiveness of Australia's aid program. It is well understood that, in the words of James Wolfensohn, former President of The World Bank, "where gender inequality persists, efforts to reduce poverty are undermined....numerous studies and on-the-ground experiences have shown that promoting equality between men and women helps economies grow faster, accelerates poverty reduction and enhances the dignity and well-being of men, women and children."

The YWCA commends AusAID for its commitment to gender as stated on the AusAID website: "Gender equality is central to economic and human development in a country. Removing inequalities gives societies a better chance to develop. When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster, children's health improves and there is less corruption." While significant progress has been made in AusAID's gender and development work in recent years, there is still work to be done to ensure that the Australian aid program provides better direct investment into the lives of women and girls.

Gender and funding research conducted by AWID over the past five years has found

"while bilateral and multilateral funding agencies have been an important source of support for the advancement of gender equality and women's organizing around the world, consistently accounting for close to 30% of the revenue of women's organisations participating in AWID surveys, the overall level of ODA for gender equality is clearly inadequate for reaching the commitments made in Beijing and at the Millennium Summit ten years ago."¹

There is concern about principles of ownership and the alignment with development country priorities and strategies. There has been significant effort led by OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDER-NET) in producing the DAC *Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*. Suggestions have been made for specific targets and measurable commitments to be developed and agreed on at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Korea in November 2011. It is hoped this review process will enable AusAID to announce new targets and measurable commitments at this meeting. In this context, YWCA also supports a stronger institutionalisation of the gender and

¹ Alpizar, Clark, Pittman, Rosenhek, Vidal Feb 2010, Trends in Bilateral and Multilateral Funding, 2009-10 Fund Her Research update Brief 1, AWID

development review processes, to ensure that projects funded by AusAID result in the transformation of gender relations as a means of achieving greater economic development. Within AusAID, YWCA supports the appointment of a Women's Rights Ambassador (similar to the post of HIV/AIDS Ambassador) who could provide high-level agency leadership on women and development issues.

The YWCA acknowledges the recent increased Australian allocation for UNIFEM and salutes Australia for its role in bringing about the new gender entity, UN Women. However the government has the scope to substantially increase funding for the new entity to ensure its success and demonstrate to the international community Australia's commitment to gender. UN Women has the potential to increase the level of work at the country level, which is particularly important for women and girls in Pacific Island countries. The YWCA supports the analysis of groups such as AWID that the expansion of an effective country level operation to address the situation of women globally must come from multi-year (five year minimum) core funding to ensure that the agency can work with a high degree of predictability.

Supporting Civil Society Organisations

YWCA Australia believes one of the most sustainable and cost-effective ways to achieve development is through building the capacity of local, indigenous civil society organisations. Building the capacity of indigenous (local) civil society organisations through partnerships is crucial to Australia's development agenda as these organisations use local governance and decision making and have the ability to deliver cost effective and culturally relevant programs and advocacy. Despite this, indigenous civil society organisations face a multitude of challenges accessing AusAID funds at present, including being forced to compete with larger INGOs for funding and resources.

It is important to acknowledge the fundamental difference between INGOs and indigenous (local) CSOs and the role they play in development. Indigenous organisations are generally community or country based, that is, they employ local staff who live and work in the community where the program is being delivered, and report to Boards who are locally based and generally comprised of local people.

Indigenous organisations face a range of challenges. For example, they usually have less money to recruit and retain qualified staff, they sometimes require technical support in areas such as governance, administration, programming/reporting and operations to ensure accountability. The current structure of the aid program appears to result in indigenous CSOs and INGOs competing against each other for Australian government funding. A better approach would be to support INGOs and indigenous CSOs to develop meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships, and to direct funds directly and equally to indigenous CSOs.

Highly competitive funding rounds with large minimum expenditure limits often disqualify small, CSOs as they lack the skills and knowledge to negotiate complicated funding processes and often do not have the capacity to manage large sums of money. While distributing aid funding in large amounts through competitive processes may suit the accountability and efficiency priorities of the Australian government, it disadvantages and isolates the organisations that need funding the most. Small organisations can lack the financial and operational systems to manage large minimum expenditures, despite the fact that they can often deliver well targeted and beneficial outcomes for less money.

One of the most effective methods of building the capacity of indigenous CSOs is through forming long term, meaningful partnerships that provide a combination of funding and technical support. This may be a partnership between an organisation and AusAID, or better, a partnership between two or more CSOs (or a CSO and an INGO) supported by AusAID.

Too often CSOs are forced to deliver programs that have been developed and agreed upon by a large INGOs, because it is the only way for indigenous CSOs to access funding.

SINPA provides longer term financial and technical support through supporting partnerships between INGOs and CSOs in the Solomon Islands. While the program claims to foster partnerships between civil society organisations to achieve development, there are several flaws in this model that isolate smaller indigenous CSOs from the program. The stated goal of matching INGOs with local CSOs is certainly welcome, however there is concern in practice the objective is not realised. Too often, the “local CSO” in these partnerships does not employ local workers in senior positions, and as such, the ability to build the governance of local organisations is lost. The current model could be better applied to enable SINPA funds to build the long-term governance and organisational capacity of genuinely locally-led organisations.

YWCA Australia also supports the AusAID Pacific Leadership Program as a valuable model for supporting civil society organisations to achieve development. PLP forms long-term partnerships with civil society organisations that provide a combination of financial and technical support to achieve capacity building. Central to the success of the PLP is the development of meaningful long-term partnerships and the sharing of knowledge and resources between partners. YWCA Australia believes the PLP model could be expanded to other countries as an effective model for the development of civil society organisations.

It is acknowledged that supporting local Indigenous organisations is not always the administratively straightforward way to distribute development aid, however effective, meaningful and sustainable development, not efficiency, should be the primary aim of the Australian aid program.

Tendering and Contracting

YWCA is concerned by the trend to offer larger sized grants but issued to fewer organisations, such as Australian Human Rights Grants.

AusAID tendering and contracting systems can appear to unfairly give advantage to Australians rather than educated and knowledgeable citizens within developing countries. A large proportion of the significant donor programs within AusAID must be tendered by an Australian or NZ contractor. This contracting process eliminates most locally based organisations from directly receiving large funds (i.e. over \$200,000) and since the contractor

extracts an administration fee and uses Australia staff in management positions much of the money is not directly applied to service delivery in-country.

With the introduction of larger grants more complex planning processes, logical frameworks and budgets are required. Shorter and less complex expressions of interest as an initial point of contact with CSOs with mutual interests in specific program areas could overcome the problems. This would allow more detailed plans and activities for specific programs to be developed at a later stage. The processes associated with larger grants usually disadvantage smaller women's organisations who have limited staff with even more limited planning and proposal writing skills. The result of the AusAID process is community groups must work with larger INGOs or UN programs to receive funds, resulting in poor outcomes for the CSO, including lost training opportunities, lack of support for indigenous governance development, and oftentimes, the implementation of programs that are funder-driven rather than responding to local need.

While the YWCA respects the newly created PLP there is scope to develop exploratory funds to help facilitate partner relationships prior to a formal relationship. For example the YWCA of Solomon Islands was unable to meet participation criteria as they did not have sufficient organisational systems in place. After much urging the PLP finally provided the return airfare for an Australian YWCA volunteer with who contributed time, paid the majority of expenses and helped the Solomons YWCA meet the criteria. The successful NZ program *Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao (KOHA)/Partnerships for International Community Development (PICD)* scheme could be examined as an appropriate model to support relationships from an Australian context.

Providing seed funds would help develop long term partnerships with local organisations using organisational "friends" in Australia and elsewhere who could work closely with emerging 3rd world groups with a more equitable partnership. Long term technical "friends" could help overcome the overwhelming AusAID planning and preparations and could provide technical assistance for project planning, writing and reporting.

Most gender work is done by civil society. While AusAID has had success in support of some CSOs (for example the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre), more funding for long term partnerships (using a minimum of five years) with local agencies should be developed. There is a need to help new emerging local groups as well as the traditional agencies to become better organised and better able to deliver services successfully. As the PNG AusAID Gender study states:

“the most work is still occurring through the civil society program of work that AusAID funds but this continues to remain piece meal and without strategic impact. Yet, at the same time, this work is spreading to other sectors, like the agriculture sector through the grants program in the Agriculture Research Support Facility. Democratic Governance Transition Program has recognised the need for greater involvement of women in the design of all their programs and the Church Partnership Program will, under its new phase, begin gender audits of all church programs and develop a gender strategy to improve the benefits to women within their existing program.”

Encouragement and support of indigenous local efforts is required so that assistance is not delivered exclusively through Australian or other external contractors and agencies. Local people and organisations should be equipped and empowered to tackle local issues.

Volunteer Programs

Mobilising human resources through Volunteer Programs is one method of delivering aid to developing countries ‘to achieve sustainable development outcomes through capacity building, skills transfer and institutional strengthening’, as stated by the AYAD program.

Volunteer Programs should analyse how sustainable development outcomes can be best achieved on a case by case basis and recognise the challenges that play a significant role in outcomes particular to a broad range of HOs. This includes but is not limited to the public and private sectors, non-government and civil society organisations and educational institutions. For example the challenges experienced by large INGOs in managing volunteers will differ greatly in comparison to smaller Indigenous CSOs who possess less resources and technical skills necessary to compete for funding and retain core staff.

The following strategies could be considered or strengthened to maximise the potential for sustainable development outcomes, particularly in regard to small Indigenous CSOs:

- Key differences between program support needs for Volunteers placed in a range of HO contexts are outlined;
- Alternative forms of ‘aid’ are considered/ discussed with the HO where a Volunteer placement may not be appropriate;
- Accountability measures exist to ensure both the HO and the Volunteer share the responsibility equally for the delivery of assignment objectives (i.e. reporting & acquittal of Volunteer program funding, and planning how the organisation will sustain

- HOs demonstrate evidence of (or at minimum plans to secure) tangible and sufficient resources required to carry out proposed objectives both at the time of application and the time of placement of the volunteer;
- Where the HO does not have sufficient resources to carry out assignment objectives, the Volunteer Service Provider and APO support the HO where possible to access appropriate resources;
- HOs, APOs and Volunteer Service Providers collaborate to develop a broader programmatic approach involving contributions by volunteers from more than one Volunteer Program over a longer period of time to increase placement impact and strengthen partnerships; and
- Volunteer positions be opened for application to suitable candidates from neighbouring Pacific Islands.

Gender Monitoring and Reporting

For gender activities to increase in effectiveness, ways must be found to assist civil society organisations to monitor, analyse and learn from its programs and activities. AusAID could facilitate those overseas CSOs interested by providing multi-year funding, internships or scholarships to increase problem analysis by local CSOs as a way to understand community needs and possible actions.

Mapping the funding flow to Asia and Pacific women's rights organisations is extremely important yet difficult especially in small island states where sex desegregated data is limited. Biennial reporting on gender related aid flows should include information by CSOs as well as multilateral and bilateral contributions.

Gender research and information on gender are to be encouraged by AusAID.² AusAID is urged to support projects to collect sex desegregated data and develop local research capacity and skills in statistical analysis. All research should include funding for research as well as a compulsory element of training for local indigenous civil society organisations and research institutes whose management consists of indigenous/local citizens.

Mandatory gender reporting and monitoring of all AusAID staff, programs, partners, contractors and government public servants is essential. Efforts to monitor gender have shown positive improvements when additional funding is provided. As AusAID's 2009 Gender Stock Take in PNG states:

“The key reason why the public sector work has so greatly improved is due to allocation of specific resourcing for gender work, for example, the Sub National Strategy now has a gender adviser and so does Policy and Program Coherence... Likewise, Education Capacity Building Program had a gender adviser in 2009 and their work in this crucial sector is vastly improved due to her efforts.”

² In Palimi, Slatter, Corner, 2007, EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace Aid effectiveness in PNG: A Gender Perspective it states: “The development partners were all unable to provide sex-disaggregated data on their ODA contributions from 2000 but referred to their websites. Interviews revealed that donor information systems were unable to capture, process and report gender-sensitive information. Only AusAID was able to provide sex-disaggregated data, (retrieved from Canberra-based data systems) but only for the previous financial year.”

A system to measure effectiveness of development efforts to eliminate violence against women should be an essential part of gender reporting and routine AusAID monitoring. The recent increased research and funding by AusAID to eliminate violence against women in the Pacific Islands is welcomed.

Statistics indicate 68% of women in Kiribati experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner and in Papua New Guinea, 67% of married women have experienced physical abuse by their husbands and 55% of women have experienced rape. However Australian allocation of funds for EVAW compared with the overall AusAID budget is miniscule compared to the related economic and social costs. Access Economics has found domestic violence alone costs Australia \$8.1billion per year.³ Fiji and other Pacific Islands have reported similar large social and financial burdens. Specific tracking and publications of donor expenditure and support to eliminate violence against women would help draw attention to the issue and AusAID efforts to combat it.

The gender stock take of AusAID's program in PNG (2009)⁴ could provide a model for other programs in the region. Recommendations from the PNG review need to be implemented. Key recommendations include:

“...trying to recruit more skilled people, building capacity within existing pools of advisers, gradually scaling up the work and focus across the program... Lack of opportunities for economic empowerment for women, climate change initiatives that address women's concerns and a disaster and risk management framework that meets the needs of both males and females are still outstanding gaps as well, though there are some small gains on the policy environment for women's economic development. ...Monitoring and evaluation work that collects sex disaggregated data, or strengthens government systems has improved a little though there is still a long way to go before the aid program can confidently say how the funds spent are impacting on the lives of women, men, girls and boys.”

³ Access Economics Pty.Ltd. 2004, *The Cost of Domestic Violence on Australia's Economy*, Office of the Status of Women, Canberra.

⁴ Susan Ferguson, 2009, *Equality matters are everybody's business: Improvements in gender equality within the PNG Australian Aid Program*, AusAID, Canberra

Summary of Recommendations

- A more targeted, institutionally supported approach to gender and development is required to improve the effectiveness of Australia's aid program.
- AusAID announce new targets and measurable commitments for gender equality and women's empowerment at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
- Increase funding for UN Women to ensure its success and demonstrate to the international community Australia's commitment to gender
- Priority be given to partnerships that build the capacity of local NGOs, rather than relying on the resources of developed country NGOs who operate "in-country"
- The SINPA requirement that the Australian-based INGO is responsible for managing the finances of the partnership be reviewed, noting it can be disempowering and contrary to the program's capacity building goal.
- AusAID ensure smaller Indigenous CSOs have fair access to Australian government development aid.
- The *Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao (KOHA)/Partnerships for International Community Development (PICD)* scheme be examined as an appropriate model to support relationships from an Australian context.
- Provide seed funding to develop long term partnerships with local organisations using organisational "friends" in Australia and elsewhere who could work closely with emerging 3rd world groups with a more equitable partnership.
- Consider the strategies outlined on pages 8-9 of this submission to maximise the potential for sustainable development outcomes, particularly in regard to small Indigenous CSOs, of the volunteer programs
- Provide support for projects to collect sex desegregated data and develop local research capacity and skills in statistical analysis
- Implement mandatory gender reporting and monitoring of all AusAID staff, programs, partners, contractors and government public servants

- Develop and implement a system to measure effectiveness of development efforts to eliminate violence against women