

Submission to Australia's International Development Policy Review

February 2020

If we could imagine a world beyond aid and beyond outdated worldviews of donor and recipient power dynamics, what could we collectively achieve by 2030? The new International Development Policy (the Policy) gives the Australian Government the opportunity to realise a new vision.

A strong, future-fit Policy needs to focus on the global megatrends already shaping our future, as the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* has demonstrated by becoming more relevant over time.

We are seeing the impact of the erosion of the rules-based order, where international laws, norms and principles are increasingly under threat. Established and emerging powers are competing for geopolitical influence and resources. Increased rates of violent conflict driven by poor governance and the frequency and severity of climate change shocks will continue to pose grave risks to human security.

RedR Australia is ready to contribute to a Policy vision that seeks a future where humanity not only survives, but thrives and prospers – now, and beyond 2030.

Key Messages

- The Australian Government must protect and advance humanitarian policy terrain.
- The Policy must safeguard and invest in trusted civilian leadership and actors, at home and abroad, to deliver effective and efficient humanitarian action.
- The true spirit of Australian values is seen in our humanitarian action and must be a core component of the Policy.

The Policy should:

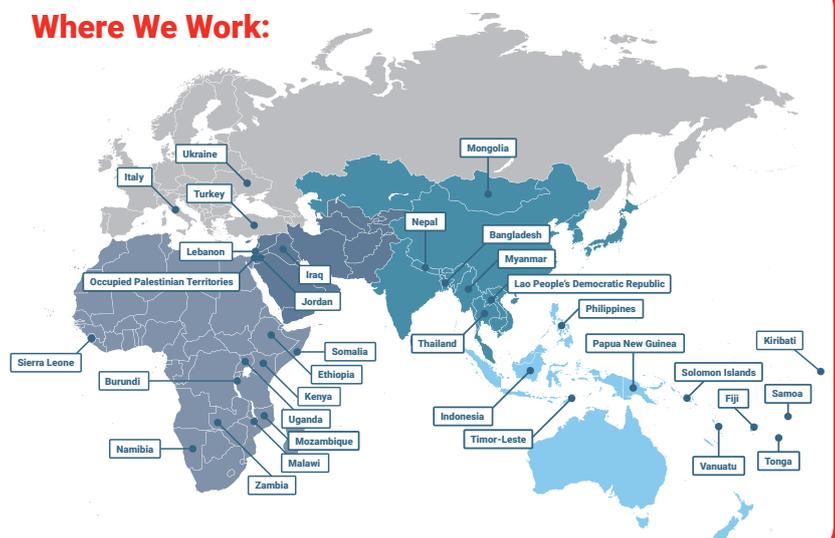
- 1:** Uphold humanitarian principles to safeguard the global rules-based order.
- 2:** Commit to ongoing reform of the humanitarian system to deliver efficient, effective and accountable outcomes.
- 3:** Invest in principled partnerships that respond to expressed humanitarian need before, during and after crises.
- 4:** Invest in civilian leadership for trusted disaster management.
- 5:** Harness innovation with a people-first approach.

Who We Are:

RedR Australia is a humanitarian organisation that provides training and skilled people to work with communities to plan, prepare, rebuild and recover before, during and after disasters and conflict. RedR Australia maintains a roster of more than 750 technical specialists across 76 skill profiles, including disaster risk management, humanitarian response, protection and stabilisation.

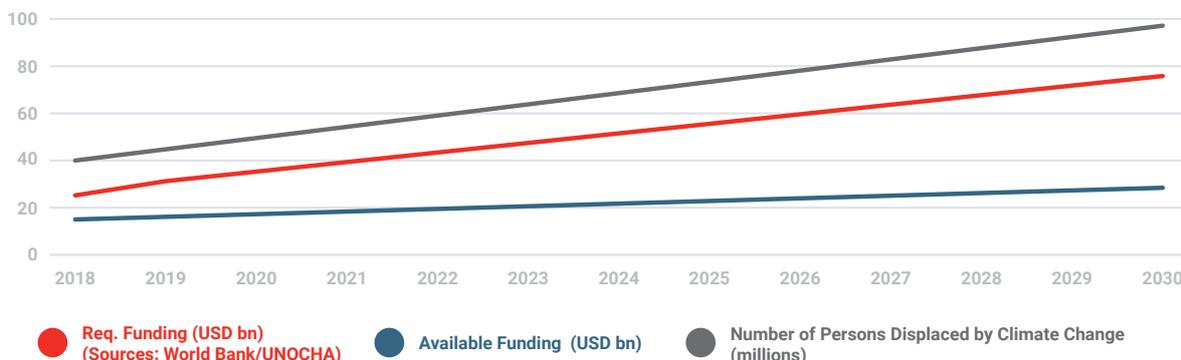
RedR Australia is a [Standby Partner](#) (SBP) to 13 United Nations agencies. The global network of SBP organisations provide emergency support to UN response efforts in times of humanitarian crises. RedR Australia also provides support to frontline relief agencies and governments, including National Disaster Management Offices.

Where We Work:



What will the global humanitarian need be by 2030?

Climate change will widen the humanitarian funding gap by 2030



To meet the primary Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty by 2030, the root causes of vulnerability must be addressed in new and more efficient ways.

Political and environmental instability will result in increasing rates of conflict and deepen humanitarian need. By 2030, violent conflict and natural disasters will require US\$50 billion per year in global donor contributions to manage the needs of approximately 300 million affected people. Of these, 77 million

climate-displaced people will require an additional US\$14 billion. The Indo-Pacific region will remain the most vulnerable to climate change and disaster shocks.

Climate and conflict shocks will widen the global poverty gap. By 2030, 6.5 per cent of the world's population is expected to be living below the poverty line, and women, children and minority groups will be disproportionately represented.

Why must humanitarian action be central to the Policy?

Humanity	Neutrality	Impartiality	Operational Independence
Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.	Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.	Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.	Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

Figure 2: Humanitarian Principles, United Nations

The mobilisation of humanity (humanitarian action) to prevent and respond to the needless suffering of people must be a pivotal component of the new Policy. Sustainable, inclusive and locally-led development can only be achieved in the long-term when immediate humanitarian need is prioritised as part of the development agenda.

RedR Australia supports the Australian Council for International Development's Humanitarian Reference Group submission that calls for the prioritisation of humanitarian principles and action (see Figure 2). RedR Australia echoes the call from the International Committee of the Red Cross to 'not forget' those with the greatest humanitarian need.

The humanitarian principles are mirrored in the Australian Government's expressed societal values:

*"...respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good."*¹

The Policy should prioritise humanitarian action that aligns with these Australian values.

¹ Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Australian values statement: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/australian-values>

Recommendation 1: The Policy should uphold humanitarian principles to safeguard the global rules-based order.

A Policy that brings coherence to a collective foreign policy, trade, security and development agenda, and that upholds Australian values, will ensure that what is good for Australia does not come at a cost to the welfare of our neighbours.

The Policy presents an opportunity to deliver on the Australian Government's *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* commitment to strengthen the international rules-based order. Upholding this order requires adherence to relevant global laws, rules, norms, conventions and guidelines. This order also depends on ensuring our people have the breadth of skills and support required to build consensus between nation states and institutions. Investment in people, training and career pathways

is required to harness mutual cooperation between nations and multilateral systems. This will ensure our future world is not governed by power alone.

The humanitarian principles are the foundation of a values-based approach that can move us 'beyond aid' and the limiting beliefs of donor and recipient power dynamics. Where possible, the Policy should embrace the opportunity to depart from the language of national interest and, instead, align with Australian national values. After all, RedR Australia's 25-year partnership with the Australian Government rests within the conceptual, policy and operational space where our humanitarian values and Australian values align.

Recommendation 2: The Policy should commit to ongoing reform of the humanitarian system to deliver efficient, effective and accountable outcomes.

The Australian Government signed *The Grand Bargain* in 2016, committing to locally-led humanitarian action. For the Australian Government to realise these commitments, the Policy will need to move from the rhetoric of localisation to a reality where local leadership is the norm. National and local actors best understand the lived realities of affected communities, and have the greatest knowledge to implement their own solutions.

The Policy should be a call to action for adaptive and accountable humanitarian programming.

The international humanitarian system is imperfect and the Policy should recognise and commit to the significant reform processes already underway. This would reinforce Australia as a principled global leader that engages with the humanitarian system. Plus, Australia would be championing evidence-based practice, greater efficiency and accountability of that same system. To do this, the Policy will need to prioritise contemporary partnerships that generate evidence of humanitarian reform in action.

Recommendation 3: The Policy should invest in principled partnerships that respond to expressed humanitarian need before, during and after crises.

The Policy should ensure political and diplomatic efforts are advancing humanitarian outcomes. The Policy should prioritise humanitarian investments that are not standalone but, instead, act as a catalyst for change and a multiplier of transformative action. The Policy should ensure

that the Australian Government's security, trade and investment objectives do not undermine humanitarian outcomes.

The Policy must support contemporary partnerships that work across the humanitarian-development-peace divides (the 'nexus'). The

Australian Government values RedR Australia's partnerships that deliver more efficient, effective and accountable programs. The [Australia Assists](#) program also asks that RedR Australia find ways to abandon outdated donor and implementing partner practices. This has been achieved by a program design that looks to promote collaboration over competition.

The Kiribati and Rohingya Crisis examples below (see text boxes below) provide an insight into what can be achieved through contemporary partnership approaches.

Kiribati Government, Disaster Risk Management:

On the request of the Government of Kiribati, RedR Australia Legal Expert, Michelle Sanson, supported the Office of the President with the drafting of the National Disaster Act that passed through Parliament in 2019. In addition to her legal background, Ms. Sanson is a gender and protection specialist with many years' experience in disaster contexts. In large part because of her diverse expertise, Kiribati is now implementing integrated disaster risk management, climate resilience and social inclusion into the national and subnational architecture. This will ensure that physical infrastructure, critical services and civil-military coordination save lives during times of crises.

Psychosocial Infrastructure, Rohingya Crisis:

RedR Australia is committed to building a corporate engineering alliance that maximises humanitarian impact and public good in Australia and overseas. From Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, Structural Engineer and RedR Australia Specialist, Professor Regan Potangaroa said it best:

"Physical shelter is so much more than a roof over heads - it's about identity, family, a sense of place, contact with something real during a crisis... Wellbeing is directly related to stability and social connection, and there is a direct correlation between safe physical shelters and wellbeing outcomes."

Recommendation 4: The Policy should invest in civilian leadership for trusted disaster management.

The Policy must recognise the unprecedented nature of climate-induced humanitarian crises and the essential role of civilian specialists and leaders required to respond to this new reality. As an organisation founded by engineers, crisis management and disaster recovery is in RedR Australia's DNA. We know that civilian leadership, at all levels, builds community resilience, stronger responses and quicker recovery for future disasters.

The Policy must protect the space for civilian leaders to lead. The risks of new actors operating without the appropriate humanitarian tools, knowledge and expertise were visible to many Australians before, during and after the recent

bushfire crisis. The Policy must therefore prioritise investing in shared skills, experience and practices. For example, RedR Australia is investing in a Pacific humanitarian roster to build Pacific civilian leadership and bolster our intra-regional response capability.

The Policy should recognise that our Pacific family depends on Australia getting Civil-Military-Police coordination right. RedR Australia has routinely worked in the same operational and policy space as military and police – but with different mandates. Geopolitical rivalry is manifesting a new reality where Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is now a field of security competition. Investment in principled Civil-Military

Coordination as a whole-of-government priority will ensure the application of International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law and

International Disaster Response Law in disaster and conflict responses.

Effective Civil-Military Coordination must be a Policy priority. The Pacific Ocean alone covers more than all of the land mass on the planet, has seven of the world's 10 largest armies and 24 of the world's 36 megacities. The militaries of the world's 'great powers' are already planning how to fight future wars, given that 66 per cent of the world's population is expected to be urbanised in the future.

Recommendation 5: The Policy should harness innovation with a people-first approach.

The Policy must ensure technological advances maintain a people-first approach. Responsible use of technology and data must support humanity rather than undermine it. By way of example, RedR Australia is proud to support the Australian Red Cross' Digital Identity Trust Alliance. This project, based on blockchain platform, aims to create digital credentials for humanitarian and development experts that can be validated by multiple actors, in multiple sectors, in all countries around the globe. It also aims to protect user's identity information.

The Policy should seek to deliver results that empower local actors and future leaders to harness technology to mitigate conflict and climate risks. It should commit to fostering innovative and entrepreneurial environments that promote collaboration and 'the right to fail' among trusted delivery partners, such as those outlined in the examples below.

RedR Australia currently partners with the Warren Centre's annual Humanitarian Hackathon. The hackathon challenges millennial students to find innovative and human-centred solutions to complex humanitarian problems by working collaboratively across disciplines.

RedR Australia Specialist, Alister Perkinson, is a Systems Engineer employed by IT company Tickbox, who was deployed through the Australia Assists program to support the Bougainville Referendum Commission. This deployment helped the Commission ensure the integrity of critical information systems for the 2019 independence referendum.

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