

# AUSTRALIA CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIAN CSOs AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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## 1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CSO ENVIRONMENT IN AUSTRALIA

### 1.1 NUMBERS AND TYPES OF CSOs

**Numbers of CSOs:** There are no precise data on the exact number of Australian civil society organizations (CSOs) currently involved in aid delivery. However, it is estimated that there are between 150 and 200 active CSOs. This is suggested by:

- there are 208 Australian approved funds for international development listed with the Australian Taxation Office that have tax deductability status and that are, therefore, eligible under Australian regulations to receive funding from the Australian government. However, not all of these are active or currently receiving funds;<sup>1</sup> and
- there are 123 Australian CSOs that are signatories to the Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.<sup>2</sup> There are also additional CSOs that are not signatories to the Code but that are nevertheless active in development cooperation activities.

**Types of CSOs involved in aid delivery:** Similar to other major Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donor countries, there is a



wide variety of Australian CSOs involved in aid delivery. They include the following:

- **International NGOs (INGOs) have relatively large budgets, staff and programmes and are members of international affiliations or confederations. They typically work in several major geographic regions and in multiple countries. They undertake a range of development programmes across different sectors and themes and with varied target groups, and usually also undertake humanitarian relief activities. Examples of these are Oxfam Australia, CARE Australia, World Vision Australia, ActionAid Australia and PLAN International Australia. These five organizations had a combined total revenue of AU\$500 million in 2012. These organizations both undertake their own programmes on the ground, with their own staff and partners, and also fund and support programmes undertaken by their international affiliates.** For instance, World Vision Australia's relief, development and advocacy programmes are implemented through World Vision's network of national offices.
- **Smaller Australian national CSOs** are not members of international confederations or affiliations but are working specifically on international development. They often focus on a single or smaller range of issues, projects or activities, and often in a smaller number of countries (sometimes only one). Some, such as the International Women's Development Agency, have a focus on one specific target group or issue. These organizations may also have very few members of staff and may rely heavily on volunteers for fundraising or programme support. Examples include the 40K Foundation, Afghan Australian

Development Organisation, Australian Himalayan Foundation, Nusa Tenggara Association and the Australian Medical Aid Foundation.

- **Health-related CSOs** work specifically on health issues. They include both reasonably large and also much smaller CSOs, such as the Burnet Institute, Leprosy Mission Australia, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia, International Centre for Eyecare Education, Foresight (Overseas Aid and Prevention of Blindness), Australian Aid International, and the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine.
- Some CSOs are the **international development ‘arm’** of organizations whose primary focus is on other issues at the domestic or international level. Many of these are non-profit organizations, such as faith-based organizations, trade unions or environmental agencies. Examples include some of the health organizations listed above, as well as Caritas Australia Overseas Aid Fund, Anglican Trust Fund for Development, Australian Lutheran World Service, Quaker Service Australia, Union Aid Abroad and the Australian Conservation Foundation.
- **Volunteer-sending CSOs** coordinate and manage the placement of Australian volunteers in developing countries. Australian Volunteers International is the largest of these, has a primary focus on volunteer programmes and receives substantial government funding. Some (often relatively much smaller) organizations specialize in volunteer placements related to specific expertise, such as Australian Business Volunteers, and may focus in a single country (such as Australian Doctors International).

## 1.2 CSO MODALITIES OF INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Australian CSOs contribute to development in a wide variety of ways. For instance, ACFID (the umbrella organization for Australian CSOs) states that CSOs reduce poverty and address global justice issues “through a range of engagements that includes community projects, emergency management, community education, advocacy, volunteer sending, provision of technical and professional services and resources, environmental protection and restoration, and promotion and protection of human rights”<sup>3</sup>

While Australian CSOs undertake some aspects of their work in Australia (such as raising funds or engaging the Australian public or Australian government), the majority of their activities occur in developing countries. Some CSOs are directly involved in ‘on-the-ground’ work in developing countries in which they are operational and directly carry out development activities and projects with their own staff. Some of the large INGOs described above adopt this approach for some of their activities (or they may provide funding for their international confederation members to do so); and in some cases, smaller CSOs may also adopt a direct operational approach. This direct work can include both longer-term development and humanitarian relief activities.

In addition to direct engagement, the majority of Australia CSOs work in partnership with developing-country CSOs. These partnership arrangements may include funding support, undertaking joint activities, provision of training and technical advice, or exchange of information and expertise. For instance, Oxfam Australia forms partnerships with a wide

variety of organizations, such as community-based organizations, peoples' movements, trade unions, other non-government organizations, academic institutions, government agencies and private companies, and these organizations may be local, national, regional or global in scope.<sup>4</sup>

In many cases, Australian CSOs work in partnership with organizations in developing countries; this applies to both the larger international CSOs as well as other CSOs. CSOs often establish long-term relationships with partner organizations and maintain them over many years. In other cases, partnerships are for the shorter term and of limited duration, and may be established to address a specific issue in a developing country or region, or in response to a funding opportunity offered by the Australian government or other funding agencies.

A transfer of funds from the Australian CSO to the partner organization is often involved so that the latter can undertake development activities; but partnerships are also maintained where there is no financial transaction involved. Thus, partnerships may be centred on implementation of a development activity; but they can also involve exchange of information and advice, or collaboration on research or policy dialogue with development institutions. Australian CSOs usually approach partnerships as a 'two-way' process from which both they and the partner organization will benefit. For instance, the International Women's Development Agency states:

"We collaborate with our partners to respond to issues they identify as important and that matter to the communities in which they belong. We see our role as a responsive and supportive collaborator that is committed to 'walking with' our partners.

By bringing together, knowledge, experience and resources, we address shared priorities.”<sup>5</sup>

In some cases, Australian CSOs will work together in partnerships or coalitions with other Australian organizations to undertake activities in developing countries; these coalitions often also involve local partners as well. An example of this approach is the Solomon Islands CSO Partnership Agreement, which involves six Australian CSOs working together in cooperation with Solomon Islands CSOs and communities.

Australian CSOs also work in partnership with other Australian CSOs on humanitarian assistance, including collaborating on and managing funds provided by external donors. A good example is the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (between AusAID and CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia, Save the Children Australia and World Vision Australia).<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 CSO COLLABORATION IN AUSTRALIA

Many Australian CSOs work together to collaborate on development issues, share information, improve coordination, share resources and address policy issues. In some cases, Australian CSOs collaborate in networks or coalitions to tackle the underlying causes of development problems.

The main formal grouping for Australian CSOs is the Australian Council for International Development ([ACFID](#)), which is the umbrella organization for Australian not-for-profit aid and development organizations. ACFID operates as a network for its 75 members that join through a shared commitment to poverty reduction and the promotion of human

rights and dignity. It provides members with a range of services and opportunities that support their work and help them collaborate. Through ACFID, many CSOs work together on policy and educational issues, or on advisory groups that provide advice either to ACFID itself or to the Australian government.

Australian CSOs often collaborate when they are working on similar development issues, in similar countries or with similar partners. For instance, through ACFID, CSOs are members of working groups such as the Afghanistan Working Group, the Africa Working Group, the Climate Change Working Group and the Gender Equity Working Group. The Humanitarian Reference Group, for example, provides the opportunity for CSOs involved in humanitarian assistance activities to share information, improve coordination and develop tools to share with the wider humanitarian sector.

In other cases, CSOs form their own groups, to collaborate on sector-specific, practice or operational issues. For instance, the The Water and Sanitation Reference Group is a community of practice of CSOs and research institutions that are working together to strengthen and improve the quality of Australia's response to the global sanitation and water crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Australian CSOs often also work together in coalitions on specific development and policy issues that involve a public campaigning aspect. Some of these are also linked to global campaigns, such as Micah Challenge (a coalition of Christians undertaking public engagement and campaigning work on poverty and injustice issues) and Make Poverty History, a secular coalition of 70 Australian organizations that works on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and on reducing poverty.

Australian CSOs also work together with academic and other institutions on collaborative research programmes. The objective of these partnerships is often to combine CSOs' direct development experience and knowledge in developing countries with academic institutions' theoretical frameworks and research rigour, and to explore new learning and solutions to development issues. An example of such a partnership is the Oxfam Australia – Monash University Research Partnership, which focuses on research on areas relevant to the two institutions, including climate change, health policy, and accountability issues.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.4 CSO ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

**ACFID Code of Conduct:** This is the key instrument governing CSO accountability to quality standards. ACFID describes it as “a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability of the signatory organizations”<sup>9</sup>

The Code sets out standards in three areas of accountability:

- programme principles — including obligations for effectiveness in aid and development activities, relationships with partners, human rights, and advocacy and emergency management;
- public engagement — including obligations relating to ethics and transparency in marketing, fundraising and reporting; and
- organizational — including obligations for governance, management, financial controls, treatment of staff and volunteers, complaints-



handling processes and compliance with legal requirements.

There are currently 123 Australian organizations that are signatories to the Code. Compliance with the Code is assessed in several ways, including: signatories must complete an annual declaration of commitment to full adherence to the Code and must publish an annual report; annual self-assessment by the signatory organization's governing body which is submitted to ACFID for review and feedback; and selected aspects of the Code are verified for each organization by the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee, an independent complaints-handling and discipline process.<sup>10</sup>

The Code is notable for a number of key features, including,<sup>11</sup>

- its 'interoperability': the Code has been assessed as having a relatively high level of interoperability with other standards and codes for CSOs (numbered by the One World Trust at approximately 350);<sup>12</sup>
- its programme principles: these set it apart from many other standards and codes that do not cover the area of actual CSO programming. This aspect of the Code deepens its original purpose, which was to provide assurance to public donors of the ethical practice of CSOs;
- its compliance requirements: the Code is one of approximately 25 percent of CSO codes of conduct that include compliance requirements, which provides the potential for better quality outcomes; and
- its complaints mechanism: this is provided through an independently elected complaints committee. Code signatories are also required to have their own individual complaints mechanisms.

The Code is self-regulatory (by signatory CSOs and by the CSO sector itself) and voluntary; as such, there is no direct role for the Australian government in enforcing it. However, the Code is a key aspect of Australian CSOs' (in particular ACFID's) engagement with the Australian government on development cooperation. The Code was initially established in 1997 and revised in 2010 in close consultation with AusAID. The government clearly considers the Code an important mechanism for CSO accountability and quality assurance: organizations must be signatories to the Code before they can be accredited to receive core funding from AusAID.

**AusAID accreditation:** The [AusAID accreditation system](#) is a 'due diligence' mechanism that also includes a quality assurance and accountability aspect.<sup>13</sup> The system determines Australian CSOs' eligibility for AusAID core funding and funding through some humanitarian relief programmes. It involves a rigorous and in-depth assessment of CSO capacity and track record; and of their structure; philosophies; links to the Australian community; partnership arrangements; programme, financial and management systems; and their application in the CSO's work.

The accreditation system complements the ACFID Code of Conduct (for instance, it is a requirement of accreditation that a CSO be a compliant signatory to the Code). However, it also has key differences. Accreditation is an Australian government mechanism, which is managed by AusAID (in conjunction with ACFID). Accreditation aims to set an 'industry benchmark' for Australian CSOs that will function as a 'front-end risk management process' for the Australian government, to ensure the accountable use of funds, and to provide AusAID and the Australian public with confidence that the Australian government is funding

professional, well-managed, community-based organizations that are capable of delivering quality development outcomes. There are also differences between the Code and accreditation relating to compliance. The Code has prescriptive requirements on financial and annual reporting but allows flexibility in compliance in some areas (in the interests of capacity-building and 'progressions towards good practice'), whereas the accreditation system requires CSOs to meet or demonstrate compliance with all aspects.

**Other international accountability and quality standards:** Australian CSOs also engage with a range of other standards, such as the 'Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness'.<sup>14</sup> There are several standards relevant to Australian CSOs which are seeking access to AusAID funding for humanitarian assistance programmes. While there is no formal requirement for CSOs to adopt the Sphere Project's 'Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response' handbook,<sup>15</sup> the AusAID accreditation manual refers to the "general agreement among humanitarian organisations on the core principles outlined in the document and a commitment to incorporate Sphere standards in CSO policy and practice".<sup>16</sup> The accreditation process also requires CSOs to adhere to the principles of the Steering Committee of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Code of Conduct.<sup>17</sup> AusAID's Humanitarian Action Policy<sup>18</sup> also refers to standards such as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Standard in Accountability and Quality Management,<sup>19</sup> and the Principle of Do No Harm.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES FOR CSOs

### 2.1 CSO GOVERNANCE

**CSO governance mechanisms:** Australian CSO governance mechanisms and processes include a number of general characteristics that are reflected across different CSOs. In addition, the Code of Conduct includes governance requirements, so signatories to the Code also have governance mechanisms with some basic common features. These include:<sup>21</sup>

- a governing body that is elected or appointed by members of the organization or its supporters, with a majority of non-staff (non-executive) members;
- written documentation that sets out the goals and purpose of the organization and defines how it operates;
- clearly articulated and communicated roles and responsibilities for the governing body, staff and management;
- written policies that cover the appointment, induction, termination and, where applicable, remuneration of the governing body; and
- an Annual General Meeting, where governors and managers must report on substantive matters, audited financial statements must be presented, and members must have the opportunity to attend and engage with governors and managers of the organization.

Within these general parameters, actual CSO governance mechanisms and processes vary widely. This is mainly a result of the diversity of Australian CSOs, including their different sizes, the nature of their

membership, and whether they are solely a national CSO or a member of an international confederation or affiliation.

**For instance, World Vision Australia's governance mechanism is the result of its membership of the World Vision International Partnership.<sup>22</sup>** This is a partnership of over 90 interdependent national offices, most of which are governed by local boards or advisory councils. World Vision offices hold each other accountable through an ongoing system of accreditation and peer review. However, while World Vision Australia is accountable to other World Vision offices, it remains a distinct legal entity in Australia with its own Board of Directors. As an Australian CSO, and to receive AusAID funding, it must demonstrate compliance with the Code of Conduct's particular requirements on governance, as outlined above.

**Modalities for decision-making:** The ways in which Australian CSOs make decisions on programming priorities also vary widely according to the particular characteristics of each CSO. In general, programmatic priorities are determined by CSO staff, based on needs in the particular countries in which the CSO is working, and established in consultation with developing-country and Australian partners and, in some cases, with the CSO's own members or its volunteers. In some cases, developing-country partners have a major role in setting country programming priorities. In others, the availability of funding opportunities has a bearing on determining CSO priorities — although this is regarded as 'supply-driven' prioritization and seen as less effective. Priorities for humanitarian action are generally driven by the severity of need and the organization's ability to respond.

CSO programmatic priorities are often outlined within an organizational strategic plan and vision, and may be accompanied by operational or action plans, which are usually developed by CSO management-level staff. The CSO's governing body often then discusses and approves these 'higher-level' priorities and plans. In some cases, however, the governing body may play a more direct role in determining programming priorities.

## 2.2 OVERVIEW OF STAFFING

Staff in Australian CSOs are involved in the full range of **roles** associated with each aspect of CSO operations (however, **how** these roles are undertaken, and designation of staff positions to undertake them, depends very much on the relative size of each organization, as discussed in Section 2.4 below). The range of staff roles include those in Table 1.

## 2.3 ESTIMATES OF NUMBERS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

**Staff:** There are no published figures on the number of Australian CSO staff involved in development cooperation. However, it is estimated that Australian CSOs employ up to 4000 people, including locally employed staff in developing-country offices.

Table 2 provides a sample of staff numbers for some of the larger Australian CSOs.<sup>23</sup>

**TABLE 1**

**STAFFING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY AND MAIN ACTIVITY</b>
<b>Direct programme management</b>	These staff typically have responsibility for identifying and developing programmes in developing countries, coordinating programme implementation and ongoing management, ensuring appropriate monitoring and evaluation and, where applicable, coordinating programme completion.
<b>Humanitarian assistance</b>	These staff may be involved in ensuring the organization’s quick response to a crisis, coordinating the deployment of staff or volunteers, organizing equipment and other logistical matters, and liaising with members of the organization’s international affiliates or with other humanitarian agencies.
<b>Fundraising</b>	These staff are responsible for raising funds to finance the CSO’s programme and operations. This often involves raising funds from the Australian public, both through ongoing fundraising programmes and also through periodic special events. Fundraising also involves securing funds from other donor institutions and organizations. This involves, in particular, the Australian government, as well as other sources such as private philanthropic funds, private corporations, trade unions, Church groups etc.
<b>Communications</b>	These staff have responsibility for communicating the CSO’s work to the Australian public (and in some cases internationally). This can involve publication of information (such as Annual Reports) that is required through the organization’s governance requirements. It typically goes well beyond this, to include information that publicizes and promotes the organization’s activities, information on programmes and partnerships, and updates on organizational activities and achievements. Communications staff may also have responsibility for developing information for fundraising purposes.
<b>Finance and accounting</b>	Most organizations have dedicated staff responsible for managing the organization’s finances. This usually also involves preparing financial statements and reports (for instance, in relation to programmes funded by government or other donors) and ensuring internal financial control systems that minimize the misuse of funds.
<b>Programme quality and learning</b>	These staff have responsibility for ensuring that the organization meets appropriate quality and performance requirements. This may involve ensuring compliance with the ACFID Code or with AusAID accreditation requirements but can also involve establishment of the CSO’s own practice and quality standards, principles or processes. These staff may also have responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the organization’s overall programme objectives and for ensuring that the organization is learning from its experience and improving practice as a result.
<b>Management</b>	These staff — usually a smaller number — are responsible for the overall management of the organization, and are accountable to the organization’s governance body for its programmes and operations.
<b>Human resources</b>	These staff are responsible for managing the organization’s staff recruitment and management, including ensuring that the organization meets legal and regulatory requirements regarding staff and volunteers.
<b>Policy and campaigning</b>	These staff may be involved in developing organizational policy on specific development issues or approaches; or they may engage in policy dialogue with the Australian government or other institutions regarding these institutions’ policies. Campaigning staff typically undertake campaigns (sometimes broad-based for a wide public audience, and sometimes more targeted) on particular issues that the CSO considers to be important. Such issues are often related to systemic development issues or to the underlying causes of development problems.

CSO	STAFF
Australian Volunteers International	70 in Australia (approximately) 40 in overseas offices (approximately)
CARE Australia	68 in Australia 970 in overseas offices (of which 920 are local staff)
Plan International Australia	62
Oxfam Australia	440 in Australia 320 in overseas offices
Save the Children Fund Australia	737
World Vision Australia	554

**Volunteers:** AusAID states that in 2011, 93,670 volunteers contributed their time to the work of ACFID member agencies and Code of Conduct signatory organizations.<sup>24</sup>

Volunteers are involved in a very wide range of development cooperation roles with Australian CSOs. This includes volunteers who work in Australia for development CSOs, and those who are placed to work in developing countries.

Many volunteers support the work of CSOs in Australia. Their roles in these cases vary widely, often depending on the size of the organization and the range of its activities. Some CSOs depend almost entirely on volunteer staff, who may undertake a number of different roles and responsibilities. Volunteers are also involved in larger organizations and complement the roles of paid staff; in these cases volunteer roles may involve less responsibility than those of paid staff.

The government provides substantial support to Australian CSOs that coordinate the placement of volunteers in developing countries. These volunteers usually have professional skills and qualifications, and



provide specific technical or practical expertise to developing-country governments, the private sector or CSOs. Volunteer skills most often called for include agriculture, community and social development, education and training, health, and special education and disability.<sup>25</sup>

CSOs that coordinate volunteer programmes usually provide a range of support to the volunteers they place in developing countries. This may include practical and financial support (such as airfares, visas, medical insurance, living allowances and accommodation). They also provide personal and practical support while the volunteers are undertaking their placement, either through their local offices or through partner organizations.<sup>26</sup>

In other cases, some CSOs and their members undertake their own programmes in developing countries as volunteers, and do so with minimal or no government support. In these cases, the CSOs' volunteers may receive minimal financial support, and may in some cases undertake short-term assignments, sometimes working as part of a team on a specific assignment.

## 2.4 NATURE OF STAFFING ROLES

The nature and balance of staffing roles within CSOs depends to a great extent on their size, budget and funding base. In some of the larger organizations (in particular, the larger international CSOs), staff numbers may total several hundred. In these cases, there are often several dedicated staff for each of the roles identified in Section 2.2 above, and these often make up programme teams or units (for instance, the 'East Asia Programme' team or the 'Humanitarian Assistance Unit'). However, in smaller organizations, some staff

may take on several or multiple roles (although in most cases there is at least one dedicated finance staff person). For instance, programme management staff may often also have responsibility for fundraising and for some aspects of programme quality and learning, and in some cases they will also take on communications roles. It is also important to note that many of the smaller CSOs depend very heavily on volunteer support, in particular for fundraising.

In larger organizations, where there are dedicated staff for most of the roles identified in Section 2.2, an approximate balance is as follows:

- a larger number of staff are typically involved in programme management of long-term development programmes, with relatively fewer involved in humanitarian assistance programmes;
- comparatively fewer staff are typically involved in fundraising, policy and campaigning, and in communications and finance (although the number of staff and volunteers may periodically increase, such as when there are major fundraising events); and
- relatively smaller numbers of staff are involved in management and human resources.

In some of the larger organizations there are dedicated monitoring, evaluation and learning staff. This is typically the case in the larger international CSOs: for instance, Oxfam Australia has a dedicated team that undertakes these roles. In many other organizations, however, resources and budgets require that these roles be undertaken by other staff, either programme management or management staff.

### 3. THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CSOs AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

#### 3.1 OVERALL LEGAL/REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Australian CSOs must operate within the laws and legislation governing not-for-profit organizations in Australia. In addition, a number of different federal and state government regulations apply to development CSOs, in areas such as incorporation, fundraising, tax status and accreditation. Of particular importance are regulations covering the following:<sup>27</sup>

**Incorporation:** Incorporation requires the adoption of a constitution, setting out the purposes of the organization, the governance structure, winding-up arrangements and other matters. Incorporation creates a legal entity separate from the membership of the organization. Australian development CSOs are generally incorporated either as an association or as a company limited by guarantee. An incorporated association is registered under state legislation and has a lower level of regulatory obligation than a company limited by guarantee, which operates under Commonwealth corporation law.

An incorporated association is a suitable framework for smaller organizations that operate primarily in a single state or territory. Most Australian development CSOs prefer to be incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, as this automatically allows national operation and provides a higher level of assurance to donors and other stakeholders.

**Fundraising/registration as a charity:** CSO fundraising from the Australian public for charitable purposes requires authorization from the appropriate government authority in each state where fundraising activities are

to take place. In some states, the organization itself is registered as a charity for fundraising purposes, while in others, licensing relates to the **activity** of fundraising. Australian CSOs that undertake fundraising must do so under the auspices of fundraising legislation that requires compliance with a range of conditions relating to record-keeping, administrative expenses, identification of volunteers and other matters. This is a separate process from incorporation.

**Taxation issues and requirements:** Australian CSOs that wish to provide tax-deductible receipts to their donors must apply to become Deductible Gift Recipients under the Australian government's Overseas Aid Gift Deductability Scheme. The application process includes an assessment of the organization's governance and programme activities by AusAID.

Australian CSOs operating for charitable purposes may be eligible for tax concessions from the Australian Taxation Office. This may include income tax exemption, the provision of tax-free fringe benefits, and concessional goods and services tax.

### **3.2 AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING MODALITIES FOR CSOs**

According to the Government of Australia's 2011 'Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness', CSOs are "increasingly important partners of the aid program". About 11 percent of Australia's ODA, and 13 percent of the budget appropriated to AusAID (\$422 million), was spent through Australian CSOs and through international and local CSOs in aid-receiving countries during the review period.<sup>28</sup> The government has announced plans to increase funding for Australian CSOs from AU\$500 million in 2011–12 to between AU\$700 and AU\$800 million by 2015–16.<sup>29</sup>

The Australian government (mostly through AusAID) currently uses a range of funding modalities to support both Australian and host-country CSOs. These modalities are summarized in Table 3.<sup>30</sup>

**TABLE 3** **AusAID FUNDING MODALITIES**

(Australian Dollars)

MODALITY	DETAILS	FUNDING
<b>ANCP (AusAID CSO COOPERATION PROGRAM)</b>	Core funding to accredited Australian CSOs	\$98 million in 2011–12
<b>COUNTRY AND SECTOR FUNDING PROGRAMMES</b>	Competitive project and programme funding for Australian CSOs, usually through AusAID bilateral or regional programmes	\$220 million in 2010–11 <sup>31</sup>
<b>FUNDING FOR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CSOs</b>	Administered by Australian diplomatic missions and through bilateral aid programmes	Approximately \$200 million in 2010–11
<b>HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE</b>	Partnership agreements with six large Australian CSOs; periodic additional funding for specific emergencies	\$15.5 million in 2010–11 for partnership agreements
<b>VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES</b>	Support for Australian CSOs to coordinate volunteer programmes in developing countries	\$50 million in 2011–12

Further details on each of these modalities are as follows:

**AusAID CSO Cooperation Program (ANCP):** This is AusAID’s mechanism for providing core support to Australian CSOs. ANCP supports Australian CSOs that are accredited under the AusAID accreditation system to implement their own international development programmes.

In 2011–12, \$98 million in grants was provided through ANCP to 43 Australian CSOs working in almost 50 countries across Asia, the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. Of this, \$63 million was provided through partnership agreements to eight of Australia’s largest CSOs.<sup>32</sup>

Core funding under ANCP is allocated to CSOs in proportion to the public donations they receive, which is regarded by AusAID as a measure of both public interest in their causes and confidence in their performance. AusAID considers that CSOs' accreditation, required for any access to core funding, provides the necessary safeguard to ensure effective use of the funds.<sup>33</sup>

Core funding through ANCP is provided in three ways:<sup>34</sup>

- formal 'partnership agreements', which provide predictable funding over a four-year period and include regular policy dialogue with AusAID. AusAID has entered into partnership agreements with eight Australian CSOs that have substantial Australian community support (World Vision Australia, Oxfam Australia, CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Plan International Australia, Child Fund Australia, TEAR Australia and CBM Australia);<sup>35</sup>
- remaining CSOs with full accreditation are allocated core funding from a fixed annual pool of funds, in proportion to the amount of money they collect from the Australian community for overseas activities; and
- small agencies with base accreditation receive \$150,000 where at least \$50,000 has been raised from the community.

**Funding for accredited and non-accredited Australian CSOs through country and sector programmes:** This is the government's primary funding modality for Australian CSOs. It is a programme and project grant funding window, and is a non-core modality. CSOs gain funding through competitive grant processes, often associated with AusAID's bilateral, regional or sector programmes. The

funding requires Australian CSOs to deliver specific projects in line with country and sector strategies. In 2010–11, AusAID provided approximately \$220 million in funding to Australian CSOs to deliver these types of projects.<sup>36</sup> In some cases, AusAID country or regional programmes will also provide funding for specific humanitarian assistance activities.

#### **Funding for local and international CSOs:**

Funding to local CSOs is provided through schemes administered by Australian diplomatic missions and through bilateral aid programmes. In 2010–11, AusAID provided approximately \$200 million in funding to international and local CSOs. There are two relevant schemes here: The Direct Aid Program (DAP) and the Small Activities Scheme (SAS).<sup>37</sup>

#### **Humanitarian partnerships:**

AusAID has entered into partnership arrangements with six Australian CSOs (CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia, Save the Children Australia and World Vision Australia) to undertake humanitarian relief activities, as well as a multi-year agreement with the Australian Red Cross. The partnership agreements are designed so that the CSOs are pre-approved and on hand to respond to rapid-onset humanitarian emergencies, and so that funds can be disbursed quickly and efficiently. Under the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA), if AusAID determines the need to respond to a humanitarian crisis, the HPA may be provided with guidance on the level of funding available and, if necessary, the sectors and/or countries to be supported. The six CSO partners will then determine possible response proposals between them, based on which have the better implementation capacity in the particular country and sector. AusAID is, therefore, provided with a unified proposal from the HPA to consider, rather than a possible six proposals

from each of the CSOs. In 2011–12, AusAID provided approximately \$15.5 million in funding under these partnerships. The partnerships also include multi-year funding to build CSOs' capacity in disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction.

The Australian government also periodically provides additional funding for specific emergencies. For instance, in 2011–12, its Dollar for Dollar initiative matched funds raised by the public through Australian CSOs to alleviate the food crisis in the Horn of Africa. With Australian CSOs raising \$13.7 million, the campaign raised over \$27 million.<sup>38</sup>

**Funding for volunteer programmes:** Australian government support for volunteer programmes is a major part of the Australian aid programme and an important part of its cooperation with CSOs. In 2011, AusAID funding for overseas volunteer programmes was drawn together under one programme, named Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID), coordinated by one Australian CSO, Australian Volunteers International, and including Australian Red Cross and Austraining International.

In 2011–12, AusAID provided Australian volunteer organizations with more than \$50 million in funding for approximately 950 new and 600 ongoing volunteer deployments. In 2012–13, the Australian government will fund more than 1000 new volunteer assignments in over 40 developing countries, supporting a total of 1850 Australians on new and continuing volunteer assignments, ranging in length from a few weeks to three years.

**Amounts of core and non-core funding:** There are limited available data on the overall amounts of core funding provided to Australian CSOs (through ANCP)



and non-core funding (for instance, through bilateral or sector programmes). However, available data indicate some trends. Non-core funding is significantly higher than core funding. At the same time, core funding to accredited CSOs has steadily increased since 2005 and is set to continue to do so. The government's 2011–12 budget statement indicates that it will more than double ANCP funding from 2010–11 to 2014–15, to at least \$150 million. In 2012–13, ANCP funding will increase to \$110 million.<sup>39</sup>

Table 4 provides details of core and 'earmarked' (project-related) funding to Australian CSOs that received over \$4 million in total in 2009–10.<sup>40</sup> As the table shows, the amount of earmarked funding is considerably higher.

TABLE 4

### CORE AND EARMARKED FUNDING FOR SELECTED AUSTRALIAN CSOs

(Aus\$ millions)

CSO	CORE	EARMARKED	TOTAL	CORE AS % OF TOTAL
World Vision Australia	15.0	14.8	29.8	50.3
Oxfam Australia	5.2	15.8	21.1	24.6
Fred Hollows Foundation	1.3	18.6	19.9	6.5
Australian Volunteers International	0	18.2	18.2	0
CARE Australia	1.0	16.8	17.8	5.62
Save the Children Australia	1.3	15.8	17.1	7.6
Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health	0.5	14.0	14.6	4.4
Caritas Australia	4.0	6.3	10.2	39.2
Plan International Australia	3.1	5.3	8.4	36.9
Child Fund Australia	2.9	1.6	4.6	63.0
Australasian Society for HIV Medicine Inc	0	4.2	4.2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>142.6</b>	<b>177.1</b>	<b>19.4</b>

### 3.3 GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING ON CSO FUNDING

Australian government decisions on which CSOs and programmes to fund vary depending on the type of funding modality. In general, there is recognition that while there is degree of linkage, and that CSOs and government may often have similar overall objectives, CSOs contribute to development differently from government and, therefore, often play different roles and have different approaches. This concept of 'similar but different' was recognized in the 'Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness':

"The role that AusAID and other Australian government agencies play in development, and the role of CSOs, are not identical, but they can be powerfully complementary. Australian government agencies are obliged to function within the framework of Australia's government-to-government relations with other countries, and to be continuously attentive to the views of other governments. ...Typically, CSOs will spend less time in intergovernmental activities, will have a high level of specialisation and will operate on a smaller or even niche scale."<sup>41</sup>

For the ANCP, government decisions are guided by the robust accreditation process under which CSOs must qualify to receive core funding. Accredited CSOs receive ANCP funding according to the mechanism described above. The criteria for CSO accreditation with AusAID require that the CSO have "development philosophies *not inconsistent* with the objectives of the Australian aid program".<sup>42</sup> Core funding can provide considerable flexibility for a CSO to undertake its own activities with minimal direction from AusAID, on the basis that it meets the broad requirements set out in the accreditation process and for ANCP eligibility.

For other funding mechanisms, consistency with Australian government priorities is a stronger requirement. This is made clear in AusAID's Civil Society Engagement Framework, which, for instance, states that funding through country and sector programmes will support Australian CSOs to deliver projects "in line with country and sector strategies".<sup>43</sup> The Framework suggests, overall, that AusAID intends to strengthen consistency between its own programme objectives and priorities and its support for CSOs, and that it is increasing efforts to bring this about. For instance, the key objective of the Framework is to "improve development impact by linking increased funding to CSO effectiveness, capacity and relevance to Australia's aid objectives".<sup>44</sup> It later states that funding increases to CSOs will be linked, among other factors, to their relevance to the Australian aid programme's five strategic goals.<sup>45</sup> The Framework identifies a number of actions that will be taken to facilitate this, including development of an assessment methodology to guide decision-making on this basis, and the inclusion in country programme strategies of plans for engaging civil society.

In some cases, the ANCP will fund CSOs that undertake programmes in developing countries that are not part of its geographic focus, or where there are no existing AusAID bilateral or country programmes. Geographic reach is seen as one of the strengths and assets of Australian CSOs, including because they extend the overall reach of the Australian aid programme beyond AusAID's own operations. For instance, the government states that it provides support to CSOs because this "enables Australia to contribute to development efforts on a broader scale and in countries where establishing a bilateral aid program would be less effective".<sup>46</sup> Through the ANCP, for example, CSOs can use funds to support programmes across a range of

countries, some of which do not fall under AusAID's geographic focus. AusAID's core funding of CSOs (and multilateral organizations) to undertake operations in these countries thus provides an important means for Australia's broad engagement,<sup>47</sup> which may extend beyond development cooperation issues. Sector or special issue funding programmes (such as the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme and the Mining for Development programme) provide for considerable CSO programming in countries where AusAID does not have bilateral programmes.

**Technical assistance:** Australia's technical assistance to developing countries has usually taken the form of the provision of expert consultants or advisers, who may provide assistance to policies, programmes or projects in partner countries. These 'experts' are often provided through consulting contracts, through the private sector, or by academic institutions, sometimes on an individual basis but also as part of technical assistance teams. Over the last few years, both the amount of technical assistance provided by Australia and the remuneration provided to experts have been reviewed and reduced.<sup>48</sup>

The provision of technical assistance — in the form of expert consultants or advisers — is not a strong factor in the government's funding priorities for CSOs.<sup>49</sup> AusAID does not identify this among the key strengths of Australian CSOs, and, in general, the government does not use CSOs for the provision of technical assistance in this way.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that many CSOs bring specific technical expertise (for instance, in water and sanitation, community education, health and nutrition). This expertise may be provided as a direct service or in the form of expert advice, but it is also

often provided in the form of capacity development or simply through partnering and dialogue. Thus, CSOs may provide technical advice and cooperation— but not necessarily in the form traditionally understood as ‘technical assistance’. Appropriate skills and expertise, and the ability to work with others and pass these on when called for, are recognized as an important aspect of what CSOs offer, but this is not usually understood in terms of the formal definition of technical assistance.

### 3.4 CSO ADVICE TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Australian CSOs are involved in providing advice to the Australian government in a range of different ways. Sometimes this occurs through targeted consultations the government carries out during a specific policy development process; in other cases, CSOs are part of established bodies that provide regular and ongoing advice on selected issues.

One of the most important areas in which CSOs provide advice to the government is in relation to its development of new policy and strategy. For instance, CSOs were strongly involved in the development of AusAID’s disability strategy, the Humanitarian Action Policy, the Research Strategy and, most recently, the Civil Society Engagement Framework.

In 2009, AusAID and ACFID signed a four-year partnership agreement to support strategic policy dialogue between the CSO sector and AusAID, and expand training and capacity-building for Australian CSOs. The partnership is a means for AusAID to engage with a broad range of Australian CSOs through an umbrella organization. ACFID is also invited to attend AusAID’s Development Effectiveness Steering Committee (DESC) meeting annually, to encourage policy dialogue.

AusAID launched a Civil Society Engagement Framework in June 2012 that sets out how AusAID will work with CSOs, in Australia and overseas. It was developed in close consultation with ACFID and will ensure that increases to CSO funding are linked to effectiveness, capacity and relevance.

CSOs also provide ongoing advice on policy, programme or thematic areas. The ACFID Executive Committee meets regularly with the government's DESC to discuss government development policy and issues such as the aid budget. CSOs meet with AusAID and other government officials to discuss specific sector issues, often through regular meetings that are part of established arrangements for dialogue. For instance, the heads of the key volunteer-placement organizations meet regularly with high-level AusAID staff, and CSOs regularly meet with AusAID Multilateral Branch and other government staff through the Multilateral Roundtable.

Australian CSOs also provide advice to the government through their partnership agreements with AusAID under ANCP. These partnership agreements recognize that the partnership between CSOs and AusAID should be a mechanism for exchange of information, mutual learning and policy dialogue, as well as for provision of funding and programme implementation. Thus, the government accepts that CSOs are a source of valuable information and learning. For instance, the Independent Review found that: "The partnership agreements with the six CSOs...have facilitated greater policy engagement..." One CSO stated that the partnership agreement arrangement:

"...recognizes the strengths of CSOs... and establishes a more equal relationship that not only delivers aid programs, but provides a basis for robust policy dialogue."<sup>50</sup>

CSOs (sometimes individually, sometimes through ACFID) also provide advice to government through written submissions, usually for ongoing policy and programme processes (such as the aid budget) or related to specific events (such as the Independent Review). In some cases the government invites CSOs to provide submissions on particular issues. This was the case for the Independent Review and for the Australian Multilateral Assessment. Other issues that CSOs have provided submissions on include Rio+20, the AusAID Civil Society Engagement Framework and Australia's humanitarian programme.

The Australian government appears to recognize the value and importance of CSO advice and dialogue. Initiatives designed to improve development impact and identified in the Civil Society Engagement Framework<sup>51</sup> for implementation in 2012–13 include structured and regular dialogue with CSOs on policy issues, a cross-agency civil society working group, including civil society focal points and relevant AusAID sectoral specialists, and increased engagement with ACFID to share learning and promote good practice among Australian CSOs.

It is unclear how much influence CSOs' advice, policy dialogue and engagement with the government has on its aid delivery policies. However, the government generally takes CSO input and dialogue seriously, and acknowledges that CSO advice is often based on long-term experience and expertise (including in areas where the government does not have similar experience and expertise) and on close relationships with communities and stakeholder groups in developing countries. In most cases, actual influence on government is most likely incremental and occurs over the longer term. In some cases there is relatively tangible evidence of influence: the Independent Review report, for instance, drew extensively on CSO submissions.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN CSO OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### 4.1 RELATIONSHIPS WITH DEVELOPING-COUNTRY CSOs

Australian CSOs are operational in developing countries in a range of different ways. In some cases, this may include an operational service delivery approach, where the CSO itself provides a service. This is particularly the case in humanitarian assistance, where some CSOs provide direct humanitarian relief activities but also often work through their international affiliates or confederation members who provide the service. Some CSOs will also directly provide development-related services (for instance, health and medical services) and in some cases do this through the use of Australian volunteers.

In most cases, however (as discussed in Section 1.2 above), Australian CSOs operate in developing countries by working through local partners. This usually involves a transfer of funds for the partner to undertake a development programme, project or activity. In many cases, this will involve funding for the partners' own programme of work or activity. It may, however, also involve funding for work proposed by the Australian CSO (or for an AusAID programme which has provided funding to an Australian CSO, which in turn works with a local partner).

Australian CSOs have a range of funding and programme agreements that underlie their partnerships with CSOs in developing countries. The ACFID Code of Conduct sets out parameters and basic requirements for these arrangements which signatories to the Code are expected to follow, in particular in relation to the



respective roles and responsibilities of the Australian CSO and partner organizations, and in relation to control of funds and resources. Key features of these requirements include:<sup>52</sup>

- working towards having a written agreement with each partner that sets out the agreed objectives of the collaborative aid and development activity and the roles, responsibilities and obligations of each party;
- “making every reasonable effort” to uphold the Australian legislative requirement to ensure that funds or resources disbursed to partners are “applied lawfully, in accordance with the promise to the donor, for a proper purpose and with proper controls and risk management in place”; and
- appropriate control and risk management mechanisms, to mitigate the risk of misappropriation or improper use of the funds or resources once funds are disbursed to the partner.

How Australian CSOs that are signatories to the Code take forward these requirements varies quite widely, but in the large majority of cases there will be some form of written arrangement that sets out the terms and parameters for the relationship between the Australian CSO and the developing-country CSO.

A documented arrangement with partner organizations is also one of the criteria for CSO accreditation with AusAID. To fulfil the criterion, CSOs must have a documented, contractual framework in place with its partner organizations, which covers the aspects of the CSOs’ own agreement with AusAID.<sup>53</sup> The accreditation criterion also addresses the financial aspects of partnerships with organizations in developing countries, and requires documented agreements with

partners on the management and accountability of funds, and evidence that the Australian CSO receives financial statements, project acquittals and copies of independent audits.

## **4.2 RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOST-COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS**

Most Australian CSOs working in developing countries will have a relationship of some sort with the government of the host country. In most cases, foreign CSOs are required to register with the host-country government. In some cases, host-country governments may work with CSOs to promote consistency between its objectives and priorities and those of CSOs, and may want to address potential duplication of programmes and services or to address gaps. However, in most cases the diversity of international and national CSOs, and the wide variety of their programmes and activities, makes this difficult. In most cases, therefore, governments accept this diversity as inherent to CSO operations and to their role within civil society, and government and CSO programmes, therefore, operate alongside each other.

In many cases, contact between Australian CSOs and host-country governments regarding programmes and projects, is rudimentary, but in some cases the relationship is closer. This occurs most frequently at regional or local levels of government. CSOs may engage at this level both in relation to programme issues and through policy dialogue. For instance, Oxfam Australia is registered with the Government of South Africa. Oxfam's programme design takes the government's national strategy into account, while the government in turn takes a general interest in Oxfam's

activities. The real engagement, however, occurs with government at the provincial and district levels, where programme details may be discussed in more detail. In some cases, this takes place indirectly: for example, Oxfam may encourage partners to talk with district and local government regarding the delivery of water and sanitation services, including in relation to gaps between government policy and actual provision and maintenance of services.<sup>54</sup>

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