



## Submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper

Since 1995, the Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development has worked across party lines to champion women's empowerment, break down gender discrimination, and advocate for women's right to access quality reproductive health services. We recognise the empowerment of women and girls as central to driving successful and sustainable development globally.

The APGPD is pleased to provide a submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper and we thank the Government for the opportunity to share our vision for Australia's international engagement over the next 5-10 years. We propose two key points:

- The value of Australia's aid program to our foreign policy goals, and in the national interest, should be respected and strengthened.
- The Australian Government should strengthen its support for family planning and reproductive health, which are key to achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and better health, education and economic outcomes for all.

### The valuable contribution of Australian aid

Thanks to the efforts and investments of governments, organisations and individuals, the world has seen enormous progress in reducing deprivation and injustice. Since 1990 world hunger,<sup>i</sup> maternal mortality,<sup>ii</sup> and child mortality<sup>iii</sup> have been almost halved. Thanks to efforts to strengthen national laws and international standards, 119 countries have now passed laws on domestic violence;<sup>iv</sup> 21 of the 29 countries where Female Genital Cutting is most prevalent now have laws banning the practice,<sup>v</sup> and the number of democracies globally has soared: from 32 in 1970 to 87 in 2010.<sup>vi</sup> Despite some horrific conflicts continuing to terrorise civilians today, the number and deadliness of interstate wars has declined dramatically since the end of the Second World War, the number of civil wars has declined substantially since the end of the Cold War and battle fatalities have decreased 95 per cent between 1950 and 2007.<sup>vii</sup> These name just a few of the thousands of achievements to which Australians can be proud to have contributed – through our work, ideas, donations and advocacy.

To ensure these achievements are maintained, and our place as a positive global citizen recognised, Australia must remain committed to a healthy and connected aid program. **In developing a framework for Australia's Foreign Policy, aid and development must be an integral and strengthened component of our strategy.**

## Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the most universally agreed roadmap for overcoming the world's most pressing challenges. Achieving this ambitious set of goals requires investing in international development assistance, as well as national action to drive down greenhouse gas emissions, multilateral engagement to tackle crime and corruption, bilateral negotiation to end discrimination against women and girls, collaboration between defence forces to boost women's participation in defence operations and peace negotiations, and incentives to the private sector to implement better social and environmental practices – to name just a few examples. International engagement driving effective development outcomes, for the benefit of all peoples, requires a coherent framework in which Australia's diplomatic, security, trade and aid interests all work together.

The Australian aid program should be guided by the Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs present us with a roadmap towards a universally agreed vision of the world we want to live in by 2030. We can commit to implementing this plan with strong targets of our own, as we contribute to the global agenda and support the countries of the Indo-Pacific region. **The White Paper should reflect and enhance the SDGs, with ongoing reporting mechanisms built in** – seeking to strengthen policies and institutions of government, and to mobilise partnership to achieve the implementation of the SDGs.

Of particular interest for the APGPD is Sustainable Development Goal 5.6:

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

## Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health

We are pleased to see support for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) features in DFAT's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*,<sup>viii</sup> *DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy*,<sup>ix</sup> the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade report *Empowering Women*,<sup>x</sup> and in our years of advocacy at the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>xi</sup>

Thanks to the enormous energy and effort of governments, organisations and individuals around the world, we have seen enormous progress in improving women and girls' reproductive health:

- Maternal mortality has almost halved since 1990;<sup>xii</sup>
- Between 2000 and 2015, new HIV infections fell by 35 per cent, and AIDS-related deaths fell by 28 per cent with some 8 million lives saved;<sup>xiii</sup>
- Contraceptive prevalence almost doubled in the past 35 years, from 36 per cent in 1970 to 64 per cent in 2015.<sup>xiv</sup>

Supporting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights has a transformative impact on women's health, education and empowerment – as well as that of their families and communities. When women and girls have access to reproductive health information and services:

- They are better able to make informed decisions in relation to their bodies, their health and wellbeing, and their relationships;
- They are better able to complete their education and training;
- They have better access to employment opportunities;
- They have increased financial security and freedom, and
- They tend to spend less time on unpaid domestic duties, including taking care of dependents, which continue to be disproportionately carried out by women and girls throughout the world.<sup>xv</sup>

Access to family planning also yields benefits to whole families, communities and economies. When women are able to plan their childbearing years around their education, training and employment, they can earn a higher incomes and better manage their family finances. Access to family planning can increase a women's wages by up to 40 per cent, increasing women's control over her finances and property, and enabling greater long-term savings.<sup>xvi</sup>

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has found women who use family planning are not only healthier and better educated, but also more empowered in their households and communities, and more economically productive. In these households, children tend to be healthier, do better in school and grow up to earn higher incomes.<sup>xvii</sup>

Advancing SRHR is a smart outlay and highly cost effective. Economic modelling has found a USD 1 investment in family planning yields a benefit to society of up to USD 120,<sup>xviii</sup> whilst each percentage point reduction in total fertility is estimated to result in an increase of up to 0.25% in per capita GDP growth.<sup>xix</sup>

We in the Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development believe we are at a tipping point. We must not lose the momentum established through key conferences (such as International Conference on Population and Development 1994, the Fourth World Congress for Women in Beijing in 1994, and the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning) and the collaborative energy inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We must aspire to realise the goal established at the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning to reach an additional 120 million women with family planning services by 2020; and to reach the agreed SDG target to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services by 2030.<sup>xx</sup>

Australia's role in shaping this vision is more critical than ever following the decline in the United States Government's support for SRHR, following the Trump Administration's reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy and likely cuts in funding to the United Nations Population Program, a leading supplier of contraceptives to many countries. Australia should drive an agenda promoting women's human rights. There is a great need to strengthen the normative agenda for these rights internationally, and to deliver on these underfunded needs in development and humanitarian settings. **The Australian Government can position itself as a leading advocate and donor to sexual and reproductive health and rights.**

We also believe **gender equality should not be a siloed issue, but rather integrated across the whole of Australia's international engagement.** We know investing in women and girls, and gender equality more broadly, is an effective way to reduce poverty, promote prosperity and support stability. For example:

- The Asia-Pacific region could be US\$47 billion richer per year if women had better access to employment opportunities;<sup>xxi</sup>
- There is a correlation between a state's peacefulness and how well its women are treated;<sup>xxii</sup>
- Female farmers provided with equal access to resources could reduce under-nutrition for 100-150 million people.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Gender equality is an important goal in itself: for too long women and girls have suffered disproportionate levels of poverty, violence and injustice. It is also essential to achieving Australia's foreign policy objectives to shape a world more peaceful and prosperous for all. The development of a Foreign Policy White Paper presents a new opportunity for Australia to demonstrate leadership, providing a clear framework to address poverty and champion women and girls across the globe.

<sup>i</sup> United Nations. Millennium Development Goals. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organisation. 2015. *Maternal Mortality Factsheet N. 348*

<sup>iii</sup> UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UN-DESA Population Division. 2015. *Levels & Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2015*

<sup>iv</sup> UN Women. 2015. *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realising Rights*

<sup>v</sup> UNFPA. 2015. Female Genital Mutilation Frequently Asked Questions. [http://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions#banned\\_by\\_law](http://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions#banned_by_law); UNICEF FGM infographic [https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/00-FMGC\\_infographiclow-res.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/00-FMGC_infographiclow-res.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Our World in Data. *Democracy*. <https://ourworldindata.org/democracy/> (democracies here are defined as systems with citizen political participation, constraints on the power of the executive, and a guarantee of civil liberties)

<sup>vii</sup> Human Security Report Project. 2014 *The Decline in Global Violence: Reality or Myth? (Press Release, 3 March 2014)*

[http://www.hsrgroup.org/docs/Publications/HSR2013/HSR\\_2013\\_Press\\_Release.pdf](http://www.hsrgroup.org/docs/Publications/HSR2013/HSR_2013_Press_Release.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy, February 2016. States: 'A focus of health programing will support universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.' And commits to, when 'assisting governments and organisations to prevent violence against women and children, [to] support and advocate for [a] strong focus on protection and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in humanitarian emergencies and responses'

<sup>ix</sup> DFAT Humanitarian Strategy, May 2016. Commits to 'promote international good practice and ensure partners implement and report against the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Marker and use the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) for Sexual and Reproductive Health at the onset of a humanitarian emergency.'

<sup>x</sup> The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Empowering women and girls: the human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region*. December 2015. Including the recommendation (11) that 'the Australian Government maintain funding and support for reproductive health programs, including obstetric and gynaecological services, across the Indo-Pacific region with an increased focus on the Pacific and Timor-Leste'.

<sup>xi</sup> **CSW 58:** 'Australia advocated for a robust focus relating to violence against women, women's economic security and workforce participation, women's political participation, sexual and reproductive health, and recognition of the increased vulnerability and marginalisation of particular groups of women' (Report of the Australian Government Delegation to the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women)

**CSW59:** 'Australia is determined to ensure that gender equality, women's political and economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's leadership and eliminating violence against women are central in the post-2015 development agenda' (Statement by Senator The Hon Michaelia Cash Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women to CSW59, (Report of the Australian Government Delegation to the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women)

**CSW60:** 'The Australian Government's international gender equality priorities focus on supporting: Better health and education outcomes for women and girls with a focus on access to quality, affordable services including in relation to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights' (Report of the Australian Government Delegation to the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women)

<sup>xii</sup> World Health Organisation. 2015. *Maternal Mortality Factsheet N. 348*

<sup>xiii</sup> World Health Organisation, November 2016, HIV/AIDS Factsheet <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs360/en/>

<sup>xiv</sup> United Nations. 2015. *Trends in Contraceptive Use Worldwide*

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/trendsContraceptiveUse2015Report.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> Budlender et al, 2010. Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care, UNRISD, Gender and Development Program

<sup>xvi</sup> Canning and Schultz, 2012. Series: The economic consequences of reproductive health and family planning, *The Lancet*, 380, pp. 165-171.

<sup>xvii</sup> UNFPA 2012 Annual Report

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<sup>xviii</sup> Lomborg, 2015, 'The UN Choose Way Too Many Development Goals', Time Magazine. Available online:  
<http://time.com/4052109/un-sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>xix</sup> Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health, 2012. 'Family Planning is the Missing Investment', Aspen Global Health and Development at the Aspen Institute

<sup>xx</sup> Goal 5, target 6: 'Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences' and Goal 3, target 7: 'By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.'

<sup>xxi</sup> Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organisation, 2011, 'Women and labour markets in Asia: Rebalancing for gender equality' <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28620/women-labor-markets.pdf>

<sup>xxii</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, Foreign Policy, April 2014, *What Sex Means for World Peace*

<sup>xxiii</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11, 2011. (Referenced in DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy)