



10 February 2021

The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP  
Treasurer  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer,

**RE: Oxfam Australia's 2021-2022 Pre-Budget submission to Treasury**

I write to you to share Oxfam Australia's 2021-2022 Pre-Budget submission, and to specifically highlight some of the opportunities outlined in the document.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian Government for the significant investments it made during 2020 to manage the immediate implications of the global coronavirus pandemic, particularly here in Australia and in our region.

The following commitments demonstrate the government's recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over for Australians until it is over for everyone.

- \$80 million commitment to improve access to an effective vaccine in 94 lower-income countries will help protect people's health globally.
- The one-off \$304.7 million COVID-19 Response Package to the Pacific and Timor-Leste.
- The additional investment of \$500 million over three years for a COVID-19 vaccine for the Pacific and South East Asia.

The 2021–2022 Federal Budget presents a unique opportunity to continue to address the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. It is also an important opportunity for Australia to make a significant contribution to eradicating poverty, inequality and injustice at home and abroad.

Oxfam Australia's submission outlines several proposals that would enable Australia to fund a range of targeted, evidence-based and high impact projects both at home and overseas. In addition to recommendations for investment in a range of areas related to Australia's aid and humanitarian programs, our submission includes funding recommendations that promote the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as recommendations that address the immediate and real impacts of the climate crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and the scale of this crisis requires a permanent and long-term increase in funding for Australia's aid and development response. Australia will need

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to progress from supporting response and recovery to partnering for regional resilience. Without this continued investment, countries in our region and around the world won't be able to get back on their feet, recent development gains will be lost, and poverty and inequality will deepen.

Our submission includes several important proposals. However, I would like to highlight the following recommendations:

***Australia's foreign aid budget and COVID-19 response***

- The Australian Government increase its aid budget to commit to an Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend of 0.7% of GNI (\$14.1 billion) by 2030.
- The Australian Government commit an additional \$2 billion of foreign aid over four years to help support the response to the immediate and ongoing impacts of the coronavirus crisis.
- The Australian Government increases the proportion of ODA channelled to and through civil society to 20%, for both humanitarian and development funding.

***Australia's humanitarian financing***

- Australia commits its fair share of humanitarian financing of at least \$861 million per year. This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increase in the overall ODA program.

***Climate change adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction***

- That Australia's ODA 2021-2022 budget reflect support for climate finance aligned with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, including limiting global warming to 1.5° C. Specifically, the Australian Government should scale-up its overall contribution of international climate finance to reach approximately \$3 billion a year by 2025.

I thank you for your consideration. Please find enclosed a copy of our 2021-2022 Pre-Budget Submission.

Please contact me directly on 0437 707 351, or contact Laura Hill, Associate Director of Strategic Communications ([laurahill@oxfam.org.au](mailto:laurahill@oxfam.org.au) or 0401 060 428) if you have any questions or would like to organise a time to discuss these recommendations further.

Yours faithfully,



Lyn Morgain  
Chief Executive



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28 January 2021

# OXFAM AUSTRALIA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2021-2022



**OXFAM**  
Australia



## ABOUT OXFAM AUSTRALIA

Oxfam Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, secular development agency. Our vision is of a just and sustainable world without the inequalities that keep people in poverty.

Our role is to:

- Provide support and relief to communities in developing countries to protect and rebuild their lives in times of crisis.
- Work with people and communities experiencing poverty and disadvantage to find sustainable ways to build fair and independent lives.
- Mobilise people to stand up and speak out, to influence those in power to ensure that people living in poverty have a say in the critical decisions that affect them, their families and communities.

Oxfam Australia is a long-term partner of the Australian Government and is supported by more than 550,000 Australians annually who contribute skills, time and financial support to advance our work. During 2019-2020, Oxfam Australia directly helped more than 12.7 million people in 23 countries.

Oxfam Australia is a member of Oxfam International, a global confederation of 20 organisations that work together in a networked approach across 90 countries around the world.

The Oxfam confederation delivered vital aid and transformational development programs for more than 19.4 million people in 84 countries around the world in 2019-2020. In collaboration with partners, Oxfam reached 12.3 million people affected by disaster or conflict.

**PHOTO (ABOVE):** Laloo Kolhi, Badin,(Pakistan); Muhammad Khan is a Community Group Member and beneficiary of an Oxfam-sponsored highly efficient irrigation system, that is providing more reliable irrigation to his communities crops. Muhammad's main income is derived from share cropping. Photo: Khaula Jamil/OxfamAUS.

**COVER IMAGE:** Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea: Onano John prepares to collect honey from her hives in the Eastern Highlands. Photo: Patrick Moran/OxfamAUS.

## SUMMARY

Oxfam Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2021-2022 Federal Budget. For further information please contact Laura Hill, Associate Director of Strategic Communications on [laurahill@oxfam.org.au](mailto:laurahill@oxfam.org.au).

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As part of the 2020-2021 Federal Budget, *Partnerships for Recovery* rightly focussed on managing the immediate implications of the global coronavirus pandemic, particularly here in Australia and in our region.

The Australian Government's \$80 million commitment to improve access to an effective vaccine in 94 lower-income countries will help protect people's health globally. Together with further support for economic recovery, particularly the one-off \$304.7 million COVID-19 Response Package to the Pacific and Timor-Leste, the Australian Government will play a crucial role in mitigating the economic and social impacts of the health crisis across the region. Furthermore, Australia's additional investment of \$500 million over three years for a COVID-19 vaccine for the Pacific and South East Asia demonstrates the government's recognition that this is not over for Australians until it is over for everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and the scale of this crisis requires a permanent and long-term increase in funding for Australia's aid and development response. Australia will need to progress from supporting response and recovery to partnering for regional resilience. Without this continued investment, countries in our region and around the world won't be able to get back on their feet, recent development gains will be lost, and poverty and inequality will deepen.

The 2021-2022 Federal Budget presents a unique opportunity to continue to address the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. It is also an important opportunity for Australia to make a significant contribution to eradicating poverty, inequality and injustice at home and abroad.

This submission outlines several proposals that would enable Australia to fund a range of targeted, evidence-based and high impact projects both at home and overseas. In addition to recommendations for investment in a range of areas related to Australia's aid and humanitarian programs, this submission includes funding recommendations that promote the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as recommendations that address the immediate and real impacts of the climate crisis.

We look forward to briefing you further on Oxfam Australia's work and proposals.

**Laura Hill**

Associate Director of Strategic Communications

Oxfam Australia

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# **OXFAM AUSTRALIA'S 2021-2022 FEDERAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **FIRST PEOPLES' JUSTICE**

### **| STRAIGHT TALK PROGRAM**

The Australian Government supports the continuation and growth of Straight Talk by providing \$3 million in funding over three years to:

- Deliver, sustain and expand an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Straight Talk national program, including the development of a powerful alumni program.
- Fund the delivery of two national summits and three regional gatherings in partnership with local communities.

### **| JUSTICE REINVESTMENT**

The Australian Government invests in justice reinvestment by providing at least \$50 million over four years to:

- Create and sustain an independent justice reinvestment body.
- Fund seven justice reinvestment trials.

### **| CLOSING THE GAP**

- The Australian Government must develop a 10-year funding agreement against each of the 16 Close the Gap target areas.

## **HUMANITARIAN**

### **| FAIR SHARE FUNDING AND FOCUS BEYOND THE SOUTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

- Australia commits its fair share of humanitarian financing of at least \$861 million per year. This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increase in the overall Official Development Assistance (ODA) program.
- Re-establish a bipartisan commitment to rebuilding the Australian development cooperation budget, which includes a floor for ODA levels enshrined in legislation and with a budget trajectory that ensures levels reach the United Nations target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) (\$14.1 billion) by 2030.
- The Australian Government increases the proportion of ODA channelled to and through civil society to 20%, for both humanitarian and development funding.

### **| COVID-19 VACCINE AND HEALTH EQUITY**

- The Australian Government advocates for and fosters greater involvement of Australian civil society (including humanitarian actors) in the Regional Vaccine and Health Security Initiative, as well as the design of vaccine roll-out programs in the Asia Pacific region.
- The Australian Government ensures community engagement constitutes a central pillar of responding to COVID-19 and the vaccine roll-out programs currently under development.

- The Australian Government should allocate, and advocate to counterparts, that community engagement activities comprise at least 10% of program budgets for the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines in developing countries.

## GENDER JUSTICE

### | COVID-19 AND GENDER INEQUALITY

- The Australian Government renews its commitment to gender equality by providing \$20 million in funding over three years in the following areas:
  - In the Asia and the Pacific region, the Australian Government should invest \$3 million for the provision of administrative and infrastructure services to reduce the burden of domestic and care work on women.
  - Australia's aid program invests in comprehensive ending violence against women and girls' programs in the Pacific region to address primary prevention and crisis response.
  - The Australian Government continues to fund programs designed to transform gender norms that reach the poorest and most vulnerable women and communities.
  - Australia's aid program invests in boosting women's access to communications infrastructure and services (internet, digital platforms, digital financial services) to reduce current gender disparity in accessing digital economy and improved access to information and government services.
- Additionally, the Australian Government should commit a minimum of \$304 million over eight years for *Pacific Women Lead* to build on the momentum established by *Pacific Women* and ensure that COVID-19 response and recovery can continue. Furthermore, allocate 20% of funding for *Pacific Women Lead* to feminist movement strengthening and research.

## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### | BEYOND COVID-19: FROM RESPONSE, TO RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

- The Australian Government increase its aid budget to commit to an ODA spend of 0.7% of GNI (\$14.1 billion) by 2030.
- The Australian Government commit an additional \$2 billion of foreign aid over four years to help support the response to the immediate and ongoing impacts of the coronavirus crisis.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE

### | CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

That Australia's ODA 2021-2022 budget reflect support for climate finance aligned with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, including limiting global warming to 1.5° C.

Specifically, the Australian Government should:

- No longer provide any official development assistance, foreign investment, export credit or trade promotion that supports fossil fuels.
- Scale-up its overall contribution of international climate finance to reach approximately \$3 billion a year by 2025.
- Commit to reporting annually on its contribution of international climate finance over the preceding year, and its intended contribution over the coming year.
- Continue to contribute financially to the Green Climate Fund, as one part of its overall contribution of international climate finance.

## CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS AND TARGETS

The 2021-2022 budget must outline plans for a renewables-led recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that aligns with Australia's responsibility to help limit global heating to 1.5°C and support communities and people who are reliant on fossil fuel related industries to transition to fulfilling work in the new, green economy.

This must include:

- Adopting a national goal of zero emissions well before 2050.
- Strengthening Australia's initial contribution to the Paris Agreement, by increasing 2030 emissions target.
- Committing to no further expansion of Australia's coal and gas industries, and to the phase-out of fossil fuels in both our domestic energy system and exports by 2030.
- Rapid expansion of renewable energy in Australia to well beyond 100% of current electricity demand, to replace fossil fuel use across all sectors, and power a renewable energy export industry.
- Investment in economic stimulus measures that accelerate the transformation of our energy system to being powered by renewable energy, create new jobs in low-carbon manufacturing industries, and protect and restore ecosystems.
- Investments in research and infrastructure needed to establish Australia as a major exporter of renewable energy.



## FIRST PEOPLES' JUSTICE

Oxfam Australia has been working to advance First Peoples' rights for more than 40 years. We are working towards a world where First Nations Peoples have achieved self-determination and their human and cultural rights are fully realised.

We work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their organisations to develop solutions and innovative answers to the issues that they believe are the most important. In tandem with our programs directed at addressing Indigenous disadvantage in local communities, Oxfam Australia promotes the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to address the systemic causes of disadvantage, inequality and injustice.

In doing so, Oxfam invokes the rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the rights to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent.

## STRAIGHT TALK

Straight Talk connects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with the political system and builds the capacity of women as change makers. With a focus on practical tools and confidence building, Straight Talk brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women together to share, learn and be effective in making a difference in their personal and community lives.

Straight Talk focuses on developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's skills to make positive changes through political engagement, while also increasing engagement in public and political life.



## THE ISSUE

The Straight Talk project has identified four main interconnected issues, which lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women feeling alienated from the formal and informal political system and a disillusionment with institutional policies and systems. These include:

1. Lack of political engagement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This is not about a lack of capacity or skills amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women but about a lack of information about the formal political systems and inroads for opportunities to engage. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are underrepresented at the local, state and federal political levels.
2. Lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices being heard in decision making spaces that affect their personal and community lives. These spaces include family, community, workplaces as well as more formal systems and institutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are underrepresented in decision making roles and positions of influence in a multitude of spaces.
3. Lack of culturally appropriate and safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to connect and build skills and knowledge. Many leadership or change making projects are top down, dominated by an external agenda and the spaces are rarely Aboriginal designed or led.
4. Lack of visibility and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women making decisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's lives and communities. This lack of visibility compounds the feelings of alienation and disconnection.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Australian Government support for the Straight Talk program has been limited. Recent funding has come from philanthropists and through Oxfam Australia fundraising initiatives. The benefit of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with the knowledge of the political system can transfer to benefiting close to 45,000 people in the wider community from just one national summit. The Straight Talk program currently has more than 800 past participants. Oxfam Australia and past participants believe that further investment in this powerful program will create greater outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities in political participation, visibility and policy making across the country.

## DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

After attending a national summit or regional gathering, many Straight Talk alumni have progressed to becoming Senators, local councillors and political advisors. Others have been elected to local school councils and community boards, and the First Female Mayor of the Torres Strait was successfully re-elected for a second term.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Australian Government supports the continuation and growth of Straight Talk by providing \$3 million in funding over three years to:
  - Deliver, sustain and expand an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Straight Talk national program including the development of a powerful alumni program to support participants to stay connected and to enhance the alumni skills set-in decision-making roles.
  - Fund the delivery of two national summits and three regional gatherings in partnership with local communities.

## JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

Oxfam Australia calls on the Australian Government to back the successful justice reinvestment trials taking place in New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA) and develop a strategy that expands this program nationally. There is demonstrable evidence showing how this proactive, community-led approach to justice is reducing rates of offending and incarceration and saving the government money.

### THE ISSUE

Justice reinvestment refers to a smarter approach to justice that stems the inflow of people into prisons and reduces re-offending. It creates a virtuous cycle that re-invests the savings back into preventative programs. In the United States, where the cost of running justice systems has soared, more than 35 states have signed onto this program, which is partly funded by the US Department of Justice.<sup>1</sup> Numerous states have cut prison numbers through the justice reinvestment approach.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults make up around 2% of the national population, they constitute 27% of the national prison population. Over-representation is both a persistent and growing problem – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates increased by 41% between 2006 and 2016, and the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous imprisonment rates over that decade widened.<sup>2</sup>

In Australia, the *Maranguka* projects in Bourke, NSW and *Olabud Doogethu* in Halls Creek, WA, have delivered demonstrable benefits, especially to Indigenous Australians, through a community-led approach to justice that better coordinates service delivery bodies, including schools, police and corrective services. A 2017 study by KPMG found that the *Maranguka* project identified significant progress in the majority of 12 indicators compared with previous years.<sup>3</sup>

### THE OPPORTUNITY

Government support in Australia for justice reinvestment projects has been limited and sporadic. Funding for the existing trials has come from philanthropists, NGOs and local government. The benefit of reducing Indigenous incarceration to the individuals, their families and communities is enormous, but so is the potential to arrest the rising cost of running prisons. A 2018 report by the Australian Law Reform Commission urged all governments in Australia to support justice reinvestment by funding an independent justice reinvestment body to promote place-based initiatives that address the drivers of crime and imprisonment, and to provide expertise on the implementation of justice reinvestment. It also called on governments to fund justice reinvestment trials in partnership with Aboriginal communities.<sup>4</sup>

Oxfam Australia has been directly supporting the projects in Bourke and Halls Creek and has seen how the community, together with the police and other service providers, have worked together to deliver results. New justice reinvestment sites are emerging in western Sydney and Moree in northern NSW, while additional sites are being planned in WA, partly with the aid of the state government's Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy. We believe that further success will be achieved with dedicated funding, strategy and support from the Australian Government.

### DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

The first phase of the *Olabud Doogethu* justice reinvestment project in Halls Creek has involved the deployment of Aboriginal leaders on the streets at night who work as Youth Engagement Night Officers (YENOs). Prior to this, Halls Creek would see up to 60 young people out in the streets at night, with burglaries and stealing common occurrences.

The program has driven a sustained, 50% reduction in offending by youth. Halls Creek Senior Sergeant Dean Bailey said since the program's inception, burglary offences in the Halls Creek town had reduced by 46% and stealing offences had reduced by 12%. He said the YENOs role is a significant contributor to this reduction. He calls for an expansion of alternative education programs to address youth issues in the region.

“We work with the night patrol officers. When kids are identified as having a street presence, we visit the families with members from *Olabud Doogetha* and get them involved in finding a solution. It’s boredom that creates crime. We need to expand other programs like the Youth Hub, to be more effective in the longer term.”<sup>5</sup>

The next phase of the project is the On Track alternative education program, which aims to engage youth through acquisition of traditional knowledge. Oxfam Australia assisted the project to secure funding of \$381,000 from Lotterywest in late 2020. A sustained, strategic approach led by the federal government can build on the success of Halls Creek and replicate benefits in crime reduction around Australia.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Australian Government respond to the overwhelming evidence in support of justice reinvestment by providing at least \$50 million over four years to:
  - Create and sustain an independent justice reinvestment body; and
  - Fund seven justice reinvestment trials based on the principles established in Bourke and Halls Creek in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

## CLOSING THE GAP

As a founding member of the Close the Gap (CTG) campaign, Oxfam Australia welcomes the federal government's willingness to support the role of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) as the prime vehicle to address Indigenous disadvantage in Australia. However, the Australian Government must demonstrate how it intends to work with the states and territories to develop and generate the reforms and funding needed to achieve the 16 CTG targets.



Melbourne, Victoria: Reginald (Reg) Thorpe, pictured during filming for the 2017 Close The Gap Day Video campaign. Photo: Carla Gottgens/OxfamAUS.

### THE ISSUE

The Australian Government's work with the Coalition of Peaks marked a historic turning point for policymaking in Australia because it put Aboriginal leadership at the centre of decision making. It also recognised that ACCOs are a means of achieving self-determination and they are best placed to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This was demonstrated with the investment in the 2020-2021 Federal Budget of \$46.5 million over four years to these organisations to build their capacity and business models.

### THE OPPORTUNITY

While the Australian Government has made great strides by involving Aboriginal leaders in decision making and supporting self-determination, it should be developing a plan to expand services delivered by ACCOs to achieve the 16 CTG targets announced in 2020. Included in this plan should be a strategy to reform mainstream services, especially in the health, education and justice sectors, to achieve these targets. Without such a plan, the new targets will remain hollow objectives in the same way as the former Health Plan was developed over many years without any additional funding.

### DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

The Katungul Aboriginal Corporation Regional Health and Community Services on the NSW south coast shows how strong, well-resourced ACCOs can improve the well-being of communities and deliver savings to government. Katungul has developed innovative approaches to address the health needs of the community. Data obtained by Oxfam Australia, and featured in our report *In Good Hands*<sup>6</sup>, showed how

hospital presentations by Aboriginal people in the region around Katungul have fallen by 30% over a six-year period. This is a testament to the role of ACCOs in providing preventative health care to their populations.

Acting CEO Jo Grant explains how the service has opened a gym which is now used by all the groups that come to the clinics. "It helps with mental health, reduced isolation, it's a yarnning space as well, it is really culturally appropriate, but it is very disguised," Ms Grant explained in the Oxfam report.

## **| RECOMMENDATION**

- The Australian Government must develop a 10-year funding agreement against each of the 16 CTG target areas, and these should be negotiated into National Agreements between the Commonwealth and states and territories, in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and in line with the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

## HUMANITARIAN

When disaster strikes around the world, Oxfam Australia moves quickly with our partners, to provide life-saving assistance to those in need. Once the immediate danger has passed, we work to rebuild lives and reduce the risk of future disasters. With support from the Australian people, Oxfam Australia contributes to emergency response efforts around the world.

The scale of humanitarian crises around the world has never been greater, with more than 235 million people requiring live-saving humanitarian assistance. Australia is the world's 14th largest national economy (GNI of USD \$1.4 trillion) and must contribute more to alleviating the suffering of people living through war, conflict and disaster.

According to the recently released 2021 Global Humanitarian Outlook, the majority of humanitarian crises (except the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh and Myanmar) are outside South East Asia and the Pacific Region, including the protracted crises in Yemen and Syria as well as the Horn of Africa's drought and food crisis. Australia must work beyond our immediate geographic region and provide humanitarian assistance to the millions of people around the world in urgent need.

We must continue supporting communities to deal with, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic by partnering with civil society and utilising the expertise of communities to engage people living through crises.



Al Bearrayer displaced persons camp, Yemen: Samiha Ali, who is next to an Oxfam worker, collects water in a jerry can at a distribution point built by Oxfam. Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam.

# FAIR SHARE FUNDING AND FOCUS BEYOND THE SOUTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

## THE ISSUE

COVID-19 has added a layer of adversity to people already experiencing humanitarian crises, increasing the number of people who need humanitarian assistance by 40%. In 2021, one in every 33 people in the world will require humanitarian assistance (more than 235 million people or around nine times the population of Australia).

The funding ask from the humanitarian sector to meet the needs of people in crises around the world in 2021 is USD \$35.1 billion. The funding ask from 2020 (USD \$38.6 billion) was only 46% funded (only USD \$17.9 billion provided by donors like Australia) - the gap between requirements and funding (USD \$20.8 billion) is the highest ever seen. The impact of this lack of funding means that roughly 130 million people (five times the population of Australia) were not able to receive sufficient life-saving assistance from humanitarian agencies like Oxfam.

More than 99% of the people targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2021 are outside the Australian Government's geographic focus areas and more than 97% of the funding ask is for countries outside the geographic focus areas.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Australia has a proud history of responding to both sudden-onset disasters and protracted crises across the globe. The Australian Government must maintain its ambition to be a world-leading humanitarian donor, continue to increase and meet its fair share of humanitarian financing, and ensure its assistance prioritises those in greatest need.

The government must affirm a global focus for Australia's humanitarian action and provide resources for humanitarian actors to support communities outside of the Australian Government aid program's focus areas. Furthermore, there is a growing need for Australia to affirm a commitment to operating with the primary purpose of alleviating suffering wherever it is found, in line with the humanitarian principles the Australian Government has already committed to in the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and through the Agenda for Humanity's Grand Bargain.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Australia commits its fair share of humanitarian financing of at least AUD \$861 million per year (only AUD \$0.86 billion of the much larger global humanitarian financing ask of USD \$ 35.1 billion, outlined in the 2021 Global Humanitarian Outlook). This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increase in the overall ODA program.
- All sides of politics re-establish a bipartisan commitment to rebuilding the Australian development cooperation budget, which includes a floor for ODA levels enshrined in legislation, and with a budget trajectory that ensures levels reach the UN target of 0.7% of GNI by 2030 (using 2019 GNI data, this would amount to USD \$9.78 billion or AUD \$14.07 billion).
- To increase the proportion of Australian ODA channelled to and through civil society to 20%, for both humanitarian and development funding (this is commensurate with OECD averages but behind leaders such as Sweden at 40%).



## COVID-19 VACCINE AND HEALTH EQUITY

### THE ISSUE

Nearly 70 poor countries will only be able to vaccinate one in ten people against COVID-19 in 2021 unless urgent action is taken by governments and the pharmaceutical industry globally to make sure enough doses are produced. Without widespread vaccine coverage, there is the risk that the pandemic will become endemic, alongside the social and economic stresses that the pandemic is already triggering. People in poor countries will continue to suffer through the pandemic unless vaccine access is dramatically increased. In Australia, we will not be safe from the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic until everyone is safe from it, thanks to widespread and accessible vaccine uptake.

By contrast, wealthier nations have bought up enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations nearly three times over by the end of 2021 if those currently in clinical trials are all approved for use. Australia has secured more than 53 million doses, and Canada tops the chart with enough doses to vaccinate each Canadian five times. Updated data shows that rich nations representing just 14% of the world's population have bought up 53% of all the most promising vaccines so far.

Vaccine hesitancy is a major challenge in many parts of the world, especially for newer vaccines. Sometimes fear, misunderstanding, a lack of two-way information sharing, and sensitive communication hinder the response. This all reduces the access and efficacy of vaccines and is likely to be a stumbling block in adequately inhibiting the further spread of COVID-19.



Decusse, Timor-Leste: Maria lives in Decusse, the enclave region of Timor-Leste. Maria is a widow and lives with and supports her 3 grandchildren. With Oxfam's support, Maria has a simple, easy to manage handwashing kit at the front of her house. This gives Maria and her family the means to wash their hands every day. A simple act, the way to stop COVID-19 spreading. Photo: Oxfam in Timor-Leste.

### THE OPPORTUNITY

So far, all Moderna's doses and 96% of Pfizer/BioNTech's have been acquired by rich countries. In welcome contrast Oxford/AstraZeneca has pledged to provide 64% of its doses to people in developing nations, however this still only covers 18% of the world's population. Oxford/AstraZeneca deals have also mostly been made with some of the big developing countries like China and India, while most developing countries have not done deals and must share the COVAX pool of vaccines between them.

The Global Action Plan for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Healthy Lives and Well-being for All) cites community and civil society engagement as a key accelerator. Civil society organisations are vital bridges to communities and community engagement and leadership is needed to effectively tackle this global pandemic. By building on existing Australian Government partnerships with civil society (including the Australian Humanitarian Partnership), opportunities exist for greater involvement of civil society in the vaccine development process and to support its safe, equitable rollout.

## DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

The Australian Government's commitment to support a global effort for the rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines is demonstrated through its pledge of \$80 million to support vaccine access for up to 94 lower-income countries through the Facility's Advanced Market Commitment, and its additional investment of \$500 million over three years for a COVID-19 vaccine for the Pacific and South East Asia.

Oxfam was a key player in responding to the West Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Ebola outbreaks, and we have learnt significant lessons in the importance of community engagement when raising awareness of the disease, how to prevent it, and in rolling-out (trial) vaccines. The crucial importance of listening to communities and building a response around what communities are doing, thinking and feeling is now understood. Putting communities at the centre of treatment and prevention is a lesson that has been hard won in previous disease outbreaks but remains challenging to implement. Health workers and community volunteers are key to this. This community engagement approach was key to bringing the DRC (and West African) Ebola outbreaks under control, a significant milestone that was achieved in October 2020.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Civil society is critical to the efficacy of vaccine programs and should be involved in the design and delivery of vaccine roll-out programs. Australian and international civil society (including humanitarian actors) should be a key stakeholder in the Regional Vaccine and Health Security Initiative and have a voice in the design of vaccine roll-out programs.
- The Australian Government must ensure community engagement constitutes a central pillar of responding to COVID-19 and the vaccine roll-out programs currently under development. Previous experience in Ebola responses demonstrates that very low levels of funding for community engagement (in the DRC case, only 3.6% of the program budget) leads to sub-standard health outcomes for the communities affected by the disease. The Australian Government should allocate, and advocate to counterparts, that community engagement activities comprise at least 10% of program budgets for the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines in developing countries.

## GENDER JUSTICE

A rights-based framework informs Oxfam Australia’s approach to gender, drawing on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and Sustainable Development Goal 5. Oxfam Australia promotes self-determination for women and girls, especially those who may experience multiple layers of discrimination because of disability, age, religion, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Across the globe, Oxfam partners with local organisations and governments to implement programs and projects that promote women’s rights and gender equality.

## COVID-19 AND GENDER INEQUALITY

### | THE ISSUE

The UN Women’s ‘Unlocking the Lockdown’ report focused on the gendered effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and found 53% of women had seen their work hours reduced, compared to 31% of men.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, lockdowns and stay-at-home orders exacerbated gender-based violence and exposed the unequal care burden that women face globally.<sup>8</sup>



Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea: Eriko Fuferefa, Director of KUSWA and a survivor of gender-based violence. Photo: Mika Tran/OxfamAUS.

### | THE OPPORTUNITY

While taking steps to address the economic and social effects of COVID-19, governments must protect the progress achieved in gender equality in recent decades and ensure that recovery efforts do not disproportionately increase the existing workloads for women and girls, and do not exacerbate gender-based violence.

A crisis like COVID-19 and resulting lockdowns break down social infrastructure, compounding existing weaknesses, leading to intra-familial violence, and exposure of women and children to unsafe

conditions, including exposure to sexual violence and harassment. The Australian Government needs to invest in integrating violence prevention and first response programming into longer-term pandemic preparedness. There is a clear opportunity to improve future pandemic preparedness efforts by including women, children and other vulnerable groups in preparedness processes and decision-making.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Australian Government renews its commitment to gender equality by providing \$20 million in funding over three years in following areas:
  - In Asia and the Pacific, the Australian aid program should invest in recognising and reducing women's care burden alongside a specific focus on shifting attitudes, norms and values that lead to inequality and marginalisation in women and other vulnerable groups.
  - Globally, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted informal, part-time and seasonal workers, most of whom are women. Australia's aid funding needs to explore cash transfers to provide a failsafe safety net to women-centred domains such as hospitality, food production and tourism sectors, now at a standstill due to lockdown measures by governments. To further address the gendered economic impacts of COVID-19, recovery measures should not only support large and medium-sized enterprises, but also micro and small businesses, where women entrepreneurs are relatively more represented.
  - Australia should continue to fund community development approaches, particularly regarding the deep and difficult work of transforming gender norms and reaching the poorest and most vulnerable women and communities. This consistent, long-term and structural work is as important as currently prioritised work on "value for money", "economic growth" and "engaging private sector" in relation to gender funding. The Australian Government should ensure long-term consistent support to local women's rights organisations in countries Australian aid is supporting so that they can get on with addressing patriarchy and gender-based violence in ways that work for their context and culture.
  - Invest in comprehensive ending violence against women and girls' programs in the Pacific region that address both primary prevention and crisis response. Additionally, the 2021-2022 Federal Budget should prioritise investing in training health workers to have basic skills to respond to disclosures of gender-based violence.
  - The 2021-2022 foreign aid budget should invest in boosting women's access to communications infrastructure and services (internet, digital platforms and digital financial services) to reduce current gender disparity in accessing digital economy and improved access to information and government services.
- Additionally, to fulfil the commitment to a program of commensurate scale to *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government must commit upfront to a minimum of \$304 million in funding over eight years for *Pacific Women Lead*. This figure has been calculated based on the average annual expenditure for *Pacific Women*, plus an annual CPI increase of 1.5%. In addition, it includes a 10% loading to address the short and medium term impacts of COVID-19, proportionate to the increase in ODA in FY2020-21 to support COVID-19 response and recovery. Furthermore, 20% of funding for *Pacific Women Lead* should be allocated to feminist movement strengthening and research.

## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our extractive global economic model. One that is based on highly unequal and carbon-intensive growth, which accelerates the climate crisis. One that has exploited and exacerbated entrenched systems of inequality and oppression, where women do three-quarters of all unpaid care work and comprise two-thirds of the often-underpaid care workforce. One where the wealth of the top 1000 billionaires has recovered to pre-pandemic levels in only nine months, while the number of people living on less than \$5.50 a day has increased by up to half a billion in 2020.

The global COVID-19 recovery offers an opportunity to fix this flawed economic system. In the 2021-2022 Federal Budget, Australia can take steps towards transitioning to a just and sustainable future by investing foreign aid commitments, in women-led recovery processes and sustainable energy futures.

## BEYOND COVID-19 – FROM RESPONSE, TO RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

### | THE ISSUE

The COVID-19 crisis has caused widespread suffering in rich countries, overwhelming some of the best healthcare systems in the world. In many poor countries, which face high levels of poverty and inequality, the challenges are even greater.<sup>9</sup> Globally, the economic stimulus amount required to support low and lower-middle income countries is likely to exceed US\$982 billion.<sup>10</sup> It is estimated the equivalent of 400 million full-time jobs have been lost globally in the first two quarters of 2020, with informal workers and women hardest hit. An additional half a billion people could be pushed into poverty by the impacts of this pandemic, including almost 240 million people in East Asia and the Pacific, and close to 130 million people in South Asia. These impacts will last years, if not decades.<sup>11</sup>



Suai, Timor-Leste: Village chief, João Gusuão, stands on the newly constructed highway that has divided his community in two. Oxfam's Inclusive Development program has helped João to stand up for his community's rights. Photo: Kate Bensen/OxfamAUS.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Urgent action is required to support developing countries to not only respond to the global health pandemic but also to build resilience to future crises. The Australian Government has already demonstrated support to Australia's neighbours in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, through additional funding committed in 2020-2021 Federal Budget. The scale of the crisis and its economic fallout requires Australia to shoulder its fair share of the economic burden and to commit to permanent and long-term funding increase to Australia's aid program. Without this, less developed nations risk losing recent development gains and worsening poverty and inequality.

The economic recovery process presents an opportunity to ensure that government investment prioritises both people and the planet, to secure a sustainable and resilient future for us all. It also presents an opportunity for Australia to deepen its global partnerships and strategic relationships that are essential to ensuring Australia's own recovery, security, influence and prosperity. With growing global uncertainty because of COVID-19, we need stronger strategic relationships now more than ever, and greater, long-term permanent investment in the development budget would see Australia recognised as a practical partner of choice that sets us apart from other powers, in the region and beyond.<sup>12</sup> Most importantly, this positions Australia to ensure that recovery investments are climate smart and put women first, in efforts that seek to transform economic systems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Australia must increase its aid budget to commit to an ODA spend of 0.7% of GNI (AUD \$14.1 billion) by 2030. Currently, Australia's ODA remains below<sup>13</sup> the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) country average of 0.3%<sup>14</sup>, and among the least generous donors. Delivery on the commitment of 0.7% ODA would see Australia join other developed nations whose aid budgets increased in 2019 (including New Zealand, up 3.4%; the United Kingdom; up 2.2%; and Canada, up 0.5%<sup>15</sup>). The priorities for this increase could see significant gains in protecting the climate and promoting economic resilience of women, marginalised and climate impacted groups in the region.
- The Australian Government must commit an additional \$2 billion of foreign aid over four years to help support a response to the immediate and ongoing impacts of the coronavirus crisis,<sup>16</sup> with a particular focus on building resilience to future shocks and stressors in our region. The Australian Government should continue prioritising emergency support to the under-funded and ill-equipped public health systems in poor countries, while also helping countries in Asia and Pacific improve social safety nets.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE

Oxfam has long recognised the climate crisis as one of the greatest challenges in the fight against hunger, poverty and inequality.

Oxfam Australia recognises the intrinsic link between climate change, human rights, inequality, land rights, food security and gender justice. Effective climate action stems from investment in climate finance, community resilience and investing in traditional knowledge and accountable governance at local to international levels.

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### | THE ISSUE

2020 was not only the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also a year of intensifying impacts of climate change. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) estimates that floods, droughts and storms directly impacted 50 million people worldwide, with bushfires burning at increased intensity not only in Australia, but also in Brazil, Russia and the USA.<sup>17</sup> Like COVID-19, the impacts of the climate crisis are not experienced equally. Poor and marginalised people and communities are disproportionately impacted. In our region, this is the case for Pacific Island nations, a point rightly acknowledged by Australia together with the other signatories of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Boe Declaration, which identified climate change as the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of peoples of the Pacific.<sup>18</sup>



Tebunginako village, Abaiang Island, Kiribati: Maria stands on the beach by a fallen palm tree, close by to where her family used to live. Parts of her village now lie underneath the ocean in the background. Photo: Ula Majewski/OxfamAUS.

### | THE OPPORTUNITY

For this reason, Oxfam Australia welcomes the Australian Government's Climate Change Action Strategy: Tackling climate change through Australia's development assistance program, along with its ongoing commitment to support Pacific Island states, and the recent announcement of a further AUD \$500 million in climate finance, taking the total to AUD \$1.5 billion between 2020-2025.<sup>19</sup> Oxfam maintains that this assistance must be provided in addition to the existing development assistance budget as part of a growing program.

The most recent UNEP Adaptation Report estimates annual adaptation costs in developing countries alone to be in the range of USD 70 billion, with the expectation of reaching USD \$140 billion in 2030. Given the pace of climate change and impacts, the report states that this “adaptation finance gap is not narrowing as a result of current efforts”.<sup>20</sup>

The report also argues that the necessary increases in climate finance make economic sense, citing research by the Global Commission on Adaptation, which estimates that a USD \$1.8 trillion investment in the areas of early warning systems, climate resilient infrastructure, improved dryland agriculture, global mangrove protection and resilient water resources could generate USD \$7.1 trillion of avoided costs and non-monetary social and environmental benefits.

Australia’s contribution of international climate finance to date has accorded a high priority to climate change adaptation and been based wholly on grants. This has distinguished Australia’s support from that of many other development partners and bucked the worrying global trends of climate finance being heavily skewed towards mitigation (at the expense of adaptation efforts) and an increasing reliance on loans and risk of saddling developing countries with additional debt.

However, while these have been significant strengths, in terms of the overall scale, Australia has failed to provide its fair share towards the international goal of mobilising USD \$100bn/year by 2020. Australia currently contributes around 0.2% of international climate finance flows, and about 0.14% of USD \$100bn.<sup>21</sup>

As a signatory to the Paris Climate Agreement, Australia can demonstrate leadership in agreeing a future climate finance goal negotiated under the Agreement. This goal will likely involve contributions from a broader group of countries, will have a floor of USD \$100bn/year, and potentially a much higher target to respond to increasing levels of climate risk.

Based on Australia’s economic capability and historical responsibility for emissions, Oxfam estimates that the Australian Government should aspire to contribute around 2% of total international climate finance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Oxfam Australia recommends that the ODA 2021-2022 budget and the forward estimates reflect support for climate finance aligned with these long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, including limiting global warming to 1.5° C. Specifically, the Australian Government should:
  - No longer provide any official development assistance, foreign investment, export credit or trade promotion that supports fossil fuels.
  - Scale-up its overall contribution of international climate finance to around 2% or approximately AUD \$3bn a year by 2025.
  - Commit to reporting annually on its contribution of international climate finance over the preceding year, and its intended contribution over the coming year. This should include a conservative approach to accounting for leveraged private finance; a breakdown of support across adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage; and the proportion of the total that is provided in grants (or a ‘grant equivalence’ amount).
  - Continue to contribute financially to the Green Climate Fund, as one part of its overall contribution of international climate finance.
- In addition, the principles laid out in DFAT’s Climate Change Action Strategy – including social inclusion and gender equity, supporting the goals of the Paris Agreement, and alignment with the national priorities of partner countries – should not be limited to ODA but apply to all international investments in climate action from across federal government departments.



# CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND TARGETS

## THE ISSUE

It is not sufficient, however, to simply offer assistance to our neighbours to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. Australia must take real and tangible action to reduce its own emissions.

2020 – together with 2016 – was the warmest year on record<sup>22</sup>, and with global warming currently estimated to have reached 1.2°C since the late 19th century<sup>23</sup>, countries must urgently increase their emissions reduction ambition to contain warming to within 1.5°C to avoid the worst impacts of runaway climate change.

Oxfam Australia welcomes the recent announcement of the government’s intention not to draw on so-called Kyoto ‘carry over credits’ to achieve the 2030 targets agreed in Paris. These credits were never a legitimate way to achieve 2030 emissions reduction targets, and this commitment must only be the first step in increasing Australia’s emissions reduction ambition.



Melbourne, Australia: Oxfam staff participate in the schools climate strike at Treasury Gardens. The crowds were estimated between 100,000-150,000 people and labelled as Melbourne’s biggest ever rally. Photo: Keith Parsons/OxfamAUS.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Australia is uniquely positioned to benefit from the opportunity that stronger action on climate change presents, by harnessing abundant resources and technical expertise to transform our energy system, using renewable sources to meet our existing energy needs and becoming an exporter of renewable energy.

This is in stark opposition to the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission and the policy reform agenda of the fossil fuel sector. The COVID-19 recovery plan and policy reform is predicated on an increase in fossil fuel projects; cuts to sector tax and fiscal requirements; changes to climate, environmental and community rights and protections; and delays in delivery on Australia’s commitments to climate change.<sup>24</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The 2021-2022 budget must outline plans for a renewables-led recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that aligns with Australia's responsibility to help limit global heating to 1.5°C and support communities and people who are reliant on fossil fuel related industries to transition to fulfilling work in the new, green economy.

This must include:

- Adopting a national goal of zero emissions well before 2050.
- Strengthening Australia's initial contribution to the Paris Agreement, by increasing 2030 emissions target.
- Committing to no further expansion of Australia's coal and gas industries, and to the phase-out of fossil fuels in both our domestic energy system and exports by 2030.
- Rapid expansion of renewable energy in Australia to well beyond 100% of current electricity demand, to replace fossil fuel use across all sectors, and power a renewable energy export industry.
- Investment in economic stimulus measures that accelerate the transformation of our energy system to being powered by renewable energy, create new jobs in low-carbon manufacturing industries, and protect and restore ecosystems.
- Investments in research and infrastructure needed to establish Australia as a major exporter of renewable energy.

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