



Photo: Kate Bensen/OxfamAUS

OXFAM AUSTRALIA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

20 DECEMBER 2019



OXFAM
Australia

Oxfam Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, secular development agency. Our vision is of a just world without poverty.

Our role is to:

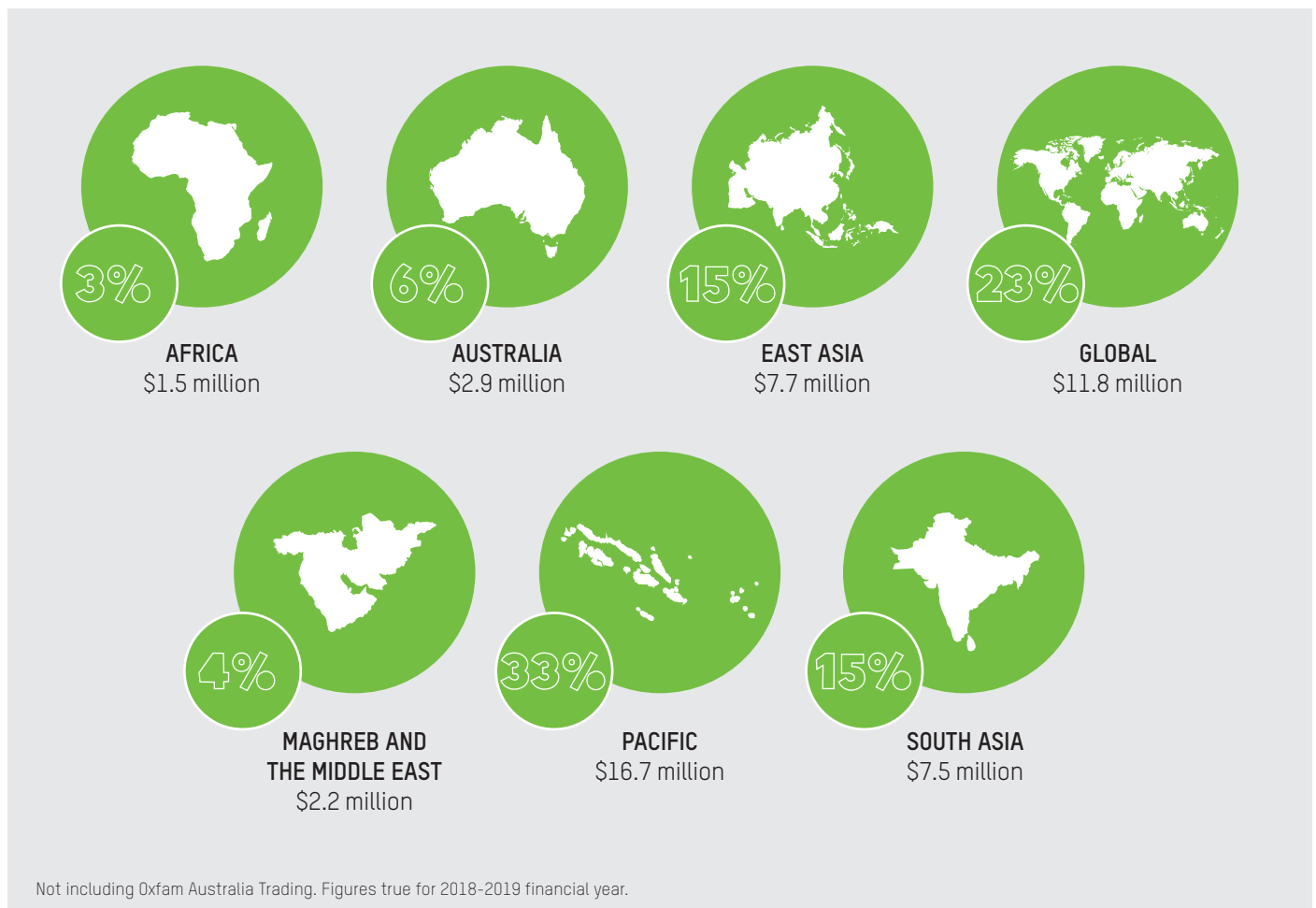
- undertake long-term development programs that tackle the root causes of poverty;
- provide emergency response during disaster and conflict;
- conduct research, advocacy and campaigning to advance the rights of poor and marginalised people, particularly women, and work with them to achieve equality.

The global Oxfam confederation delivered life-saving assistance and life-changing development programs for more than 19.5 million people in 79 countries around the world in 2018–2019. Of that number, Oxfam Australia directly reached more than 1 million people in 22 countries. In partnership with our Oxfam affiliates, we reached 10.4 million people affected by disaster or conflict.

Oxfam Australia is supported by more than 550,000 Australians annually who contribute skills, time and financial support to advance our work. Oxfam Australia is a member of Oxfam International, a global confederation of 20 organisations that work together in 80 countries around the world.

Oxfam Australia is a long-term partner of the Australian Government. Oxfam Australia delivered \$17,080 million worth of programs in partnerships with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2018-19.

PROGRAM SPEND BY REGION



The 2020-2021 Federal Budget is an opportunity for Australia to make a significant contribution to eradicating poverty, inequality and injustice at home and abroad.

This submission outlines a number of proposals which would enable Australia to fund a range of targeted, evidence-based and high impact projects both at home and overseas. These include:

1. Connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with the political system and building the capacity of women as change makers
2. Boosting Skills Recognition and Economic Opportunities for Humanitarian Migrants
3. Improving Outcomes for Refugee Women
4. Saving Lives in Yemen
5. Together for Peace – empowering women in crisis situations
6. Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction
7. Innovative aid delivery
 - Micro-desalination plants
 - Cash transfer delivery platform using Blockchain technology

At Oxfam we believe all lives are equal and no-one should live in poverty. While we work to alleviate the symptoms of poverty, we also campaign to tackle the causes of it too, by changing minds, systems and lives.

HAVING IMPACT HERE AT HOME

In 2019 our campaigns have spanned widely because there are many causes of poverty. Changing the world starts here at home. Our 500,000 supporters and activists are currently campaigning on these main areas:

- What She Makes: ensuring the women who make our clothes earn a living wage to lift them and their communities out of poverty.
- Families Together: changing our immigration visa system to make it easier to keep refugee and humanitarian migrant families together.
- Food and Climate Justice: stopping polluters from destroying people's lives and finding a fair global solution to climate change.
- Indigenous Rights – working for a world in which all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's human rights are respected and realised.

HAVING IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

Oxfam tackles poverty and inequality around the world through projects delivered overseas and funded under Australia's overseas development assistance program.

Through our work we see the critical role that Australia's aid program plays in addressing poverty and inequality, and in supporting Australia's national interest. As the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper recognised, "Our investment in the stability and resilience of developing countries works to improve our own security and prosperity."

For Australia's aid program to deliver sustainable and measurable impact, the government needs to demonstrate leadership and deliver a fair and stable aid budget. There are a number of areas where Australia's aid program is already delivering great impact, such as in promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and responding to humanitarian crises. Building on these areas of strength is important for solidifying a long-term, bi-partisan and strategic approach to the aid program.

Australian aid can be a catalyst for eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and tackling the rising threats of climate change, disasters and fragility – risks that inevitably hit the world's poorest people first and hardest. To achieve that vision, however, Australia's aid development assistance must be focused on supporting and empowering the poorest countries and communities to achieve their aspirations, and ensure resources flow first and foremost to women and other marginalised groups denied power and prosperity.

Australian aid should be delivered in ways that not only helps countries to deliver the development results their citizens require, but also helps citizens to demand the investments and outcomes they need and hold aid providers to account. That means the aid program must invest much more in civil society and programs that support inclusion, aid transparency and social accountability. Aid investments that strengthen this 'citizen-state compact' will ensure results are sustained over time.

At home and abroad the Government needs a much clearer strategy for tackling climate change, and much greater ambition when it comes to investing in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, food and water security. We know investing in resilience and risk reduction saves lives, and is more cost effective than responding when disaster hits.

At the same time, humanitarian crises are a fact of life, and their escalating scale and frequency is assured in the near term given climate change and global insecurity. Australia needs to continue to scale up its capacity to respond to this humanitarian challenge in our region and beyond.

We look forward to briefing you further on our work and our proposals.

Emma Bull
Head of Political Engagement
Oxfam Australia
E: emmab@oxfam.org.au T: 0408 371 498



Photo: Jillian Mundy/OxfamAUS

OXFAM AUSTRALIA'S STRAIGHT TALK PROGRAM

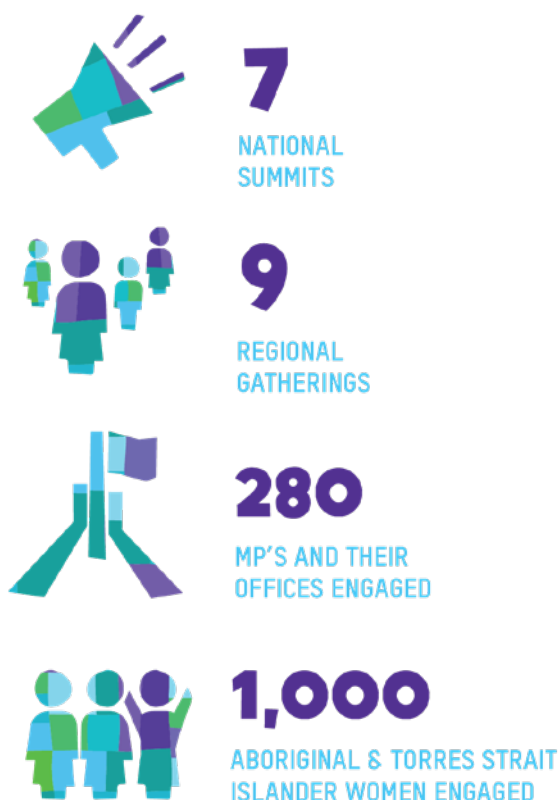
OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

Oxfam Australia's Straight Talk program 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, Straight Talk brings people together to share, learn and be effective in making a difference. The program includes opportunities for relationship-building between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, information-sharing and developing strategies for change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

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.

2020 marks the 10-year anniversary of Straight Talk in Canberra. Highlights of the past 10 years:



BENEFITS

Much of Oxfam's work is alleviating the symptoms of crisis and poverty through projects delivered overseas and funded under Australia's overseas development assistance program.

Currently the program holds a National Summit in Canberra every two years, in addition to a regional gathering every other year. The National Summit increases the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to bring about change, connect them with the political system and to build on their political knowledge. It also creates a pathway for participants to build ongoing relationships with female parliamentarians as high level decision makers and encourage our Parliamentarians to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, and particularly those important to women, on the political agenda. The regional gatherings have a local focus which brings women together to further learn about political processes, discuss local issues of concern and generate ideas to collectively bring about positive change in their lives and communities.

Since 2009 the program has connected with more than 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from around the country. Straight Talk participants come from a range of backgrounds, and bring with them knowledge from different generations, as well as their experience living in urban, regional or remote communities.

The Straight Talk program emerged from a commitment by Oxfam Australia to support the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, further, to engage, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to put forward their own solutions and ideas to create change in their own communities.

Federal politics is a daunting arena for many people. Disconnection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the decision-makers that affect their lives has contributed to poor policy decisions and discontent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These concerns have been well evidenced over many years, including at the international level. In its 2010 report to the Australian government on its progress on meeting the goals of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations explicitly requested the Federal Government to increase the representation of Indigenous women in political and public life and institutions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are largely excluded from many important functions of society, including politics (Maddison, 2014). The first Aboriginal woman was elected to state parliament in 2001; while in 2013 Senator Nova Peris became the first Indigenous woman to be elected to the Commonwealth Parliament since Federation (Australian Parliament, 2014). Currently there are only five Indigenous politicians in Commonwealth Parliament. More recently, former Straight Talk participant Vonda Malone was elected as the very first female Mayor of the Torres Strait.

Straight Talk aims for:

- Women to gain new skills which will better equip them to bring about change. In particular, the program's focus on political engagement will enable women to acquire new knowledge and skills, and a greater understanding of how they can use political processes for the benefit of their communities.
- Participants to develop new skills, not only through the formal Straight Talk training sessions, but also through the opportunity to learn from each other over the course of the program.
- Discussions to be held among women about what works and what hasn't worked in their communities.
- Participants to learn about different institutions and players within the political system, such as the Senate, House of Representatives, Cabinet Ministers, advisors, the media, lobby groups, constituents, etc.
- Participants to have the opportunity to meet with politicians at Straight Talk gatherings and to facilitate the building of longer-term relationships between participants and their local member, other politicians and formal decision makers.
- Women to have an opportunity to take time out from their families, jobs and other commitments to reflect on their work for change and share what is working, what isn't working and to receive feedback and support from other participants.

SUCCESS STORY

For Vonda Malone, participating in Oxfam's Straight Talk program sparked a fierce desire to become a leader in her community. In 2016, she was elected the first ever female mayor of the Torres Strait.

"I think that was what we all felt that night – that we were making history," Vonda says of the moment the election results came through. "I am so appreciative to the community for being... I use the word progressive, because there have always been female positions and male positions, and for the community to be forward-thinking and trust in female representation is reflective of us moving forward."

Born and raised in the Torres Strait Islands and as a passionate advocate for women's leadership, Vonda has spent her career mentoring other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to achieve their goals. "I've always had that same message: 'If I can do it and I'm from here, you can do it too'," Vonda says. "Sometimes life throws

you challenges and in Indigenous communities, some of our girls fall pregnant younger in life and they feel their life is gone, basically. And I always use myself as an example, because I had a child when I was young as well and I always say to them, 'Don't think that because you've got a family, you can't continue doing what you want to do'."

For Vonda attending the Straight Talk National Summit in 2010 provided her with the confidence and tools she needed to run for office. And as a member of the program's Steering Committee, she has seen the difference Straight Talk has made to other women as well.

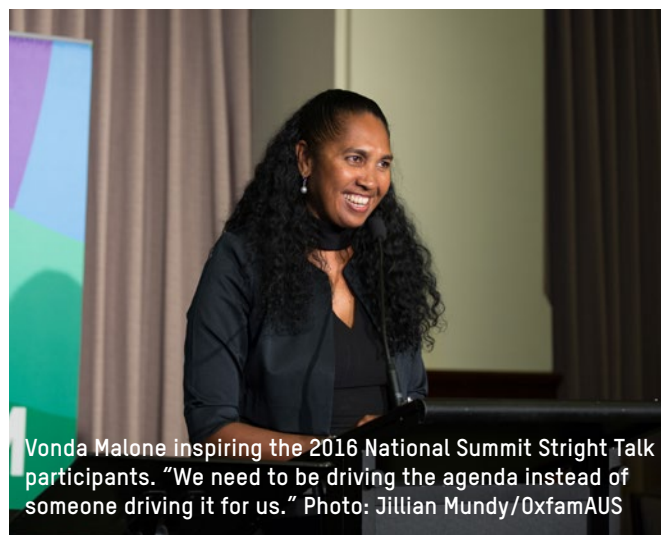
"I think sometimes we feel isolated in our communities and we feel as though we lack that belief in ourselves. Straight Talk gives you that lift," she says. "I've seen such a difference in the women who have gone through the program locally. They don't sit back now; they don't wait for the men to do the talking. I was really impressed about that and I think that's why Straight Talk is so needed... supporting women in leadership and getting them to understand the system. Because when you understand the system, you can operate better within that system."

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government make an investment of \$350,000 to allow Oxfam to ensure a successful, high profile 2020 Canberra Summit for the 10-year anniversary of the Straight Talk program.

The funding would contribute to:

- Travel, meals and accommodation for 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Welcome/smoking ceremony
- Parliament house and Straight Talk workshop venue hire Parliamentary breakfast
- Senate inquiry role play
- Social Media and content distribution



Vonda Malone inspiring the 2016 National Summit Straight Talk participants. "We need to be driving the agenda instead of someone driving it for us." Photo: Jillian Mundy/OxfamAUS



Photo: James Riturban/OxfamAUS

BOOSTING SKILLS RECOGNITION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR HUMANITARIAN MIGRANTS

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

Investment in better recognition of the skills of humanitarian migrants is a practical measure that can assist the Government to deliver on its commitments to improve the economic participation of refugees and humanitarian migrants.

This investment will help attract these migrants to the regions, where there are significant labour shortages across the skills spectrum. By improving the process for skills recognition, the Government will help refugees and humanitarian migrants to better realise their immense potential for contributions to Australian society.

BENEFITS

Research highlights that many refugees and humanitarian migrants are highly qualified and their skills are underutilised to the detriment of the local economy¹, with around 49% of migrants and refugees either not currently employed or working in jobs that do not use their highest skills or qualification.² This has a direct impact on the Australian economy via the opportunity cost of latent human capital.³ Greater skills recognition for humanitarian migrants would improve the matching of labour supply (by skill) to labour demands, creating a more productive workforce and better meeting labour shortages.

This presents a real opportunity for attracting humanitarian migrants to the regions, where employment opportunities may be available that are commensurate with their skills and capabilities.

The Australian Government recently committed to better supporting the settlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants, reiterating the benefits of successful settlement to the broader Australian community.⁴ The Government's independent Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants found that refugees are frequently unable to get jobs that utilise their skills, qualifications, capabilities and overseas experience. This is in part because of the costs and complexities involved in gaining recognition of overseas qualifications and is compounded by discrimination, language barriers, limited Australian workforce experience and difficulties accessing government assistance.⁵ These factors restrict potential labour force participation, which is vital to successful settlement.

Recent research by Deloitte Access Economics, highlighted in the Government's independent Review, stresses the need for a process through which refugees can demonstrate

their skills and knowledge as an alternative to current lengthy qualification recognition processes.⁶

The Review also highlights the significant role of the states and territories, together with settlement providers, in introducing employment initiatives to meet shortfalls in support for refugee labour market integration.⁷ In response to the Review, the Australian Government has committed to increasing settlement in regional areas and has recognised that 'robust labour market strategies' can improve settlement outcomes by advancing the socio-economic participation of refugees and humanitarian entrants.⁸

This aligns with the Liberal Party's commitments to incentivise new arrivals to settle outside the capital cities in regions in need of their skills and expertise, to create opportunities for migrants to drive growth in regional communities, and to build social cohesion through practical measures to support the engagement of new migrants in the Australian workforce and community.⁹

SUCCESS STORY

The successful settlement of Karen refugees from Myanmar in the regional Victorian town of Nhill provides a recent example of the social and economic benefits that flow from regional settlement, adding \$40 million and 70 jobs to the local economy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government provide:

1. Additional and adequate funding to states, territories and settlement providers to expand initiatives such as the Refugee Employment Support Program in NSW to better address barriers to skilled employment for humanitarian entrants.
2. Funding for the development of a workplace assessment process to recognise skills and capabilities that humanitarian entrants can demonstrate, to be designed in consultation with humanitarian communities, peak bodies, service providers and industry.

1 Hugo, Graeme (2013) The Economic Contribution of Humanitarian Settlers in Australia.

2 Deloitte Access Economics (2018) Seizing the opportunity: Making the most of the skills and experience of migrants and refugees.

3 Stronger Together: The Impact of Family Separation on Refugees and Humanitarian Migrants in Australia (Oxfam Australia, 2019), p.23.

4 <<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcolemans/Pages/supporting-refugees-settle-in-australia.aspx>> (22 November 2019)

5 Department of Home Affairs (2019) INVESTING IN REFUGEES INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA The findings of a Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia p.34-35.

6 Department of Home Affairs (2019) INVESTING IN REFUGEES INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA The findings of a Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia p.42.

7 Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia Report, p.36.

8 <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants-government-response.pdf>> (November 2019), p.4, 7.

9 <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-regional-australia>>; <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-population-migration-and-better-cities>>; <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-back-our-multicultural-communities>>



Photo: Kim Landy/OxfamAUS

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21



OXFAM
Australia

Family togetherness is central to successful settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Separation negatively impacts the capacity of new arrivals to rebuild their lives in Australia and actively engage in Australian social, economic and civic life.

Women humanitarian migrants separated from close family members are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of family separation, which include ongoing trauma, poverty, unemployment and social isolation.¹ In addition to creating improved options for family reunification, women humanitarian migrants need more support in the form of improved employment and education pathways, English language classes, childcare and other support services.

BENEFITS

Humanitarian migrants separated from close family members have a greater probability of post-traumatic stress disorder and are more likely to have had no engagement in study or job training. Research by Monash University in collaboration with Oxfam confirms that refugees in Australia waiting for family reunification are more likely to experience serious mental illness and negative psychological effects including anxiety and distress.² The research also confirms that the negative impacts of family separation are often exacerbated for women, who are more likely to be single parents, unemployed and experiencing financial hardship.³ These factors pose significant risks to their mental health and are compounded by the fact that women and girls in humanitarian contexts are the most likely victims of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, exploitation and early forced marriage.⁴

A study of Sudanese refugee women found that their well-being focused 'on their ability to see that their families were well cared for and safe' and not on their own adjustment to settling in a new country.⁵

Additional funding aligns with the Australian Government's recognition of the importance of humanitarian policies being responsive to the needs of women and is an opportunity to address factors that contribute to the low participation rates of women humanitarian migrants shortly after arrival in Australia.⁶

These rates are largely due to lower educational attainment and a higher likelihood of having more children than the Australian-born population, both factors that limit labour force participation.⁷ Additionally, without access to childcare, many of these women are unable to participate in language training, which highlights how gaps in services disproportionately impact women (and their children)⁸ and require targeted initiatives.

In response to its independent *Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants*, the Government recently reaffirmed the importance of 'financial independence, English language skills and personal connections' to the capacity of humanitarian entrants to transition into the Australian community.⁹ The Government committed to developing new approaches to enhancing labour market and English language outcomes for humanitarian entrants, including women at risk and parents, and recognised the importance health plays in the capacity of humanitarian entrants to fully participate in Australian life.¹⁰

These recent commitments build on the Liberal Party's commitment to strengthen opportunities for at-risk women¹¹, recognising factors that compound the vulnerability of women in humanitarian contexts, which include family separation.

Greater investment in targeted support for women humanitarian migrants in Australia would assist the Government to deliver on its policy commitments to reduce the social isolation of new arrivals by breaking down barriers to their social, economic and civic participation.¹²

1 Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, *The Social Impact of Family Separation on Refugee Settlement and Inclusion in Australia* (2019), p.7.

2 Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, *The Social Impact of Family Separation on Refugee Settlement and Inclusion in Australia* (2019), p.7.

3 See *Stronger Together: The Impact of Family Separation on Refugees and Humanitarian Migrants in Australia* (Oxfam Australia, 2019).

4 UNHCR, 'Women' <<https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/women.html>>.

5 Tilbury and Rapley (2011) cited in Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, *The Social Impact of Family Separation on Refugee Settlement and Inclusion in Australia* (2019), p.35.

6 <<https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>> (February 2016).

7 11.9% of working age female humanitarian migrants have no educational attainment. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Microdata: Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset, 2016*, cat. no. 3417.0.55.001 (18/07/2018); Deloitte Access Economics & Oxfam Australia, *Economic and Social Impact of Increasing Australia's Humanitarian Intake* (August 2019); Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Empowering Migrant and Refugee Women* (2017).

8 Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, *Finding Refuge in Canada: A Syrian Resettlement Story*, p.33.

9 <<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcoleman/Pages/supporting-refugees-settle-in-australia.aspx>> (22 November 2019)

10 <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants-government-response.pdf>> (November 2019), p.4-5; <<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcoleman/Pages/supporting-refugees-settle-in-australia.aspx>> (22 November 2019)

11 <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-population-migration-and-better-cities>>

12 <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-back-our-multicultural-communities>>; <<https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-population-migration-and-better-cities>>

SUCCESS STORY

Lucy was separated from her three-year-old daughter for six years due to civil war in Sudan. Lucy arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1991, but it took three years for her daughter, Susan, to be granted a family reunion visa. Susan was nine years old by the time she was reunited with her mother in Australia in 1994. For her first three years in Australia, Lucy was unable to begin rebuilding her life, not knowing if her daughter was safe or had been kidnapped, raped or killed. As she explains, while separated 'your life will always be torn apart – you can't settle'. Only once reunited with her daughter was she able to begin healing from the trauma that she was living with, and now both she and her daughter lead active and engaged lives in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government provide additional and adequate funding for targeted support for refugee and humanitarian migrant women experiencing family separation, including greater support for employment and education pathways, English language classes, childcare and other support services.



Photo: Kim Landy/OxfamAUS



Photo: Sami M. Jassar

SAVING LIVES IN YEMEN

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21



OXFAM
Australia

The dire nature of the situation in Yemen cannot be understated. Approximately 80 per cent of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance, one in every two people is on the brink of famine and the country is suffering through the worst outbreak of cholera in modern history.

There are reported to have been more than 100,000 fatalities as a result of the conflict since 2015¹, and the UN has warned that the conflict has already set back development in Yemen by 21 years². While recent signs of a return to the negotiations by warring parties are promising, the conflict that has been so devastating for the people of Yemen continues to rage. September was the deadliest month for civilians of 2019 so far³.

In the context of a Humanitarian Aid Program set to increase in 2020/21, Australia has the opportunity to alleviate some of this suffering through committing further humanitarian aid to key interventions in basic need, particularly food assistance, water and protection.

BENEFITS

Australia is noted as a global champion for human rights. Through both our diplomatic efforts and aid program, we have pursued our values, and both saved and improved lives in many countries around the world. However, Australia is currently failing to act on this strong reputation by not responding adequately to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Yemen, which will soon enter its fifth year.

The United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for 2019 remains underfunded with just under 70% of funding needs being met at the same time as the needs, and the cost of meeting them, is increasing.

The fuel crisis unfolding in late 2019 has resulted in water supplies being cut to 15 million people in Yemen. Eleven million people relying on water supplied by piped networks

and four million people who depend on water trucked in by private companies have had to drastically reduce their daily consumption since fuel prices soared in September. In three major cities, Ibb, Dhamar and Al Mahwit, home to around 400,000 people, central water systems have been forced to shut down completely.

In late 2019, Oxfam has had to stop trucking water to thousands of people because of the increase in fuel prices. Piped water systems installed by Oxfam, which supply a quarter of a million people, are running at around 50 per cent capacity. In this context, further funding for the response is essential.

In providing further humanitarian aid to support the response in Yemen, Australia has an opportunity to reinforce its commitment to the core humanitarian principle of neutrality. A majority of funding available to the response currently flows to the North, leaving the response in the South even further underfunded despite critical needs.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government commit an additional humanitarian funding of \$40 million over four years to the Yemen crisis.

¹ Jones, Sam and Sulz, Matthias 2019, Press release: Over 100,00 Reported Killed in Yemen War, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), accessed 13 December 2019, <<https://www.acleddata.com/2019/10/31/press-release-over-100000-reported-killed-in-yemen-war/>>

² Moyer, Jonathan D et al 2019, Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen, United Nations Development Programme, accessed 13 December 2019, <<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/yemen/General/Docs/ImpactOfWarOnDevelopmentInYemen.pdf>>

³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 2019, Yemen Humanitarian Update Issue 12, OCHA, accessed 13 December 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Yemen_Humanitarian_Update_12_FINAL_0.pdf>



Photo: Tommy Trenchard/Oxfam

TOGETHER FOR PEACE – EMPOWERING WOMEN IN CRISIS

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21



OXFAM
Australia

Women are the most powerful agents of change within their communities. The fundamental objective of this program is to work with women to achieve greater transformation impacts within societies experiencing and emerging from crisis.

Crises are hard for everyone but exact a particular toll on women who face increased risk of violence, exhausting workloads to care for their family's survival, and lack full control over decisions that affect their lives.

In many cases, crises result in the loss of social, political and economic gains towards greater gender equality, for example in crisis situations like Yemen. Conversely, evidence shows a clear link between greater gender equity and peace. Helping women realise their rights in fragile contexts helps prevent conflict and increases the likelihood of fair and sustainable peace.

This proposal is for a program that will work in up to three crises contexts to support women's rights organisations and activists to:

- Build capacity and powerful networks across geographies.
- Develop and advance shared agendas for change.

BENEFITS

Australia has longstanding commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and is rightly recognised as a leader in this space within our overseas development assistance. The program responds directly to Australia's priorities in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment of:

- Enhancing women's voice in decision making, leadership and peacebuilding.
- Promoting women's economic empowerment.
- Ending violence against women.

This program would enable Australia to further its strong reputation, and take advantage of its almost unique positioning on women and international development to ensure that Women Peace and Security is central to Australia's humanitarian assistance and development aid.

The program represents a key opportunity for Australia to invest in gender transformative programming across a range of countries, including in the Indo-Pacific region, which will both strengthen women's organisations and connect them across contexts in partnership to enhance outcomes for inclusive and sustainable peace - including shifting norms, legal frameworks and policies towards equality.

The program is also in line with recommendations emerging from the recent Office of Development Effectiveness Report of the Strategic Evaluation of Australia's Ending Violence Against Women programming, specifically:

- 1.1: Sustain and strengthen fragile gains by: maintaining core funding where it exists, and expanding where it does not exist, to local women's organisations to strengthen their critical and catalytic

- 2.4: Focus on investments that support the development and implementation of EVAWG legislation with an emphasis on: supporting civil society organisations and national governments to promote public awareness on how to use the laws, and to monitor their implementation.

Women's organisations are responding in valuable ways to crises around the world. They are best placed to deliver assistance that works for women and transforms the gender power relations that fuel conflict in the first place. However, their ability to do so is constrained by patterns of abuse, exclusion and violence, as well as by being constrained by geography, and ethnic or religious barriers from harnessing greater collective voice and power.

This program is proposed to take place in two to three contexts. These may include: Myanmar and Bangladesh, with Rohingya women and women from other ethnic minorities in Myanmar, South Sudan, Zimbabwe or Mozambique.

The program builds on Oxfam's work with women's rights organisations in each of these contexts. The program will support women's rights organisations and activists to:

- Build capacity and powerful networks across geographies
- Create spaces and opportunities for dialogue, peer learning and networking
- Provide peer-based coaching and mentoring
- Provide organisational development - technical support with human rights education, diversity and inclusion trainings, feminist policies, safeguarding
- Undertake exposure/exchange visits between diverse organisations and activists focused on supporting women's rights in crisis contexts
- Develop and advance shared agendas for change:
- Build joined up, strategic advocacy on key issues related to women's rights in crisis contexts, primarily at national but also global levels
- Develop deep power analysis and social listening exercises to understand power structures, cultural biases, values
- Share research and advocacy projects focusing on participatory, women-led effort, with small grants attached
- Access travel funds to support participation of women leaders and activists in key advocacy events at national, regional and global levels.

Oxfam has a long history of supporting networked approaches and a track record of supporting networks and movements to bring about positive changes for women's rights and gender equality around the world. Many women's rights organisations value working with Oxfam because of our approaches and our global reach. This program builds on those strengths in a humanitarian setting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government allocate \$3 million over three years to develop and support the program. This funding should be additional to current humanitarian aid allocations and be part of a growing aid budget.



Photo: Dustin Barter/Oxfam



Helena with her solar panel outside her home in Eton Village, Efate, Vanuatu. 16th Sept 2015. Photo: Arlene Bax/OxfamAUS.

COMMUNITY-BASED CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

Recognising the immense challenges facing Pacific Island countries and communities from climate change and increasing disaster risks, the Australian Government has rightly made responding to climate change a key priority of its development assistance program.

Well-targeted and evidence-based investments in climate change adaptation and zero-carbon development also offer great opportunities for local economic development and for building resilient and flourishing communities. Support for 'Community-based Adaptation' initiatives is one of the most cost-effective ways of enabling countries to thrive in the face of escalating climate and disaster risks, and for ensuring that the Australian Government's broader program of assistance to the region delivers the greatest positive impact.

This proposal is for a program that will provide small grants to local NGOs, civil society networks and community organisations in the Pacific, for activities designed to increase knowledge of climate risks and adaptation strategies at the community level, enable inclusive decision making, and foster greater collaboration between communities, government and the private sector.

BENEFITS

This proposed program will be a valuable complement to the Government's overall pledge of support for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the region, ensuring that Australia is directly supporting the region's most vulnerable communities. It will align with our commitments under the Paris Agreement, which explicitly recognises the role of local communities, women and Indigenous peoples in driving climate solutions.

The Government has recognised climate change is the single biggest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of Pacific peoples¹. Supporting effective action within the region to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to escalating disaster risks must be at the heart of the Government's Pacific Step-Up.

Local community organisations and civil society play a critical role in building the resilience of communities to climate change and disaster risks. Experience has shown (for example through the Government's former Community-Based Climate Change Action Grants)² that relatively small investments in community-based adaptation can deliver vital progress. For example, in ensuring that local communities have better access to information on climate risks, have a greater say in the design and implementation of national policies and programs, ensuring that the voices of community and civil society leaders are heard in regional and international fora, and that funding for climate action

delivers concrete outcomes for those who need it most. This is particularly important in ensuring socially inclusive and gender-responsive interventions.

The Government is poised to increase its overall support for climate change action in the Pacific. The recently released Climate Change Action Strategy: Tackling Climate Change through Australia's Development Assistance Program 2020-2025 has reaffirmed the importance of social inclusion and gender responsiveness, including building community participation.³

Community-led programs are vital to maximising the effectiveness of Australia's support to the region and to ensuring that funding delivers concrete outcomes for the most vulnerable communities. Nonetheless, shifts in the overall focus of Australia's development assistance program have left limited opportunities for local organisations to access small grants for this work. This new program would address this longstanding gap. And help fulfil the aspirations of Australia's Pacific Step-Up and Climate Change Action Strategy.

SUCCESS STORY

Vanuatu has been widely recognised as a leader in inclusive governance of climate action. Initiatives such as the Vanuatu Climate Action Network and Vanuatu Humanitarian Team have enabled government, civil society and the private sector to draw on each other's strengths, co-design policies and actions, innovate, support local leadership, and extend the reach of climate change and disaster risk reduction programs. Vanuatu has provided a model for how community-based adaptation can strengthen the design and implementation of climate change action strategies from the national to local level, with demonstrable gains in community resilience to disasters and the impacts of climate change.⁴

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government fund the establishment of a Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Program for the Pacific. It requires an initial budget of \$50 million in grants over two years.

This should be additional to the Government's \$500m climate and oceans package for the Pacific, and be part of a growing aid budget.

¹The Boe Declaration on Regional Security. 2018.

<https://www.forumsec.org/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>

²Independent Evaluation of the Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation Grants Program. 2016. <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/community-based-climate-change-action-grants-independent-review-2016.pdf>

³Climate Change Action Strategy: Tackling Climate Change through Australia's Development Assistance Program 2020-2025. 2019 <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/climate-change-action-strategy.pdf>

⁴ See, for example: Lessons from the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program. Oxfam, 2015.

<https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/lessons-from-the-vanuatu-ngo-climate-change-adaptation-program-web.pdf>



Photo: Keith Parsons/OxfamAUS.

INNOVATION

OXFAM AUSTRALIA
PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21



OXFAM
Australia

Oxfam brings a global brand and networks world-leading expertise and evidence-based approaches to the table when it comes to innovation.

There are significant untapped opportunities for Australia's aid program, to invest in digital innovations that reduce poverty, inequality and disaster risk in Asia, where nearly 2 billion people are online. Investing in programs that enhance poor women, men and young peoples' access to information, financial services, communications and other essential digital services should be core business for the aid program, not just for the DFAT's InnovationXChange.

There is also an opportunity to adapt innovations and technological advancements which are developed by international non-government organisations in the domestic market to address issues of geographical distance, poverty alleviation and access to cheap, reliable resources such as water or energy.

MICRO-DESALINATION



Photo: MonashUniversity/OxfamAUS

With the right support and investment, this innovation could be a game-changer in the provision of clean drinking water to vulnerable communities in Australia and elsewhere, saving lives and improving health and livelihoods for people suffering from poor water quality around the world.

BENEFITS

Salinity and contaminated ground and surface water are a real threat to the health and livelihoods of communities around the world.

More than 2 billion people are living with the risk of reduced access to freshwater resources and by 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water.¹ In Australia 5.7 million hectares of land is classified 'high potential' for salinisation, and the National Land & Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) expects this to increase to 17 million hectares by 2050. Growing populations, rising sea levels, industrial and agricultural waste, and competition

for increasingly scarce fresh water resources are all contributing to this growing problem.

However, this same water presents a real opportunity because when purified it offers a new source of clean water for communities. Countries are increasingly turning to technological solutions to meet growing demand for safe drinking water and in recent years there has been an exponential growth in water desalination from unconventional sources, including sea and brackish water.²

As part of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, Oxfam Australia and the Monash Department of Chemical Engineering have collaborated to develop a micro-desalination prototype water purifier that not only produces pure water from a variety of contaminated sources, such as surface and ground water, and tanks, but is also low-cost, energy-efficient, compact, portable, and easy to maintain.

It is a compact design and can fit into a medium suitcase, and weighing only 20kg, it can easily be wheeled to remote communities in need of clean drinking water. Being solar-driven with a built-in small water pump, the system can function in locations where power supply is either costly, unreliable, or non-existent, and for both pressurised and non-pressurised water sources.

UNBLOCKED CASH PROJECT



Photo: KeithParsons/OxfamAUS

Oxfam Australia is developing and testing an innovative multipurpose cash transfer delivery platform using blockchain technology. The aim is to support disaster preparedness and increase the speed, transparency and cost efficiency of delivering cash in Vanuatu and the Pacific.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>

² <https://e360.yale.edu/features/as-water-scarcity-increases-desalination-plants-are-on-the-rise>

The UnBlocked Cash Project is an innovative and unique payment delivery system that runs on the Ethereum blockchain. It enables the participation of community-level vendors who play a direct role in micro-economic recovery and development. It is a blend of locally-led humanitarian assistance, digital financial inclusion, and blockchain innovation that combines the expertise of a leading humanitarian and development agency with an emerging tech start-up company.

BENEFITS

This initiative is both innovative and unique, as it is one of the few global examples of bringing cutting edge technology to the community level, resulting in a case of blockchain utilisation characterised by community-based, participatory product iteration; localised ownership and delivery, together with leveraging community-level micro economies and ecosystems to enable inclusion and functionality.

During the pilot phase in early 2019, the solution was intentionally developed to address existing capacity and financial service provider gaps that have historically been obstacles to the delivery of cash-based humanitarian and development assistance, at scale, throughout the Pacific Region and in other locations that are characterised by remote, small and scattered populations. As such, the inherent design and approach are uniquely adapted to challenges in the region and in other remote country environments, and offers a solution that will enable Oxfam to leverage existing networks of civil society and INGO partners across the region to shift the current paradigm of humanitarian assistance from one that is primarily goods-in-kind and cost intensive, to one that is cash-based, localised, and cost-effective.

At present, the UnBlocked Cash project is in Phase II in Vanuatu 2019-2020 (with the support of DFAT's Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)), with a focus on scaling the solution through an iterative process at the country level. This includes roll-out geographically and through expanded partnerships, adding multiple primary users (civil society organisations) implementing the solution, piloting in a different geographic area, with different vulnerable groups and in multiple communities simultaneously, increasing the total number of participants (partners, vendors, recipients) to 5,000 in total³. It is expected that the outcome of this second-phase scaling will be an improved product that facilitates coordination across multiple actors (users) that will increase the viability of its use at a regional scale, as put forward in this proposal. In addition, the Phase II includes initial scoping to assess compatibility of the UnBlocked Cash approach with an existing multi-purpose disaster preparedness application

in Sri Lanka. In parallel, through the AHP Disaster Ready program, the UnBlocked Cash process is being rolled out in the Solomon Islands including an initial scoping and national feasibility assessment. This process includes an initial scoping to be undertaken in PNG.

The approach includes extensive community participation in the design of the pilot that allows development of strategies to promote gender equality and promote inclusion. This begins at the feasibility stage (such as specific questions on the role of women and who should determine and receive entitlements) and is continued through to the piloting stage through targeting female-headed households, widowers and female-owned vendors. Experience has indicated the advantage of the UnBlocked Cash model is that it is inherently more accessible to women and other group such as people living with disability due to the decentralised nature of the delivery system, that allows participants to access goods and services from within their communities and from local service providers (such as village shops/kiosks) at times and locations convenient for them. The use of a Near Field Communication card also reduces the risk of carrying cash through digitalised value storage and user identification. Furthermore local shops/vendors are often run by women who are known in the community further increasing accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Government is ambitious in its dedication to innovation and adequately funds Not-For-Profits to test and implement innovation projects both in Australia and overseas.

³ This includes 1,000 primary recipients/vendors and approximately 4,000 household members, based on an average family size of five.



OXFAM
Australia