

ActionAid Australia Pre-budget Submission 2022-23



1. Introduction

ActionAid Australia is a global women's rights organisation that empowers women on the frontlines of injustice to mobilise and transform their communities. In more than 45 countries, ActionAid supports women to understand their rights, reflect on the people and systems that affect them, and harness their collective power to change their lives and positions in society. More than 70,000 Australians support our efforts to advance economic and climate justice for women and their rights in emergencies. ActionAid has reached more than 10 million people through its efforts to respond to COVID-19 in over 40 countries, including working with women's organisations in the Pacific with the support of the Australian Aid Program.

ActionAid welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to Treasury on the 2022-2023 Federal Budget. Australia has played an important leadership role over the last two years in supporting COVID-19 response efforts across our region. Temporary aid increases have provided crucial resources for health and economic response and recovery initiatives. New funding for Pacific Women Lead was also vital in ensuring Australia continues to contribute to progressing gender equality across the Pacific region.

However, two years into the pandemic, the new Omicron variant is devastating communities around the world and extreme poverty is rising for the first time in 20 years.¹ Women and girls continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic, compounding an alarming deterioration in gender equality that is threatening hard won women's rights gains. The situation facing developing countries is heightened by the rapidly escalating climate crisis, which is threatening lives and livelihoods, particularly across the Pacific region, highlighting an urgent need for a new ambition on financing for emission reduction and the adaptation efforts of developing countries.

In this context, the need for wealthy countries like Australia to step up their development assistance remains urgent. The 2022-23 budget provides a crucial opportunity for Australia to rise to this challenge, including by providing critical finance to support global vaccine equity. By standing with developing countries across our region and globally, Australia can play a crucial role in ensuring that we all build back better from COVID-19 and work together to create a more equal and resilient global community. ActionAid calls on the Government to:

1. Expand Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) in line with growing need and to meet our international obligations.
2. Provide leadership on gender equality regionally and internationally through targeted policies and scaled-up investment in women-led development and humanitarian responses, and resourcing of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
3. Increase Australia's climate finance commitment to enable developing countries to respond to the escalating impacts of the climate crisis.
4. Expand support for fragile and conflict affected States.
5. Improve transparency by developing gender responsive budgets across all portfolios.

¹ The World Bank (2021) *2021 Year in Review in 11 Charts: The Inequality Pandemic*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/12/20/year-2021-in-review-the-inequality-pandemic>

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: *The Government should establish a clear timetable to increase ODA to at least 0.7 percent of GNI over the next 5 years to meet its global obligations under the SDGs and ensure adequate resources are available to enable developing countries to reduce poverty, facilitate sustainable development and respond to COVID-19.*

Recommendation 2: *The Government should target its ODA investments where there is greatest need by allocating half of ODA investments to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including reinstating and increasing the portion of ODA to the African region, where 90 percent of people living in extreme poverty are expected to reside by 2030.*

Recommendation 3: *In light of rising debt distress in developing countries resulting from COVID-19 and the accompanying global economic recession, the Government should cease the use of loans (commercial or concessional) in its development assistance, including through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific.*

Recommendation 4: *In order to identify the gendered impacts of budget investments and transparently track funding for gender equality initiatives, the Government should return to publishing a gender responsive budget across all portfolios for the 2022-23 Budget.*

Recommendation 5: *Australia should scale-up its gender equality investments in order to respond to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. 30 percent of all new ODA investments should have gender equality as their primary objective and 85 percent should have gender equality as their primary or secondary objective.*

Recommendation 6: *The Government should commit to directing 5 percent of all ODA to frontline women's rights organisations in order to address the gendered impacts of the pandemic and ensure that aid investments are gender responsive.*

Recommendation 7: *The Government should prioritise resourcing for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda by committing adequate funding towards the implementation of the Second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security including targeted funding for bilateral partners and civil society.*

Recommendation 8: *The Government should allocate a minimum of \$170 million over 5 years for the establishment of a ground-breaking program on gender equality in Southeast Asia to redress the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in the region.*

- I. 20 percent of funding should be allocated to local and national women's rights organisations, movement strengthening and research.*

Recommendation 9: *The Government must provide adequate resourcing in the 2021-22 budget to enable the realisation of more ambitious carbon emission reduction targets of 45 percent by 2030 and zero by 2050.*

Recommendation 10: *The Government should immediately increase its international climate finance to \$3 billion over the period 2020-2025 as well as*

developing a clear plan to meet Australia's fair share of climate finance of \$12 billion annually by 2030.

- I. Climate finance funding should come outside of the aid budget and include \$700 – \$920 million for the Green Climate Fund.

Recommendation 11: The Government should commit to resourcing locally-led and inclusive climate projects that support the priorities of developing country partners. This should include targeted funding for women's rights organisations to participate in climate change policy and decision-making, including the development of national climate change adaptation plans, bringing their localised knowledge, and ensuring more gender-inclusive and responsive approaches.

Recommendation 12: Australia should provide \$100 million annually in multi-year funding for Afghanistan, including resources for the immediate humanitarian response as well as long-term development projects. Targeted funding should be provided for crucial gender equality initiatives.

Recommendation 13: Australia should respond to the humanitarian need in Myanmar by maintaining its current level of aid funding, and providing multi-year core funding to civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations.

Recommendation 14: Australia should reinstate funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including providing targeted resources for women's rights organisations to drive the peace and security agenda.

2. Responding to intersecting global challenges through a sustained increase to Australian Aid

COVID-19 is the world's largest humanitarian crisis and developing countries continue to bear the brunt of surging cases, and the wider social and economic impacts of the pandemic. The situation is made worse by glaring vaccine inequality. The average rate of vaccination amongst developing countries is languishing at less than 10 percent, while wealthy countries are sitting above 75 percent.² This is worsening global inequality by pushing the impacts of the pandemic onto developing countries whose healthcare and social protection systems are least able to respond.

Australia has played an important role in supporting regional responses to the pandemic over the last two years – the 2020-21 aid budget included approximately \$1.1 billion over four years in COVID-19 funding, including to support vaccine access across our region. However, this funding increase was not replicated in the 2021-22 budget and total ODA, including the temporary and targeted COVID-19 measures dropped from \$4.479 billion in 2020-21 to \$4.335 billion in 2021-22 budget.³ The aid budget is now sitting at 0.21 percent of gross national income (GNI), well below the international target of 0.7 percent of GNI. Australia remains one of the least generous

² Our World of Data (2022) *Share of people who received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine*, 26 January, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/share-people-vaccinated-covid?country=High+income~Upper+middle+income~Lower+middle+income~Low+income>

³ DFAT (2021) *Partnerships for Recovery: Australian Official Development Assistance 2021-22*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/pbs-2021-22-aid-budget-summary.pdf>

donor countries, ranking 21 out of 30 in terms of its aid to GNI ratio in the OECD's latest Development Assistance Committee (DAC) review.⁴

With the health and economic impacts of this crisis protracting, many developing countries continue to lack adequate resources to fund healthcare, social protection and critical public services. In this context, the Government should establish a clear pathway to increase ODA to at least 0.7 percent of GNI by 2025, with half of this aid allocated to the poorest Least Developed Countries (LDCs).⁵ As of 2021, 46 countries were classified as LDCs by the UN ECOSOC's Committee for Development – 33 of these are in the African region, with 8 in Asia and 4 in the Pacific.⁶ The 2019 SDG Progress Report has also identified that by 2030, 90 percent of all people living in extreme poverty would be living in sub-Saharan Africa. The Government's focus on the Pacific and Southeast Asia is justified as our nearest neighbours. However, given the significant risks to LDCs as a result of intersecting health, economic and climate crises, including across the African continent, Australia also has a responsibility to ensure that countries most in need are not left behind.

In the absence of adequate levels of ODA, developing countries have been forced to take on additional loans in order to access the resources needed to respond to the pandemic. This is fuelling an already growing debt crisis, as debt service payments expand and governments are forced to divert more resources away from crucial public services such as healthcare and education.⁷ In recent years, Australia has administered two loans to Papua New Guinea (in 2019 and 2020) and one to Indonesia (in 2020), as well as launching the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (in July 2019).⁸ Australia's use of loans risks heightening debt distress at a time when developing countries are already grappling with the concurrent crises of COVID-19, the economic recession, and climate change. In this context, ActionAid also encourages the Government to cease its use of bilateral loans. As a wealthy nation that ranks eighth in UNDP's Human Development Index,⁶ Australia has both the capacity and the moral obligation to respond to developing countries' growing need for resources by stepping up its ODA contributions rather than relying on loans.

Recommendation 1: *The Government should establish a clear timetable to increase ODA to at least 0.7 percent of GNI over the next 5 years to meet its global obligations under the SDGs and ensure adequate resources are available to enable developing countries to reduce poverty, facilitate sustainable development and respond to COVID-19.*

Recommendation 2: *The Government should target its ODA investments where there is greatest need by allocating half of ODA investments to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including reinstating and increasing the portion of ODA to the*

⁴ ANU Development Policy Centre (2021) *Australia hits (almost) rock bottom in new global aid rankings*, <https://devpolicy.org/australia-hits-almost-rock-bottom-in-new-global-aid-rankings-20210510-2/>

⁵ SDG Target 17.2, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=17&Target=17.2>

⁶ United Nations Committee for Development Policy (2021) *List of Least Developed Countries (as of 24 November 2021)*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/lcd_list.pdf

⁷ ActionAid (2020) *Who Cares for the Future: Financing Gender-Responsive Public Services*, <https://actionaid.org/publications/2020/who-cares-future-finance-gender-responsive-public-services>

⁸ The Australian Government has administered two loans to Papua New Guinea (US\$ 300m in 2019 and US\$ 100m in 2020) and one loan to Indonesia of AU\$ 1.5b. The Government is also continuing to administer loans through the *Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific*.

African region, where 90 percent of people living in extreme poverty are expected to reside by 2030.

Recommendation 3: *In light of rising debt distress in developing countries resulting from COVID-19 and the accompanying global economic recession, the Government should cease the use of loans (commercial or concessional) in its development assistance, including through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific.*

3. Providing leadership on gender equality through enhanced and targeted funding

Australia has a strong record of advancing gender equality internationally and has historically been a global leader in gender responsive budgeting. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* has committed to advancing equality and economic empowerment for women across all aspects of Australia's foreign policy.

Supporting the empowerment of women and girls is a cornerstone of Australia's engagement in our region and approximately 30 percent of Australia's aid budget is allocated towards gender equality. While significant, this ranks Australia at 23 out of 29 donor countries for its spending on gender equality.⁹ DFAT's recent decision to abandon its 80 percent gender effectiveness target under the *Partnerships for Recovery Strategy* also calls into question the Government's ongoing commitment to embedding gender equality within its development assistance.¹⁰ Gender responsive budget targets are critical to ensure that gender analysis is applied to Australia's foreign policy, and that aid and development initiatives are designed to support gender equality goals.

ActionAid urges the Government to expand its gender equality resourcing by ensuring 30 percent of all new ODA investments have gender equality as their primary objective and 85 percent have gender equality as their primary or secondary objectives. It is crucial that gender is not assumed under a broad category of social inclusion. Targeted efforts to address harmful gender norms and discrimination are essential for progress in poverty eradication and sustainable development, as well as responding to the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and intersecting crises.

Recommendation 4: *In order to identify the gendered impacts of budget investments and transparently track funding for gender equality initiatives, the Government should return to publishing a gender responsive budget across all portfolios for the 2022-23 Budget.*

Recommendation 5: *Australia should scale-up its gender equality investments in order to respond to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. 30 percent of all new ODA investments should have gender equality as their primary objective and 85 percent should have gender equality as their primary or secondary objective.*

⁹ OECD (2021) *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2021 snapshot*, OECD DAC network on gender equality, <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Development-finance-for-gender-equality-2021.pdf>

¹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (2020) *Proof Committee: Senate Estimates - Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, Estimates (Public) 29 October*, p. 60-61, https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Estimates_Transcript_Schedule

3.1 Commit 5 percent of ODA to local women's rights organisations

Women's rights organisations are critical for the development of gender-responsive, inclusive and effective development initiatives and humanitarian responses. These organisations have strong community networks that have a detailed understanding of the local context, including of power dynamics within local communities, which is vital in the delivery of successful development initiatives. For example, it is widely recognised that the sustained advocacy of feminist organisations has been the most important contributor to new laws, policies and programs to tackle violence against women globally. Despite this, women's rights organisations receive just 0.5 percent of all bilateral ODA worldwide.¹¹ In the Pacific, less than 1 percent of grant funding is directed to Pacific Women's Organisations.¹²

It is crucial that the Australia continues to commit funding to women's rights organisations, to ensure that aid investments address the specific needs of women in partner countries. Australia is performing above the OECD average in this area – coming in at 11th for its funding to women's equality institutions and organisations.¹³ However, Australia's contribution to WROs has declined substantially in recent years, in 2018-19 just 0.4 percent of bilateral allocable ODA was allocated to WROs¹⁴ – falling from 0.95 in 2017-18 and 1.24 percent in 2016-17.¹⁵ The Government has a significant opportunity to match its policy leadership on gender equality with financial leadership by increasing Australia's contribution to 5 percent of all ODA.

Recommendation 6: *The Government should commit to directing 5 percent of all ODA to frontline women's rights organisations in order to address the gendered impacts of the pandemic and ensure that aid investments are gender responsive.*

3.2 Commit adequate resources to the Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Australia is a strong international actor on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), and ActionAid welcomes the release of the Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) in April 2021. However, implementation of the NAP risks being undermined by inadequate resourcing alongside the decentralisation of budget and implementation responsibilities across Government Departments. It is crucial that enhanced funding is provided to ensure that the WPS agenda is mainstreamed into Australia's response to emerging conflicts and crises, and response efforts.

Recommendation 7: *The Government should prioritise resourcing for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda by committing adequate funding towards the*

¹¹ ActionAid calculation of total funding to women's equality institutions and organisations as a percentage of total bilateral aid. Data taken from OECD (2021) *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts*, <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/aid-in-support-of-gender-equality-2021.pdf>

¹² Fiji Women's Fund and the Urgent Action Fund, Asia and Pacific (2020) *Where is the money for women and girls in the Pacific: Mapping funding gaps, opportunities and trends*, <https://fijiwomensfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Full-report-UAF-FWF-14Feb2020.pdf>

¹³ OECD (2021) *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts*.

¹⁴ ActionAid calculation of Australian funding to women's equality institutions and organisations as a percentage of total bilateral aid. Data taken from OECD (2021) *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts*.

¹⁵ Data taken from OECD *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts* for 2019 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2019.pdf> and 2020 <https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2020.pdf>

implementation of the Second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security including targeted funding for bilateral partners and civil society

3.3 Allocate \$170m in funding for gender equality in Southeast Asia

Australia has played a strong role in fostering women's leadership in the Pacific region through its flagship program *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* and the new *Pacific Women Lead* initiative. This program has played a crucial role in progressing gender equality, and supporting women's rights organisations, across the Pacific region.

The COVID-19 health crisis has brought with it an economic, social and political emergency, especially for women and girls in Southeast Asia. The global climate crisis has brought further instability and threats to prosperity and resilience in the region with cyclones and heavy monsoon rains last year causing severe flooding that resulted in significant loss of lives, homes and livelihoods. These intersecting crises are having devastating impacts on women's work, paid and unpaid, on girl's education and on violence against women and stand to eroding decades of progress towards gender equality.

Under the *Partnerships for Recovery Strategy* the Government has identified and responded to the urgent need in Southeast Asia by providing an estimated \$1.01 billion to the region in the 2021-22 aid budget. In the 2022-23 ActionAid urges the Government to ensure that funding to Southeast Asia addresses persisting gender inequality through the establishment a similar initiative to Pacific Women Lead for the Southeast Asia region, with an initial allocation of \$170 million in funding over 5 years. 20 percent of this funding should be allocated to feminist movement strengthening and research.

This initiative would establish Australia's role as a leader in gender equality across the region, and provide crucial funding for gender equality initiatives, including to support women's leadership in COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives.

Recommendation 8: *The Government should allocate a minimum of \$170 million over 5 years for the establishment of a ground-breaking program on gender equality in Southeast Asia to redress the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in the region.*

- 1. 20 percent of funding should be allocated to local and national women's rights organisations, movement strengthening and research.*

4. Increase resources for domestic and international responses to climate change

Climate change is the greatest threat facing humanity. At 1.1 degrees of warming, communities across the world are already battling deadly cyclones, severe droughts, unprecedented heatwaves, and devastating bushfires. The situation is particularly stark for developing countries, which are already bearing some of the worst impacts of climate change despite being least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions.

For the Pacific region, which is among the most vulnerable to climate-related disasters, governments and communities have consistently identified climate change

as the biggest security threat to the region.¹⁶ Without a rapid expansion in international ambition and financing, climate change related environmental degradation and extreme weather events will only worsen - threatening livelihoods, food security, homes and safety, and undermining poverty reduction, gender equality and development goals.

In this context, it is crucial that the Government provides adequate resourcing in the 2022-23 budget to support ambitious carbon emission reduction targets of 45 percent by 2030 and zero by 2050. In addition to investing in bold domestic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Australia must respond to the urgent need for financing to support developing countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and reduce emissions. ActionAid welcomes the \$500 million increase to Australia's international climate finance, announced by the Prime Minister at the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in October 2021. However, at \$2 billion over 2020-2025, Australia's climate finance contributions remain well below our international fair share, particularly as we understand that this funding will come from within the already insufficient aid budget.

ActionAid calls on the Government to immediately increase its climate finance to \$3 billion over the period 2020-2025. This funding should come in the form of grants and be additional to the aid budget, in line with the commitment from wealthy countries to mobilise new and additional funding to support global climate solutions.¹⁷ Beyond this, the Government should develop a plan to scale up its climate finance to its international fair share of \$12 billion annually by 2030, including by committing \$700 – \$920 million to the Green Climate Fund. It is important to note that Australia's 2030 fair share figure is calculated based on Australia's current emission reduction targets – Australia can reduce its international financing obligations by expanding domestic action to reduce emissions.¹⁸

International climate finance should be allocated in line with the priorities of governments and communities in partner countries, and targeted at locally-led and intersectional adaptation initiatives, including those led by women's rights organisations. Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequality, restricting women's control over and access to natural resources like water and food; hindering access to education; and impeding women's participation in decision-making processes. By supporting gender-responsive climate projects, particularly those led by women's rights organisations, it is possible to address climate change, alongside gender equality and interlinked crises.

Recommendation 9: *The Government must provide adequate resourcing in the 2021-22 budget to enable the realisation of more ambitious carbon emission reduction targets of 45 percent by 2030 and zero by 2050.*

Recommendation 10: *The Government should immediately increase its international climate finance to \$3 billion over the period 2020-2025 as well as*

¹⁶ Pacific Islands Forum (2018) *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, <https://www.forumsec.org/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>

¹⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2010). Report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifteenth session, held in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009, Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth session, <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf>

¹⁸ ActionAid Australia, Oxfam Australia et al (2021) *Fairer Futures: Financing Global Climate Solutions*, <https://actionaid.org.au/resources/fairer-futures-financing-global-climate-solutions/>

developing a clear plan to meet Australia's fair share of climate finance of \$12 billion annually by 2030.

- I. *Climate finance funding should come outside of the aid budget and include \$700 – \$920 million for the Green Climate Fund.*

Recommendation 11: *The Government should commit to resourcing locally-led and inclusive climate projects that support the priorities of developing country partners. This should include targeted funding for women's rights organisations to participate in climate change policy and decision-making, including the development of national climate change adaptation plans, bringing their localised knowledge, and ensuring more gender-inclusive and responsive approaches.*

5. Expand support for fragile and conflict affected States

ActionAid urges the Government to expand its support for fragile and conflict affected States to prevent a worsening of conflict, poverty and inequality and regional insecurity. Despite the risks and challenges of operating in conflict affected States, additional resources are critical to respond the immediate humanitarian response and long-term development initiatives. In particular, ActionAid calls on the Government to:

- **Provide \$100 million annually in multi-year funding for Afghanistan**

Australia should expand its support to Afghanistan to \$100 million annually in multi-year funding in line with global efforts to address the growing humanitarian crisis, that is worsening poverty and gender inequality. The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) – a global standard for assessing food insecurity – found 8.7 million people face emergency levels of hunger in Afghanistan, while an additional 22.8 million people could face acute risk.¹⁹

Women and girls are the most at risk in Afghanistan and the failure to mobilize adequate humanitarian and long-term development funding risks undermining crucial gains that have been made in women's rights across the country. Targeted funding is required to maintain gender equality initiatives that provide crucial support and services to women and girls across the country.

- **Respond to humanitarian need in Myanmar by maintaining aid contributions**

ActionAid is deeply concerned about the emerging humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and the reports of ongoing violence and human rights abuses. We recognise the complexity and sensitivity of this situation, but urge the Government to respond to growing humanitarian need through the development of a funded, multi-year plan to protect and assist the thousands displaced by the coup and the conflict, both within Myanmar and in the border regions. Aid should be directed towards local civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations who are best placed in providing support to the people of Myanmar.

- **Reinstate funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to compound the devastating poverty, food and water insecurity in Palestine and comes on top of the daily

¹⁹ WFP (2021) *Half of Afghanistan's population face acute hunger as humanitarian needs grow to record levels*, <https://www.wfp.org/news/half-afghanistans-population-face-acute-hunger-humanitarian-needs-grow-record-levels#:~:text=The%20Integrated%20Food%20Security%20Phase,interventions%20to%20meet%20basic%20food>

trauma of the conflict resulting from the Israeli occupation. An increase in international aid is crucial to strengthen healthcare and other support services. However, donor funding has declined in recent years - 32 percent of GDP in 2008 to 3.5 percent of GDP in 2019,²⁰ and continues to fall short of financing needs.

Australia's aid funding for Palestine has fallen from \$44.1 million in 2019-20 to \$29.8 million in 2021-20. We urge the Government to uphold its commitment to Palestinian refugees, particularly women and girls, and the ongoing peace processes by reinstating these funding cuts, and increasing support for critical women's rights organisations to drive the peace and security agenda.

Recommendation 12: *Australia should provide \$100 million annually in multi-year funding for Afghanistan, including resources for the immediate humanitarian response as well as long-term development projects. Targeted funding should be provided for crucial gender equality initiatives.*

Recommendation 13: *Australia should respond to the humanitarian need in Myanmar by maintaining its current level of aid funding, and providing multi-year core funding to civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations.*

Recommendation 14: *Australia should reinstate funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including providing targeted resources for women's rights organisations to drive the peace and security agenda.*

6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be the world's largest humanitarian crisis, and it is having profound impacts on communities across the world. As the pandemic protracts and intersects with a worsening climate crisis, and an alarming deterioration in gender equality an urgent increase in international support and solidarity.

ActionAid welcomes Australia's strong response to the pandemic over the last two years. The 2022-23 budget provides an opportunity for the Government to build on this support, responding to regional and global challenges by providing an immediate and sustained increase to its aid, humanitarian and climate finance contributions.

Further, by targeting funding at countries most in need, including LDCs and fragile and conflict affected states and prioritising resourcing for gender equality and women's rights organisation the Government can ensure that no one is left behind in the global response to the pandemic and intersecting crises.

Submitted by Michelle Higelin, Executive Director, ActionAid Australia
Suite 2.3, Level 2, 25 Cooper Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Telephone: 02 9565 9116
Email: michelle.higelin@actionaid.org
Website: www.actionaid.org.au

²⁰ UNCTAD (2020) *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, TD/B/67/5, 5 August, p. 4, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdb67_d5_en.pdf