

30 August 2019

CID Submission – Inquiry into New Zealand’s aid to the Pacific

to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

The Council for International Development would like to appear before the committee to speak to our submission. We can be contacted at:

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Introduction

1. The Council for International Development (CID) would like to thank the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee for the opportunity to make a submission on New Zealand aid in the Pacific. This submission covers CID’s analysis of New Zealand’s role in aid in the Pacific, the implementation of the government’s Pacific Reset agenda, representing CID’s views and New Zealand’s international development organisations (CID’s members and their partners). This submission will focus on aid as it relates to the funding of aid organisations and their work.
2. The Council for International Development (CID) is the national umbrella agency of international development organisations based in Aotearoa New Zealand. CID was formed in 1985 by a number of development NGOs and aid agencies to coordinate activities and present a single voice on issues of common concern. Currently CID represents over 40 members, from small community-based organisations to large international NGOs. CID is governed by its members and a board made up of member organisations.

3. In framing this submission, CID has considered the following points from the original terms of reference for the inquiry:
 - a. understanding the different aid models used in the Pacific, and their purpose and effectiveness
 - b. evaluating the effectiveness of existing programmes such as the Pacific Reset
 - c. evaluating how other countries manage their Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programmes in the Pacific
 - d. evaluating the effectiveness of New Zealand's domestic and international partnerships that support ODA in the Pacific
 - e. considering value for money and accountability in respect of New Zealand's ODA commitments in the Pacific
 - f. investigating how New Zealand's ODA programmes in the Pacific contribute to human rights and environmental sustainability
 - g. evaluating the risks and opportunities arising from ODA spending in the Pacific and how they affect and contribute to short and long-term outcomes (including unintended outcomes)
 - h. building a social licence for ODA in the Pacific.

The Role of New Zealand NGOs

4. New Zealand NGOs are vital to achieving long term sustainable development impacts in the Pacific. We bring a unique contribution that includes:
 - Deep networks into Pacific communities
 - Expertise and experience in development and humanitarian responses
 - Experience in devolving ownership of development and humanitarian work to local communities so they are empowered to lead their own development, and emergency responses
 - The skills to build the capacity of local groups to deliver development outcomes in their communities
 - The ability to amplify the voices of community groups in the Pacific, and 'capture' local voices
 - Close connections with the public of New Zealand, who still provide the bulk of funding to New Zealand NGOs
 - Long term effective partnerships with New Zealand businesses and social enterprises to work collaboratively to get better results.

Prioritising the Pacific and the Pacific Reset

5. As noted in previous engagements with this Government and MFAT, CID supports the concept of the Pacific Reset. Its aim of "shifting the dial" from the donor-recipient relationship, into "genuine, mature political partnerships" match with the general goals of

the sector to emphasise localisation (devolving decision-making and resources to local communities in the Pacific) and genuine partnerships.

6. However, CID is concerned that the Pacific Reset is not sufficiently collecting the views of Pacific communities to define what the reset looks like in-country. Can we answer the question, 'what does the 'reset' mean to Pacific communities?'
7. A reset via governments requires a whole of government approach, country by country. But it is not clear to us that all government departments active in the Pacific are involved in the defining and implementing the reset.
8. The plan for the 'reset' is not being shared sufficiently with groups both in New Zealand or the Pacific, and so it's challenging to know exactly what has changed, what's being done, and to hold any part of government accountable.
9. CID is concerned that not enough has been done to promote the Pacific Reset to the New Zealand public, and that attempts to genuinely engage with the public and the Pacific diaspora community have been limited. CID dedicated its Annual Conference to the Pacific Reset in 2018 (Rt Hon Winston Peters and the Deputy PM of the Cook Island, Mark Brown were the keynote speakers, including a panel of Pacific diaspora leaders). But we are not aware of other public events since then to promote the 'reset'.
10. CID also supported a group of Pacific Diaspora leaders to form an informal 'ginger group' to meet on a semi-regular basis with the Ministers and the Under Secretary. There have been some constructive meetings and we're grateful for the opportunity, but the group has still not seen a reset plan, and therefore it is hard to offer any constructive feedback, or comment on existing plans. We believe this is a missed opportunity.
11. CID remains supportive of the reset, but is concerned that key players in the Pacific or in New Zealand will quickly become cynical unless there is evidence of a changed relationship.
12. While we are supportive on the government's focus on the Pacific and believe our 'shared Pacific identity' requires us to prioritise the Pacific as a priority region, CID is concerned that this could lead to the Government effectively withdrawing from other areas equally in need of development assistance - in Africa, South America, the Middle East, and South-East Asia. While New Zealand's aid is most efficient in the Pacific (particularly in Polynesia) due to our connections with the region, we still have obligations to other parts of the world, and a balance should be considered.
13. New Zealand has engaged effectively in a number of protracted crises *outside* the Pacific, including crises in Syria, South Sudan, and Rohingya/Bangladesh, through New Zealand NGOs, their partners, international organisations, and the UN. It should continue to do its part on the world stage. New Zealand's support for local partners engaged in the response is highly valued, and disengagement from areas aside from the Pacific will only compound the need for aid in the long-term.

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14. From the perspective of the aid sector, most of CID's member organisations do *not* primarily focus on the Pacific. The New Zealand Government needs to consider that aid agencies work outside of political considerations, and should continue to support and fund agencies working primarily in Africa, South-East Asia, and South America.

Mapping Influence in the Pacific

15. To understand the role of New Zealand aid to the Pacific – ODA and unofficial assistance – work needs to be done across the Pacific to gain a better understanding of how government departments, NGOs, social enterprises, and private sector organisations work together to provide aid or development impact.
16. To that point, CID is disappointed that MFAT has declined to fund the proposed pilot project to map 'New Zealand Inc.' presence in Vanuatu (that is, all the New Zealand businesses, NGOs and government departments working in-country) in order to better align our collective work, increase our development impact and, and assist Vanuatu to identify opportunities. CID has continued to work with the Vanuatu High Commission, and other key partners to do this mapping work, but needs further support to make this a viable project. The long term plan is for this to be led by MFAT, and to role this approach out across all Pacific countries.

Recommendation:

Fund the Council for International Development to continue its Vanuatu Mapping Pilot to increase the effectiveness of the project, and with the long-term aim of extending this to other Pacific countries, if the pilot is found to be useful. This will help inform future aid policies and directives.

Recommendation:

The government increases its funding to the Syrian crisis to reflect commitments made under the 'The Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan' where citizens are continuing to suffer, particularly in Idlib where people have had to flee bombs targeting civilian areas.

Localisation and Partnerships – this is the key to the Pacific Reset

17. CID supports the global commitment to localisation in the Grand Bargain framework, which requires not only 25% of ODA to go directly to local partners, but also a dialogue between peers to use frameworks and language that resonates better with Pacific countries. Local and national humanitarian actors are best placed as the first (and often the last) responders in a humanitarian emergency or protracted crisis. They are most likely to respond with appropriate and deep local knowledge in cooperation and coordination with local and national governments, long before external assistance is available. CID supports the New Zealand government's strengthened commitment to localisation, and we see this as a key part of achieving a successful 'Pacific Reset'.

18. Stable and enduring partnerships form the basis for genuine localisation of development and the building of local resilience. To ensure these partnerships remain strong and have high capability, a multi-year commitment to support capacity building and organisational strengthening which draws on skills and knowledge of local NGOs and civil society is required.

Importance of an Inclusive Approach

19. An appropriate aid policy should address human rights with a focus on reaching and protecting the most at-risk groups such as children, women, older people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. Addressing inclusion of these minority groups as a cross-cutting issue will require ongoing participation from local organisations of representative groups.
20. Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in humanitarian events and aid generally, and bear the brunt of things affecting their development, education and ability to reach their potential as an adult. These effects are compounded by characteristics such as their ethnic and religious minority status, sexual identity, disability and lower social economic status. Additionally, aid work should adopt an equity lens that leaves no one behind (i.e. exclusion from assistance) and does not exacerbate the existing inequalities of children.

Recommendations:

Ensure that the New Zealand ODA programme prioritises at-risk groups such as children, women, older people, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.

Recognise that New Zealand-based NGOs that focus on protecting specific minority groups play an essential role where they have local presence.

Environmental Concerns and Climate Change

21. Within the umbrella of climate change, New Zealand's ODA focus must be focused on three things: prevention, mitigation, and adaptation. In terms of mitigation and adaptation, New Zealand's development funding should focus on building capacity among Pacific countries. Environmental/humanitarian crises are already on the rise, and will continue to increase in frequency. As such, New Zealand should take a long-term view of climate change in its aid and development approach. According to a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) calculation, each dollar invested in disaster preparedness saves seven dollars in recovery.
22. Although communities around the world are already feeling the effects of climate change, countries must continue to implement ways in which they can reduce their carbon footprints and limit action that may negatively impact the environment. Therefore, in order to be a credible development actor in the Pacific and beyond, New Zealand should remain

committed to the Zero Carbon Act, as well as meet carbon emission targets (zero carbon by 2050).

Cross-Government Policy

23. An effective aid programme will utilise multiple government agencies to ensure it has the most effective system. Having a consistent cross-government policy will ensure that MFAT and NZDF in particular, along with other organisations such as DHBs and the Ministry of Health can work together in the most effective ways. A well-integrated and consistent approach to policy and practise is vital to the realisation of the SDGs.

Recommendation:

Implement a cross-department policy directive to ensure effective distribution of aid (both in long term development and before emergency responses)

Promote a deeper mutual cultural understanding between New Zealand and Pacific Islands through public engagement, mobility opportunities within the region, and ad hoc cross-sectorial initiatives.

Social Licence for Aid

24. As noted in a recent MFAT survey of Public Attitudes to Overseas Aid and Development Assistance, trust in and support of New Zealand's ODA programme has decreased, along with knowledge of the New Zealand aid programme. Building a social licence for aid is an important part of the Government's work – if not a priority – for ensuring that New Zealand meets an international commitment of the eventual goal of 0.7% ODA/GNI ratio.
25. The main part of building that social licence needs to be in proving the effectiveness of New Zealand's aid, and its importance to New Zealand. Aid benefits extend beyond those who directly receive aid. Explaining to the public the three drivers of New Zealand's Pacific Reset – Pacific identity, national security, and shared prosperity- should be central to this. Properly defining the Pacific Reset itself would also go some way to improving public perceptions.
26. Accountability and transparency is critical to the creation of social licence for aid. The effective and timely provision of information to the New Zealand public and the NGO community who work in partnership with MFAT is an important mechanism for ensuring accountability. This will also build confidence in all stakeholders, including the recipients of New Zealand's ODA, that lessons are being learnt and the impact upon poverty is effective. Unfortunately, information about New Zealand's ODA is somewhat limited, including a lack of timely information to NGO partners in spite of a lot of time and energy being spent on keeping MFAT up to date on our activities. This needs to change.

Recommendation:

That the government fund CID to carry out a nation-wide 'story-telling' campaign to communicate in a compelling and interactive way with the public of New Zealand, about how their donations and taxes contribute to development and humanitarian outcomes.

Promote a deeper mutual cultural understanding between New Zealand and Pacific Islands through public engagement, mobility opportunities within the region, and ad hoc cross-sectorial initiatives.

This submission is from the Council for International Development

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This submission has been written on behalf of, and in consultation and collaboration with the CID membership. A full list of CID members is available on the CID website at www.cid.org.nz/about-us/members