

Gender Equality

Gender Equality
World Vision Australia's
Public Policy Position

World Vision Australia's position on gender equality¹

World Vision Australia recognises and affirms the equal worth, dignity, and rights of women, men, girls, and boys and the significant role each one plays in promoting sustainable, transformational development.

World Vision Australia believes that sustainable progress can only take place through transformation that increases opportunities, resources, and choices, so that power is distributed equally among females and males and all people have the resources to shape their own lives and contribute to their families and communities.

World Vision Australia promotes gender equality as essential for the sustained well-being of children within their families and communities.

World Vision Australia and the World Vision broader partnerships are committed to the following gender equality principles:²

- **Faith Based Approach to Gender Equality:** World Vision is committed to facilitating community engagement that promotes a life of dignity and full participation of females and males as equal in the sight of God. When harmful traditional practices, beliefs or social norms are sources of discrimination, exploitation and oppression, World Vision programmes and advocacy together endeavour to empower communities to address these challenges.
- **Engagement of Men and Boys:** World Vision acknowledges that the promotion of gender equality is the responsibility of both males and females, and intentionally programs to engage men and boys as partners and allies in achieving gender equality and reducing gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices.
- **Gender-Based Violence.** World Vision works to end all forms of gender-based violence and all practices that undermine the dignity of girls, boys, women and men and their right to protection from physical, sexual and psychological harm.
- **Gender Mainstreaming.** World Vision's work in advocacy, disaster management, and development intentionally and consistently addresses the barriers of gender inequalities and injustice. World Vision responds to structural and systemic inequalities through influencing formulation and implementation of legislation and policies. Gender equality principles are integrated in programme cycle processes, including strategic planning, programme design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

World Vision's mandate to advocate for gender equality

- **Collaboration and Partnerships.** World Vision actively collaborates with key stakeholders, including government entities, United Nations' (UN) agencies, civil society, churches and other faith-based organisations, to promote gender equality.

The World Vision Partnership works across three domains to support gender equality outcomes:

1. Addressing specific gender issues, such as gender-based violence,
2. Intentionally integrating gender in sectoral projects and ADPs, and
3. Supporting World Vision's country offices to make their organisations and programs more gender responsive.

World Vision Australia supports gender specific programming through program models including Channels of Hope and C-Change. World Vision Australia is also working to build greater gender sensitivity in core programming approaches of farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) and local value chain development (LVCD).

World Vision Australia's policy recommendations for change

World Vision Australia calls on the Australian Government to:³

For the Australian Aid Program:

1. Collect, and make publicly available, sex-disaggregated data relating to both outputs and outcomes of Australian aid projects to ensure sustained impact for women and girls.
2. Accompany the relevant gender benchmarks and aid allocations within Australia's aid program, with a publicly available, independent analysis, of social impact arising from the increased budget and policy focus on advancing women and girl's empowerment.

On violence against women and girls:⁴

1. Continue advocating in international fora for the empowerment of girls and their participation in addressing all forms of violence against girls.
2. Strengthen all measures and investments aimed at addressing family violence to ensure they are inclusive of children, informed by their experiences, and consistent with the rights of boys and girls, and strengthen prevention and response systems to support the elimination of family violence.
3. Support front line gender based violence response services, including through training for staff and ensuring survivors have access to appropriate healthcare facilities.
4. Build greater regional capacity to collect and understand data on gender based violence, to improve the policy and legislative environment on prevention and inform expenditure on services for those impacted by gender based violence.
5. Allocate research funding to assist in identifying effective evidence based interventions to prevent gender based violence. Ensure programs designed to prevent violence against women and girls also invest in strategies to challenge and change social norms on violence against girls in the home.⁵

On girls and young women in humanitarian contexts:

1. Acknowledging that humanitarian contexts provide a critical opportunity for the transformation of gender relations, ensure that the Australian government's actions during crises enable progress towards gender equality and support the leadership of women.
2. Ensure all humanitarian programming is gender sensitive, and builds upon gender sensitive needs assessments.
3. Ensure that humanitarian and emergency responses commit to the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and early marriage by:

4. Continuing to invest in initiatives which create safe and supportive environments for women and children during emergencies;
5. Actively engaging men and boys in appropriate rights-based education to challenge discriminatory gender norms;
6. Incorporating gender and child protection specialists into disaster preparedness training and deployment; and
7. Ensuring gender-based violence prevention and protection mechanisms are integrated into all emergency responses
8. Pursue a working relationship between UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security and 2250 on youth, peace and security.⁶

On birth registration:

1. Support national governments to improve birth registration systems to ensure that all children, including girls, are registered from birth, consistent with their right to birth registration under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

On economic empowerment:

1. Engage with non-government organisations and private sector actors with local expertise to invest in contextually appropriate, business-orientated networks or associations such as women's savings groups. Access to social and business networks can be invaluable for driving partnerships, encouraging the sharing of knowledge, and facilitating the growth of women's businesses.
2. Ensure that Australian aid program-funded initiatives tie women's vocational training to real, locally identified economic opportunities. Women should actively be involved in all stages of the vocational training project cycle to ensure that education and training initiatives are purposeful and tied to real opportunities in their local context.

On health:

1. Support household-level family planning counselling to engage families, including men and adolescent women, in sexual and reproductive health education.
2. Mainstream gender in Australian aid-supported WASH programming.⁷
3. Prioritise Australian aid program funding for maternal and newborn child health programs which integrate family planning and preventative measures.

Background

International Context

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms the 'equal rights of men and women' and that no individual can be discriminated against, or hindered from enjoying his or her rights on the basis of gender. The World Vision International (WVI) Board endorsed the UDHR in 1985.⁸

Considered the "women's bill of rights"⁹, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. CEDAW is the major internationally binding instrument focused on the elimination of discrimination against girls and women and promoting the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls on an equal basis with men in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.¹⁰

The World Vision International board has endorsed the underlying intent and larger goals of CEDAW and its Optional Protocol (establishing the reporting and complaints mechanisms to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.)¹¹ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women monitors the implementation of CEDAW by the 189 United Nations Member States¹² that have ratified the convention.

Building on the rights enshrined in CEDAW, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established a global policy agenda for advancing women's rights and gender equality.¹³ Negotiated at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the Declaration and Platform for Action set strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern.¹⁴ The Beijing platform was adopted by 189 countries (including Australia) and is reviewed at five year intervals.¹⁵

Most recently, both the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015)¹⁶ and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015-2030) have incorporated gender equality as a standalone goal¹⁷ and as a target across other goals.

SDG Goal 5 includes targets dedicated to eliminating discrimination, violence, harmful factors against women and ensuring women's participation and leadership at all levels, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights,¹⁸ equal rights to economic resources and enabling technology.

Progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women against these frameworks is considered annually at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the principal intergovernmental body dedicated to gender equality. A functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council, CSW involves representatives of UN Member States, civil society organisations and UN entities and discusses progress and gaps in the implementation of the Beijing Platform and

other emerging issues affecting gender equality and the empowerment of women globally.¹⁹ UN Member states use CSW to agree on further actions to accelerate progress towards women's enjoyment of their rights. The World Vision Partnership actively engages in CSW.

Notwithstanding the international legal frameworks for gender equality, gender inequality and discrimination against women persists to varying degrees in all parts of the world. Globally, women earn 24 per cent less than men in the labour market²⁰ and only 20 per cent of global landowners are women.²¹ Despite some progress, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians are female.²² Violence against women occurs at concerning rates across the world with a 2013 report noting that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.²³

Australian Context

The Australia government is a strong supporter of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Australia ratified CEDAW in 1983.²⁴ Australian representatives attended the 1995 World Conference in Beijing (and subsequent formal reviews), and the Australian Government has been committed to implementing the outcomes of the Beijing Platform, both domestically and internationally.²⁵ Australia has also been a proponent of the Sustainable Development Goals.²⁶

The Australian Government places strong emphasis on gender equality within its foreign affairs portfolio, as managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This commitment is articulated through DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy.²⁷ Gender equality and women's empowerment is a pillar of the Australian aid program, with particular focus on:

- enhancing women's voice and participation in decision-making, leadership and peace building;
- promoting women's economic empowerment; and
- ending violence against women and girls.

The aid program has set a target requiring that 80 per cent of all Australia's aid, regardless of their objectives, perform effectively in promoting gender equality.²⁸ According to DFAT's latest performance report (covering 2015-16) 78 per cent of aid investments were rated as satisfactorily addressing gender equality during their implementation.²⁹

Australia's work in this area is championed by the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls. Established in 2011, the role of Ambassador is to ensure the needs of women and girls are properly represented in Australia's overseas development programs and foreign policy.³⁰ The Ambassador is responsible for high-level advocacy to promote Australian Government policies and activity regarding gender equality and the social, political and economic empowerment of women and girls.³¹ Dr Sharman Stone has been appointed Ambassador for Women and Girls, effective January 2017.³²

Key resources & references

Key resources

World Vision International, 'Gender Equality Policy', 2013, available at: <https://www.wvcentral.org/Grants/WVUS/FY15%20Workshop%20Materials/21.c%20WVI%20Gender%20Equality%20Policy.pdf#search=gender%20equality%20policy%20>

World Vision International, 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Partnership Policy', 2015, available at: https://www.wvcentral.org/wvipolicy/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/wvipolicy/Document%20Library/CEDAW%20Nov%202015%20clean%20pp.doc&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1

World Vision International, 'World Vision public policy positions: a guide for staff', 2013, available at: [https://www.wvcentral.org/wvipolicy/Document%20Library/Public%20Policy%20Position%20staff%20guide%20\(2013\)%20.pdf#search=World%20Vision%20public%20policy%20position%3A%20a%20guide%20for%20staff%E2%80%99](https://www.wvcentral.org/wvipolicy/Document%20Library/Public%20Policy%20Position%20staff%20guide%20(2013)%20.pdf#search=World%20Vision%20public%20policy%20position%3A%20a%20guide%20for%20staff%E2%80%99)

World Vision Australia, Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into the human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region, 2015, available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Human_Rights/Report

References

¹ This position and principles reflects the World Vision International (WVI) Partnership Policy on Gender Equality, for internal WV use at: [http://thehub/ourteams/PolicyPrograms/internationalprograms/Documents/2013 Gender Equality Policy Approved-9Nov13.docx](http://thehub/ourteams/PolicyPrograms/internationalprograms/Documents/2013%20Gender%20Equality%20Policy%20Approved-9Nov13.docx)

² These principles are based on the principles of the World Vision International (WVI) Partnership Gender Equality Policy, however the WVI Partnership policy also includes principles on organisational culture and accountability.

³ For further information and context, see World Vision Australia 2014 submission to Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into the human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region, available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Human_Rights/Submissions

⁴ Some of these recommendations were identified during the October 2016 Australian Council for International Development – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ACFID-DFAT) Gender Workshop. Notes forthcoming.

⁵ World Vision's Channels of Hope (CoH) for Gender model demonstrates the effectiveness of exploring gender identities, norms and values from a faith perspective to develop shifts in attitudes towards violence and mobilising faith leaders' influence to challenge misconceptions and reduce violence against women.

⁶ The Australian government has been a vocal supporter of UNSC Resolution 1325, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda [see associated position paper]. There is presently an opportunity to elevate the recently adopted UNSC Resolution 2250, on youth, peace and security. Given Australia's expertise in the area of UNSC Resolution 1325, Australia is well positioned to play an active role in creating a functional working relationship between the two agendas, ensuring that girls and young women are able to benefit from unprecedented support for their roles in reaching and sustaining peace in their communities.

⁷ Evidence suggests that when gender considerations are considered in WASH interventions, this has the potential to both improve the effectiveness of WASH programs, and increase gender equality outcomes. See: Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), WaterAid and Unilever, 'We Can't Wait: A report on Sanitation and Hygiene for Women and Girls,' November 2013, available at: <http://wsscc.org/resources-feed/cant-wait-report-sanitation-hygiene-women-girls/>

⁸ World Vision International (WVI) Partnership Policy on Human Rights (1 March 1985, revised 19 November 2015), for internal WV use, available at: https://www.wvcentral.org/wvipolicy/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/wvipolicy/Document%20Library/Human%20Rights%20Nov%202015%20clean%20pp.doc&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1

⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality,' 2015, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/WRGSIndex.aspx>

¹⁰ Article 1, United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

¹¹ World Vision International (WVI) Partnership Policy on CEDAW (7 March 2002, revised 19 November 2015), for internal WV use, available at: https://www.wvcentral.org/wvipolicy/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/wvipolicy/Document%20Library/CEDAW%20Nov%202015%20clean%20pp.doc&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1

¹² For current ratification status of Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) see: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=_en

¹³ United Nations Women, 'World Conferences on Women,' 2015, available: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>

¹⁴ The 12 strategic areas of the Beijing Platform are: women and the environment, women in power and decision making, the girl child, women and the economy, women and poverty, violence against women, human rights of women, education and training of women, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, women and health, women and the media, and women and armed conflict.

¹⁵ United Nations Women, 'World Conferences on Women,' 2015, available: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>

¹⁶ General Assembly Resolution 55/2 (2000)(Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women), A/RES/55/2, available at: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

¹⁷ General Assembly 55/2 (2015)(The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), A/RES/70/1, available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

¹⁸ See World Vision International (WVI), 'Management Policy on Reproductive Health', September 2016, for internal WV use, available at: <https://www.wvcentral.org/community/health/Documents/Mangement%20Policy%20on%20Reproductive%20Health%20September2016.pdf>

¹⁹ United Nations Women, 'Commission on the Status of Women' 2016, available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

²⁰ United Nations Women, 'Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming economies, realizing rights', 2015, Chapter 2, available at: http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf

²¹ Food and Agriculture Organization, 'The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women and Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development', 2011, available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

²² As at 1 August 2016. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Women in National Parliaments', 2016 available: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

²³ World Health Organisation (WHO), 'Global and regional estimates of violence against women,' 2013, p.2 available at: <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

²⁴ Australia ratified the Convention subject to a reservation that states: "The Government of Australia advises that it does not accept the application of the Convention in so far as it would require alteration of Defence force policy which excludes women from combat and combat related duties. See, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women', available at: <http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/treaties/treaties.nsf/alldocids/333d22b9ed69b058ca256b300024f1ba>

²⁵ See, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'Australian Country Statement at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)', 2016, available at: <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/news-centre/office-women/csw60-country-statement>

²⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Global Development' available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/global-development-agenda/Pages/global-development-agenda.aspx>

²⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy', Feb 2016, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.aspx>

²⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Making Performance Count: enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of Australian aid,' June 2014, p.8, available: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/making-performance-count-enhancing-the-accountability-and-effectiveness-of-australian-aid.aspx>

²⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Performance of Australian Aid 2015-16), May 2017, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/performance-of-australian-aid-2015-16.pdf>

³⁰ Hon Julia Gillard, Hon Kevin Rudd, Hon Kate Ellis, 'Australia appoints Global Ambassador for Women and Girls,' 13 September 2011, available at: http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2011/kr_mr_110913.aspx?ministerid=2

³¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Ambassador for Women and Girls,' available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/our-people/homs/Pages/ambassador-for-women-and-girls.aspx>

³² See, Minister of Foreign Affairs Media Release, 'Ambassador for Women and Girls,' available at: http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb_mr_161121.aspx