



Security: challenges and opportunities for the Pacific

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Talking Notes

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Introduction

It is a pleasure for me to be here representing ACFID (the Australian Council for International Development)

ACFID is the peak body comprising **80 Australian NGOs** working in aid and development – **57 of which work in the Pacific – mostly in Melanesia – and all of whom work with local partners.**

ACFID's membership includes a diverse range of organisations:

- **large organisations** such as World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children;
- **faith-based organisations** such as CARITAS, ADRA, Anglican Board of Mission, Marist Mission Centre;
- **Volunteer sending agencies** such as AVI and ABV, and a range of
- **small to medium-sized organisations** such as The Leprosy Mission, the Fred Hollows Foundation, The Australian Conservation Foundationto name a few.

Security

I have been asked to talk today about ***“Security – Challenges and Opportunities for the Pacific”***

What do we mean by **“Security”**?

In the post September 11 environment, western countries became pre-occupied with their own security. As a consequence, their overseas aid focus concentrated on so-called 'good governance' to address 'fragility' of states – concerns over whether neighbouring 'fragile' states would become havens for terrorists, money laundering, drug networks and small arms distribution or experience breakdown of civil order.

Of recent times there has been greater recognition of the importance of focusing more on **security for Pacific Island nations** – recognising that without a stable and secure environment, the benefits of development activities will not be sustainable.

The **Pacific Plan** defines Security as:

“the stable and safe social (or human) and political conditions necessary for, and reflective of, good governance and sustainable development for the achievement of economic growth”

The Plan has as its objective for Security: ***“Improved political and social conditions for stability and safety”***.

The Security section of the Plan focuses on maritime and aviation security; environmental security (from introduced species); financial security (associated with protocols to prevent money laundering); crime reduction; and natural disaster response. Other sections of the Plan however address **human security**.

I will focus today on the human security aspect. Also on the actions which we, as a civil society group, can take to promote this over the next 10 years.

Some elements of human security include:

- being secure from HIV/AIDS epidemics and other major illnesses
- being secure from adverse impacts of Climate Change
- being secure from negative external economic changes and ensuring citizens can find livelihoods to take care of their families

On some of these, CSOs can play a key role.

Challenges

Also important is that Pacific Island voices have the major role in shaping their development paths. As I see it, there are some challenges to building on the strengths within and between our countries – both among CSOs and in dealings with government and business either in Australia or in the region.

Challenge 1

To broaden and deepen donors' understanding of what is involved in good governance and sustainable economic growth. (Needs to be major civil society engagement over the next few years)

It is also important that any foreign assistance to the region takes into account what does and doesn't work in specific country, or even provincial, areas based on genuine 'listening and learning' before programs are designed. Agree it must be a two-way thing, but mainly between citizens and government. Often national governments, like donor governments, are poor at this.

Shifting from a "good governance" model focussed solely on State institutions – government departments/policy.

How to listen to village/clan level at an early stage and be ready to adapt?

Is it appropriate to build governance programs around a decision-making process located in Honiara or Port Moresby – remote from rural constituencies?

The Australian government is at an early stage of this effort to broaden government support. The challenge is to create a more respectful dialogue so that better quality policy solutions will be pursued. This means they are more likely to be supported over time.

Challenge 2

Strengthened basic health and education services are key components for human security of the region.

The challenge is to ensure the way in which donors support the building of basic services (such as health and education) is done in a culturally appropriate way.

In Australian civil society, we continue to lobby for a stronger focus on:

- local capacity building-based on listening to local views to be given priority;
- skills upgrading be sustained in the very long term;
- partnerships and twinning arrangements adopt a two-way approach – exploring more opportunities for on-the-job training of Pacific Islanders attached to Australian institutions.

Challenge 3

To create more likelihood opportunities in the region – one aspect is by opening up overseas job markets.

(That is, advocating for a trial Pacific Labour Mobility Program to create employment opportunities for short-term work in countries like Australia)

ACFID has been lobbying the Australian Government for a Pacific Labour Mobility Scheme to allow mainly unskilled workers to have temporary access (eg harvesting crops) – highlighting:

- the important social and economic benefits to Pacific Island countries through remittances;
- the value of training opportunities for Pacific Islanders – as well as the potential for linkages between a Pacific Labour Mobility Scheme and the proposed Australia-Pacific Technical College; and
- the two-way benefit through deepening and strengthening relationships
- the success of similar schemes elsewhere

There is increasing support within Australia, but there is still strong resistance by government on concerns about possible exploitation of workers and that some may not go home, etc. Opposition are nervous. But, I am confident this will move forward over the next several years.

Challenge 4

To build a partnership with divergent CSOs. To increase the proportion of donor support that is channelled through NGOs.

That is, to ensure that civil society is effectively involved in the development, delivery and monitoring of development activities.

Australia is only one of the donors. During its current budget period, the **Australian Government** is providing **A\$766.6 million** per annum to PNG and the Pacific **BUT**

only a very small percentage of this funding uses the partnership with Australian or Pacific NGOs This is:

- despite acknowledgement of the vital role of civil society in the region
- despite recognition of NGO effectiveness in outreaching to remote rural communities (IMF report last year and AusAID evaluation)
- despite the significant potential for capacity building between Australian NGOs and their Pacific partners (based on decades of close and effective working partnerships)

The majority of Australian Government aid to the Pacific is targeted to anti-corruption measures (Law and Order – courts, police, prisons) and (Economic management – Treasury – Customs – Quarantine) with a view that if good governance principles are adhered to, economic growth will follow.

I am pleased to see the shift by the Australian Government to broaden the concept of governance (as in the White Paper) and recognition of the importance of working with civil society but the challenge remains to ensure that this acknowledgement materialises into more solid support for aid delivery through Pacific and Australian NGOs.

Opportunities

I think there is more opportunity in what we can do and share together as CSOs In the long-term it is mainly what civil society and the private sector do that creates the future.

There are a number of ways in which the Australian NGO community can support Pacific partners to achieve human security in the region.

1. Specialised Mutual Efforts - Disability

We are trying to break through the institutional barriers, including in the civil society world, which leaves disability out of the picture. It is exciting to now have a group of the best disability service providers and some aid NGOs to share knowledge.

We are exploring closer links with the recently created Pacific Disability Forum.

ACFID is a strong advocate for addressing disability. Worldwide, the disabled are in grave danger of becoming the 'poorest of the poor'.

In the HIV sector, Australian HIV organisations/medical institutions work closely with the development sector to bring together technical medical expertise with community development experience and skills.

We already have some good regional sharing links on child protection, domestic violence and maternal health issues.

There is scope for more of this cooperation where we lead together and don't wait for governments, but leave them (remember vote for women and the environment).

2. Deepening and strengthening relationships

Australian NGOs already have good relationships with our Pacific partners. In the case of some NGOs, engagement extends back four decades and over 100 years in the case of some church-based organisations. There are opportunities to build on and further strengthen this engagement through:

- staff exchanges
- networking and person-to-person links

- providing training opportunities and
- helping with strategic planning and other organisational issues

At ACFID we have certainly learned a lot through these interactions and value those relationships.

3. Capacity building for the Pacific NGO sector

ACFID members are involved in a range of Pacific NGO hands-on capacity building activities.

A good example of Australian/Pacific NGO engagement and capacity building is the **Papua New Guinea Church Partnerships Program (PNG-CPP)**. This AusAID funded program involves Australian church-based organisations working with PNG churches to improve health and education services – drawing on the churches extensive networks in remote and isolated areas of PNG. Some of our PNG church friends have told us that this partnership has helped them to be more confident in policy discussions, service delivery and peace and reconciliation activities. Institutions taking part in the program are the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, United churches and the Salvation Army.

4. ACFID Code of Conduct

There is also potential for sharing with the Pacific NGO sector ACFID's development industry Code of Conduct – to which our members are signatory.

Elements of this could be adapted to suit a Pacific Island context to provide procedures for good governance, transparency and accountability in the NGO sector.

5. White Paper Initiatives

The Australian Government is now talking about our Pacific partnership and a **more inclusive way of working**. Who knows, this may happen. We have experienced some very productive and more open policy dialogue over the last six months than for a long time.

We want to see that this is reflected in AusAID's program planning and implementation in the Pacific using Pacific civil society perspectives.

We have a history of collaboration among us for decades – in ways that build human security.

We hope to be able to draw on your views and expertise to provide input into the following Australian Government White Paper initiatives:

- Building Demand for Better Governance Program
- Pacific Leadership Program
- Delivering Better Health (especially addressing the needs of women and children)
- HIV/AIDS – Leadership in the Region
- Mobilising New Australian Links to the Region (schools, local government, business, professional bodies)

6. Advocacy Efforts – informed by you

I was impressed by the Vice-President's points this morning. We are all involved in advocacy and trying to get a more respectful attitude from governments towards civil society. One that does not dismiss us or question our legitimacy. We in Australia are not as well respected as some of your organisations by politicians. But we can use our networks to do our research and exert more influence, eg where you speak up with your governments about civil society involves at the design state of relevant governance, education and health projects and where you use opportunities to push for new systematic CSO

consultation prior to annual donor consultation. We want to share this with you.

I have focused on what we can do to impact on human security because I am sure we can make a difference.

During the next couple of days, I am keen to hear any of your thoughts about actions we can take ourselves.