

Church Agencies Network submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry

Into the delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid program in Papua New Guinea

17 April 2015

This is a joint submission from the Church Agencies Network (CAN) in Australia to provide information on the experience of CAN members on the effectiveness of working through church NGOs in delivering Australian government funding in Papua New Guinea.

We specifically address part (b) – *the role of multilateral and regional organisations, non-government organisations, Australian civil society and other donors* – in this Senate enquiry into the delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bi-lateral aid program in PNG, and part (f) – *supporting inclusive development by investing in good, governance, health and education, law and justice and women's empowerment*

The Church Agencies Network (CAN) is comprised of Australian church-based, aid and development agencies who are members of the Australian Council For International Development. Currently this is: Act for Peace, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia, Anglican Board of Mission, Anglican Overseas Aid, Australian Lutheran World Service, Baptist World Aid Australia / Transform Aid International, Caritas Australia, Global Mission Partners, Quaker Service Australia, Salvation Army Australia, and UnitingWorld. CAN constituencies in Australia are the communities within each of our denominations and networks. Our constituencies overseas are the churches, church-based and faith-based agencies, their members and communities with whom we partner. These are indigenous, grass-roots organisations working to overcome poverty and injustice through empowering local people.

The Australian Government-funded PNG Church Partnership Program (CPP) is one of several ways in which CAN members engage in the enhancement of the delivery of Australian bilateral aid to PNG. The CPP is a long-term, multi-stakeholder partnership between the CAN members, the corresponding churches in PNG, and the governments of PNG and Australia. It was first funded in 2004 and has had significant positive impact in PNG society. The underlying premise of the CPP is that the quality, value for money, and scale of the services delivered are enhanced if the capacity of, and collaboration between, the various churches is strengthened. CPP has been recognised as a key civil society program by the Australian High Commission in PNG, and will continue to make significant inroads into PNG society.

We make the following recommendations, supported by international research and our field experience in PNG:

Recommendations:

1. The Australian Government continues to recognise and enable the role of Churches in providing improved service delivery in PNG.
2. The Australian Government to engage and consult with Churches in the development and implementation of aid investment plans, due to the comparative advantage of churches in achieving results and leveraging greater change.
3. The Australian Government makes long-term commitments to enhancing Church and State partnerships in health and education, reduction of gender-based violence, and improvements in child protection.

Background: the Role of Churches in Aid Effectiveness

Religious communities—their leaders, institutions and faith-based organisations—play a critical role as Civil Society Organisations, promoting and enhancing the wellbeing of society. Globally this is being recognised by governments and international institutions. The World Bank has increased its operational collaboration with civil society by encouraging its participation in Bank-financed projects, and by cooperating with civil society in education, disaster risk management, and other areas. Civil society participated in 82% of the 1,018 new projects and programs financed by the Bank between 2010-2012. Civil Society Organisations were also important beneficiaries of community-driven development projects, which received \$4.5 billion in 2012 (World Bank 2012).

Since the inception of the Global Fund, faith-based organisations have received over \$500 million in Global Fund grants in at least 73 countries. In 2014 the German Government released a strategy on government-civil society cooperation for post-2015 which stated: *“A strong and vibrant civil society forms part of any properly functioning democracy. Widespread voluntary commitment, a highly flexible approach and direct access to the target groups often enable civil society initiatives to work with lower administrative and staffing overheads than is the case with state institutions.”*

The Office of Development Effectiveness evaluation of health service delivery in Melanesia found that there is a strong case for donors to encourage greater dialogue between government and civil society. Civil society organisations can play a constructive role in policy advocacy and in increasing accountability, which would help to broaden ownership of reforms and improve their chances of surviving changes in government (ODE 2009).

Papua New Guinea

Estimates across all Pacific nations, excluding Australia and New Zealand, indicate that over 95% of the population identify as Christian (Pew Research Centre 2011). CAN works with the PNG church structures that are present from grassroots level to national level. “The unique modern history and geography of the small island states of Melanesia has given rise to several distinctive features of their church-state relations: 1 - FBO’s, away from key administrative centres, often have more influence and certainly more ‘presence’ than state institutions and officials; 2 - FBO’s retained influence over how governments made decisions as the colonies gained the status of independent nation-states; 3 - FBO’s played significant roles in conflict resolution and peace-building when ‘the state’ showed signs of fragility; (Hassell, 2012)

The Government of PNG (GoPNG) recognises the efforts by the Christian Churches in providing vital services such as minimising law and order issues and providing health and education services to the rural majority of the population. The PNG National Department of Health has said: “There is great potential for significant gains in rural health if the right efforts are made to enhance the work of Church Health Services.” (NDoH, AusAID, *Improving Health Service Delivery in PNG, 2011*). Churches are currently the biggest partner in delivering health services with GoPNG – 47% nationally, and in some Provinces, over 80%. Churches manage all 12 Community Health Worker training schools, and five out of eight nursing schools in PNG (2013 *Christian Health Services Technical Assistance Mission Report*). The Catholic Church alone runs 1800 Catholic Elementary Schools, over 1000 Primary Schools and 49 Secondary Schools across PNG.

Recommendation 1 - The Australian Government continues to recognise and enable the role of Churches in providing improved service delivery in PNG

Many Melanesians see their churches as intrinsically involved in peace building, service provision, policy development, the construction of social capital, and holding the government to account. In response to this cultural imperative, the CPP provided a forum for defining a “Theology of Development.” In September 2014 the Theology of Development was launched at Parliament House in Port Moresby. Speaker of the Parliament, Honourable Theo Zurenuoc, said in his speech: *“I believe that development must be based on certain fundamental ideologies ... and we have embraced the Christian faith as the fundamental belief to build our society on...”* Through the Theology of Development, the seven mainline churches of PNG offer themselves as strategic partners of the GoPNG – specifically the ministries of National Planning & Monitoring, and Community Development, Youth & Religion.

Education & Adult Literacy

The Churches make a huge contribution to education in PNG, with approximately 50% of both elementary schools and primary schools administered by churches (*National Department of Education 2010*). Analysis shows that teachers at church-run schools spend more time teaching, and that as a result children are more likely to attend church-run schools. (*Spotlight October 2014*). Each church in the CPP program conducts some form of adult literacy – the majority of recipients are women. Adult Literacy programs operate through existing church networks and are spread over the majority of provinces in PNG, in both very remote areas and in the urban settlements in Port Moresby and Lae. Literacy programs are conducted in *Tok Pisin*, English or local languages.

Caritas Australia has been supporting a number of literacy initiatives through CPP. These include the Sacred Heart Brothers – Save Our Children and Youth (SOCAY) initiative, targeting youth who have dropped out of school or have been involved in crime. SOCAY has combined literacy education, skills training and sports participation into its program, which is recognised by the GoPNG Department of Education. These programs allow students to either re-enter the public school system or obtain employment. Since 2007 over 1170 students have entered the training programs, 447 have graduated, 463 have found formal employment and 81 have enrolled in further education.

Gender & Violence against Women

Gender-based violence is an epidemic in PNG, with estimates that 70% of women have experienced some kind of violence. According to 2012 PNG country gender assessment jointly conducted by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the UN, and the Australian and PNG governments, “*the high prevalence of such violence in PNG is a cross cutting issue, with very serious implications for public health and social policy, economic development, and justice and law enforcement.*” Through the CPP, church leaders clearly recognise that they have been part of the problem, and therefore it is essential they are part of the solution. CAN members are in an ideal position to work with PNG churches in this process, since they too have already commenced their own journey to improved gender and child protection.

The CPP works with gender equality both through mainstreaming and with specific programs delivered by each church and in collaborative partnerships within the program. In 2010 the Anglican Board of Mission worked with their partner in PNG to launch a gender advocate program. Gender advocates are both male and female, and they work through primary and high schools to talk about gender issues. Johnston Kena is one of the gender advocates. He writes: “When I joined the group, I began to understand what gender meant. Before, I didn’t understand, and did some things that were not good for myself and my family...The Church members and priests must know what gender means. Some people criticise this program, but we are not going to give up. We will continue with this work.”

In another example, churches that provided HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing were aware of low access rates by men and were seeking to address barriers to men’s participation, and were also aware of the consequences in terms of violence and social stigma for women when they accessed such services without their husband being tested too. The churches were actively seeking to provide gender sensitive services to reduce the likelihood of violence in the family (Webster 2012). Indicators for measurement of impact include increasing women’s participation in leadership, women’s access to health, education and financial services, reduction in family violence and wider representation of women in church life. CPP partners are also working with men to provide alternatives to violence, and with couples to strengthen marriages.

Through the CPP churches are now working together to develop a Theology of Gender Equality and a gender strategy that all participating churches in PNG can use as a tool to improve gender outcomes throughout the entire program. This strategy will provide a mechanism of working from the hierarchy to the grassroots of the seven PNG mainline churches, and will contribute to attitudinal change and a reduction in violence for women and children.

Child Protection

Through joint training in child protection facilitated by CPP, key staff within PNG churches identified two main gaps in the community's ability to adequately protect children. Firstly, a lack of awareness of the existence government services. Secondly, limited, under-resourced and often unreliable government services. The promotion of under-resourced government services can worsen the situation, so local Churches are developing an advocacy plan aimed at encouraging the government to prioritise the adequate funding and management of welfare and judicial services related to the wellbeing of children. Advocacy will also be done to encourage churches to support the government's efforts by strengthening their own child protection practices, so that the churches can assist the government as well as advocate for better government services, especially in relation to the implementation of GoPNGs *Lukautim Pikinini Act*.

Following advocacy and training provided by the CAN members the PNG churches are putting child protection policies in place. The Salvation Army PNG has trained all their pastors and youth workers in child protection. They are currently training church workers, community workers and community members. Anglicare PNG has a child protection policy in place and has trained over 130 people. United Church PNG has a child protection policy and has conducted training with key senior leaders in preparation for mainstreaming child protection through their children's ministries. The Seventh-day Adventist Church PNG has conducted training in child protection and endorsed a child protection policy. The Catholic Church has a national policy for child well-being and has trained 36 child protection officers across the country, who are now government certified and assist in case management with the gazetted government Child Protection Officers.

Recommendation 2 - The Australian Government to engage and consult with Churches in the development and implementation of aid investment plans, due to the comparative advantage of churches in achieving results and leveraging greater change.

Church-State Partnership

There is a strong link between improved service delivery in PNG through the Churches, and the enhanced accountability and quality of government service provision. "...FBO's have added the function of 'social critic and conscience' to that of service delivery. Lamour suggests that churches 'provide the normative framework, and concern with shame and reputation' that makes officials self-accounting, 'as moral agents or simply followers of rules'" (Lamour 2000:8).

The CPP has provided a forum for church leaders to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern, and also allowed capacity building within individual churches, supported by CAN members. This has led to the strengthening of churches ability to manage and implement development projects. This strengthened capacity and unified voice were important factors leading to the GoPNG reinstating the Church State Partnership (CSP), which has led to increased GoPNG support for health and education services delivered by churches in PNG. The CSP allocation within the current GoPNG budget is 25 million Kina.

Following further advocacy from the PNG church leaders involved in the CPP, the GoPNG established a Church Development Council (CDC) as the mechanism for strategic dialogue and discussions between the state and the Church. This mechanism provides a transparent process for how the government funds for health and education under the Church State Partnership Program are to be distributed. The CDC was modelled on the DFAT PNG Church Partnership Program.

The PNGCSP funds provide money for churches to undertake major infrastructure development in areas that would improve service delivery in the areas of health and education. This complements the funds provided through the Churches Education Council and Christian Health Services, which are for actual service delivery. The GoPNG was so impressed with the governance and management systems of CPP that they have replicated these systems for the management of CSP, and asked CPP to support the establishment and initial management of CSP. Churches are using these funds to build health clinics, housing for nurses, water tanks for schools, and other essential hardware.

Recommendation 3 - The Australian Government makes long-term commitments to enhancing Church and State partnerships in health and education, reduction of gender-based violence, and improvements in child protection.

Multi-year commitments result in higher impact programs with sustainable results. Through the CPP, Transform Aid International has conducted capacity building over the past ten years with the Baptist Union of PNG. One success from this long-term programming commitment has been the ability of the Baptist Union of PNG to recently negotiate a joint project to re-establish the Telefomin Baptist Community Health Worker Training School. The school has been able to accept 23 first year enrolments in 2015, and by the end of December 2015 will be ready to accept second year students into the school. This was only possible because of the long-term capacity building relationship between Transform Aid International and the Baptist Union of PNG.

Hela

Hela province remains one of the most challenging to work in due to high levels of tribal fighting, difficult terrain, lack of infrastructure and population spread. Three churches within the CPP have collaborated in Hela and are working through a committee representing the churches, organisations and GoPNG to deliver education and health services. Priorities for the collaboration are governance, adult literacy and school attendance. A workshop was conducted with 30 provincial government and church education professionals and the Hela Council of Churches about the challenges, priorities, strengths and gaps of running church-based education programs. The churches want a standard national literacy curriculum, and governance training for people working in education. An action plan was produced, and CPP is supporting its implementation.

Bougainville

Through CPP, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, United Church and Catholic Church collaborated to identify an area of need they could jointly address in Bougainville. A consultative workshop was held in Arawa with the members of the three churches which identified as a high priority literacy and support for the 'lost generation' - young people who have lost one or both parents and who did not have access to education during the Bougainville civil war. Activities are now being designed to address the needs of this group. Due to the complex post-conflict environment in Bougainville positive improvements for this young generation will only come through long-term contextualised engagement and support. Churches largely remain trusted organisations in Bougainville, which gives them leverage and flexibility to reach communities isolated geographically and socially following the conflict in Bougainville.

Conclusion

Faith-based organisations are the oldest social services providers in the world. Papua New Guinea's Medium Term Development Strategy for 2005 – 2010 envisaged Churches as partners, together with other NGOs, in not only health and education service delivery, but also agricultural extension and access to clean water. (PNG Department of National Planning and Rural Development 2005). This reflects the reality that in the Pacific Islands, identity and governance is formed via a tripartite partnership of government, civil society and faith-based organisations. (UNFPA 2014). Continued partnership with the Churches in PNG is critical for regional sustainable progress.

Thank you for considering our submission.

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Church Agencies Network - Australia

The 11 agencies represented in this submission are:

Act for Peace

Adventist Development & Relief Agency - Australia

Anglican Board of Mission - Australia

Anglican Overseas Aid

Australian Lutheran World Service

Caritas Australia

Global Mission Partners

Quaker Service Australia

The Salvation Army

Transform Aid International / Baptist

World Aid Australia

UnitingWorld

We welcome any opportunity to discuss this submission further.

CAN Contact:

Mr Chris Jensen - Adventist Development & Relief Agency - Australia

+61 2 9473 9505

Email: ChrisJensen@adra.org.au

Alistair Gee, Executive Director
Act For Peace



Colin Scott for John Gilmore
Executive Director
Global Mission Partners



Mark Webster, Chief Executive Officer
Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia



Jackie Perkins, Executive Administrator
Quaker Service Australia



Rev John Deane, Executive Director
Anglican Board of Mission - Australia



Colonel Richard Munn, Chief Secretary
The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory



Rev Bob Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer
Anglican Overseas Aid



John Hickey, Chief Executive Officer
Transform Aid International



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Australian Lutheran World Service



Rob Floyd, National Director
UnitingWorld



Paul O'Callaghan, Chief Executive Officer
Caritas Australia

