

# **Diaspora Learning Network:**

Foreign Policy White Paper Submission

**February 2017**

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## Summary of Recommendations

1. Australia's diaspora communities should be recognised as key stakeholders in Australia's foreign policy architecture.
2. Australia's foreign policy and immigration policy should be informed by the successes of our multicultural society and reinforce the values of diversity and inclusion in response to global political trends of division and exclusion.
3. That Australia's development assistance program should be identified as a key pillar of Australia's foreign policy architecture with Australia's diaspora communities deliberately and explicitly included within this.
4. The Australian government should harness diaspora knowledge, capabilities and networks to enhance its foreign policy objectives by:
  - a. building government, NGO, university and private sector capability to engage with diasporas
  - b. supporting and resourcing diaspora initiatives and amplifying diaspora capabilities. *(see Section 5 below for more detail)*
5. That Australia reengages with Africa, particularly Eastern and Southern Africa, by:
  - a. supporting diaspora initiatives in areas including trade and job creation, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian response
  - b. reinvesting in bilateral aid to Africa.
6. The Australian Government should facilitate a more favourable remittance regulatory environment that allows low-cost, safe and sustainable remittance flows, particularly to Pacific nations and to fragile states such as Somalia.
7. Australia's respond to forced migration:
  - a. by addressing root causes of conflict and supporting peacekeeping measures to reduce the need of people to flee
  - b. through application of a humane refugee policy that is consistent with international refugee law
  - c. by contributing to international solutions to forced displacement and by making a significant commitment to the Global Compact process.
8. As the internationally agreed framework for achieving sustainable peace and prosperity in the world, the Sustainable Development Goals should be placed at the front and centre of Australia's Foreign policy. Working with diasporas is a key way of realising the focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration that is the focus of Goal 17 of the SDGs.

## About the Diaspora Learning Network

The Diaspora Learning Network (DLN), created in 2016, is a network of organisations that promotes ongoing learning and multi-sector dialogue on the role of diasporas in peace, development, humanitarian action and human rights, and to facilitate collaboration between diasporas and other sectors.

The current and founding members of the Diaspora Learning Network are: Diaspora Action Australia, Melbourne Refugee Studies Program (University of Melbourne), Australian Red Cross, Refugee Council of Australia, Australian Council for International Development, Oxfam Australia and Research for Development Impact Network.

## Context: Australia's diaspora communities – key strategic actors

Australia is home to large and varied diaspora populations, with a quarter of the population born outside of Australia and 43% of the population with at least one parent born overseas<sup>1</sup>. Australia's overseas-born populations come predominantly from the Asia Pacific region and Europe, but with sizeable Middle Eastern and African communities.

Diasporas in Australia maintain strong links and investment in their countries of origin in a variety of ways.

Diasporas have been actively engaged in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian responses in their respective countries of origin, and around the world, for many years. Diaspora communities and their organisations in Australia are actively involved in projects ranging from peacebuilding, advocacy, humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction projects. They build schools and hospitals, improve local economies through remittances and investment, raise money for disaster relief and promote respect for human rights.

In 2015, over \$5.8 billion in remittances were sent from Australia<sup>2</sup>. Comparatively, the Australian Government spent slightly more than \$5 billion in aid funding during the 2014-2015 period<sup>3</sup>.

Diasporas are increasingly recognised internationally as key to the future of effective engagement with developing and conflict-afflicted countries, as they represent a natural bridge between their countries of origin and settlement, between the global north and south.

Diasporas are key strategic actors in Australia's foreign policy for their value add in the following areas:

1. They can bring in-depth first-hand knowledge, based on their intimate political, economic,

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *2011 Census reveals one in four Australians is born overseas*. June 2012. <http://abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/CO-59> last accessed 23/2/17.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank Data. Personal Remittances, Paid (current US\$) 1970-2015. [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BM.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?year\\_high\\_desc=true](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BM.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?year_high_desc=true) last accessed 21/2/17.

<sup>3</sup> DFAT. *2015-16 Development Assistance Budget Summary Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Update*. February 2016. <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/corporate/portfolio-budget-statements/Documents/2015-16-development-assistance-budget-summary-feb16.pdf> last accessed 21/2/17.

cultural and social understandings of their countries of origin. This knowledge can be applied to Australia's policy and programming.

2. Diasporas are significant contributors to the economies of developing countries and fragile states through remittances. In 2015, the global value of remittances to developing countries was \$431.6 billion<sup>4</sup>, which is more than three times overseas development assistance of \$131.6 billion<sup>5</sup>. Individual remittances contribute to household economies - particularly critical in emergency contexts - while collective remittances are often mobilised from the community for broader social purposes.
3. Diasporas are development and humanitarian actors in their own right, implementing a range of projects and initiatives that benefit their countries of origin. Their complementary approaches offer capacity to innovate in Australia's development assistance program. See Section 1.2 below.
4. Diasporas form transnational networks that link their communities here in Australia with organisations, businesses and communities in their countries of origin, in countries of transit and also in other countries of settlement. Their use of communications technology makes diaspora initiatives agile and responsive and enhances knowledge and information transfer.
5. Diasporas also have capacity to influence attitudes both in Australia and countries of origin. They can put a human face to global issues, which can help the Australian public better understand Australia's relationship with the rest of the world. As Australian citizens, they are also able to transmit the values associated with our liberal democracy, such as respect for rule of law, inter-ethnic harmony and gender equality, and promote transparency and accountability in governance and business. This public diplomacy capability can be enhanced in future foreign policy directions.

## Diasporas in Action Conference

In September 2016, the first-ever Australian conference focusing on the role and contribution of diaspora communities in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian response was hosted by the DLN and sponsored by DFAT. The *Diasporas in Action: working together for peace, development and humanitarian response* conference was attended by over 160 people from diaspora communities, government, international NGOs, universities and others.

Featuring international and Australian practice and research, it created a foundational learning space for participants to explore and discuss the current landscape of diaspora projects, and opportunities for collaborations and actions between multiple stakeholders. It provided a unique opportunity for researchers, practitioners, students, policy makers, and the broader civil society to share insights, good practice and lessons learned.

The conference demonstrated a very significant level of diaspora activity in Australia and a strong interest from other sectors in engaging with diasporas. It showed that diasporas have high

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<sup>4</sup> World Bank. *Remittances to Developing Countries Edge Up Slightly in 2015*. April 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/04/13/remittances-to-developing-countries-edge-up-slightly-in-2015> last accessed 20/2/17.

<sup>5</sup> OECD. *Development aid rises again in 2015, spending on refugees doubles*. April 2016. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/development-aid-rises-again-in-2015-spending-on-refugees-doubles.htm> last accessed 20/2/17.

responsiveness, flexibility, contextual knowledge, people-to-people links and empathy that enable them to build bridges across border and cultures.

A full report on Conference outcomes can be found at: [http://www.diasporasinaction.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OutcomesDoc\\_DIAconf2016.pdf](http://www.diasporasinaction.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OutcomesDoc_DIAconf2016.pdf)

Diasporas represent an untapped resource for Australia's foreign policy directions, which can be harnessed by supporting diaspora initiatives and by building capacity within government, NGOs, universities and the private sector to better engage with Australia's diaspora communities.

## Australian Foreign Policy

### 1. Australia's Interests and Values

#### 1.1 Values

In a world experiencing rising isolationism, nationalism and political polarisation, Australia's foreign policy should be underpinned by the values of our liberal democracy – particularly respect for international norms and standards, tolerance and a fair go for all, regardless of gender, socio-economic levels or ethnicity.

Australia is one of the most successfully multicultural societies in the world. Migrants and refugees have built Australia's economy and take their place among our country's political, business, social and scientific leaders and thinkers. Australia's experience of multiculturalism is an asset that can and should be harnessed in our relationship with the world.

Through their people to people ties, diasporas are ambassadors for Australian values and are bridge builders between Australia, their countries of origin and with counterparts settled in other countries around the world.

As Australian citizens, diaspora communities are deeply invested in Australia's foreign policy directions, particularly in relation to how Australia engages with their countries and regions of origin.

**Recommendation:** Australia's diaspora communities should be recognised as key stakeholders in Australia's foreign policy architecture.

**Recommendation:** Australia's foreign policy and immigration policy should be informed by the successes of our multicultural society and reinforce the values of diversity and inclusion in response to global political trends of division and exclusion.

#### 1.2 The international development assistance program

Australian development assistance builds relationships between Australia and the rest of the world and helps address inequalities within societies that contribute to instability. Australia's international development program contributes to security and prosperity in our country and our region, making it a critical part of Australia's foreign policy architecture.

Diasporas are already key stakeholders in Australia's international development assistance program, as development actors in their own right and as supporters of Australia's development assistance in their countries of origin. Diasporas in Australia engage in their countries of origin, by

- setting up schools, training teachers and scientists, and running health units.
- sending emergency relief after natural disasters
- investing in new businesses and foster trade links
- sending remittances
- contributing to knowledge transfer
- campaigning for human rights and holding governments to account
- advocating to the Australian government and the United Nations on issues of importance
- helping people flee danger, navigate life in transitional refugee situations in third countries, and settle in Australia
- contributing to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and
- helping the Australian public better understand the human impact of insecurity and poverty.

**Recommendation:** That Australia's development assistance program is identified as a key pillar of Australia's Foreign Policy architecture and Australia's diaspora communities are deliberately and explicitly included within this.

## 2. Regions of Importance to Australia

In determining countries of strategic interest for Australia, consideration should be given to the countries that reflect the origins and connections of our population and with which millions of Australians maintain close ties and interests.

### 2.1 Africa

As the Australian aid budget has contracted through recent years, Australia has increasingly diverted its attention and influence away from the African continent to a narrower focus on the Pacific. While there are clear needs and opportunities for Australian engagement in the Asia Pacific region, this focus should not come at the extent of sustained diplomatic, aid and trade engagement with countries in Africa.

The African continent shows high rates of economic growth and will account for more than half the world population growth by 2050. At the same time Africa has the most countries in the world with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty. In this context, Australia is home to an increasingly influential African diaspora.

With Australians giving over \$130 million in community funding to humanitarian appeals and development programs across the African continent,<sup>6</sup> and the potential economic opportunities from sustained engagement in the region's emerging economies, Australia must reengage in the

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<sup>6</sup> ACFID. *Australian Development NGOs: Unified, Growing, Achieving: ACFID Annual Statistical Survey Report*. February 2016. pg 11.

<https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/ACFID%20Annual%20Statistical%20Survey%20Report%20February%202016.pdf>  
last accessed 23/2/17.

region, acknowledging the clear mutual benefits from doing so. The diaspora can play a critical role in brokering these connections. The key opportunities for deeper partnership include:

**Remittances:** Remittances sent by diasporas represent important supports to family income and to economic growth. According to an Oxfam report, Somali-Australians send approximately \$33.5m to Somalia each year — more than double the AU \$15 million in Australian humanitarian assistance to Somalia in 2014.<sup>7</sup> Much of these remittances had traditionally flowed through Money Transfer Operators (MTOs), however the perceived high risks of money laundering and potential links to terrorism led to Australian banks adopting an across-the-board de-risking approach which saw the closure of all MTO accounts in 2015. This resulted in a significant obstacle to remittance sending, which has particularly affected Somalia, with its undeveloped banking system.

We understand that in some cases MTOs have been able to maintain funds transfers since 2015, however it is of concern that there is still no long-term solution agreed between Australian banks, MTOs and the Australian Government to ensure that safe and sustainable remittances can continue to flow uninterrupted to communities in need.

**Sustainable development:** Australia should rebuild its partnerships for sustainable development through a return to a strong bilateral aid program in the region. Stability and prosperity in the region will be enhanced by improving the status of women, increasing education levels and subsequent participation in the workforce, and strengthening of civil society. There exist opportunities to add value in areas of Australia's expertise such as water resource management, dryland farming and increasing agricultural productivity. African diasporas in Australia actively contribute to sustainable development through a range of projects.

**Trade and investment:** Australian investment in Africa is estimated to be worth around \$30 billion, with more than 200 ASX-listed companies operating more than 700 projects in 35 countries. The diaspora business community explores trade opportunities and invests in countries of origin.

**Security and peacekeeping:** Australia and African countries share security challenges, including terrorism and the impact of climate change, among others. We also have a shared interest in promoting the global rule of law and enhancing stability through peacekeeping and strengthening the resilience of societies.

**Recommendation:** That Australia reengages with Africa, particularly Eastern and Southern Africa, by:

- Supporting diaspora initiatives in areas including trade and job creation, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian response.
- Reinvesting in bilateral aid to Africa.

## 2.2 Pacific

To add to Australia's already well-understood interests in the Pacific, it should be noted that

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org.au/2015/10/new-assessment-confirms-major-drop-in-remittances-to-somalia/>

Australia is home to over 150,000<sup>8</sup> people of Pacific origin, with significant populations from Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. This number had grown 34% between 2006 and 2011<sup>9</sup>. These diaspora populations make important contributions to their countries of origin.

Whether as Australian citizens or temporary workers, Pacific diasporas send remittances which are a vital source of income for Pacific Island states. Currently up to 20% of GNI of many Pacific nation states comes from remittances from the diaspora.<sup>10</sup> However the cost of sending remittances from Australia is 9.2%, well above the world average of 7.5%. The cost of sending remittances to the Pacific is even higher again at 11.5%.<sup>11</sup> Lowering the costs of remittance transfer to the Pacific would have a positive impact on Pacific economies.

Pacific diasporas in Australia also play an important role in disaster response. As an example, funds raised by the Fijian diaspora raised in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston (and channelled through the Fijian High Commission in Canberra) contributed to the Fijian government's emergency response.

## 2.3 Asia

Australia has significant Asian diaspora populations with capacity to assist Australia's diplomatic and development assistance objectives.

- Sri Lanka: Australia is home more than 86,000<sup>12</sup> people of Sri Lankan birth, many of whom are business and community leaders. They are active in a range of initiatives including business establishment, peacebuilding, development and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Afghanistan: Afghan diaspora organisations (such as the Australian Afghan Development Organisation) continue to operate in Afghanistan with access to vulnerable populations despite significant instability. Hazara diaspora organisations are active in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The work of these organisations increases in significance as the presence of international organisations decreases.
- Myanmar/Burma: The rapidly changing context in Myanmar/Burma may offer opportunities for voluntary return of some refugee diaspora populations. These same communities can and should be consulted about conditions for safe return.

## 3. Responding to Global Challenges

Diaspora communities in Australia are expressing concerns and a desire to address the following issues.

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<sup>8</sup> ABS 2011 Census Data in DevPolicy Blog: From the Development Policy Centre. *Pacific Islanders in Australia: where are the Melanesians?* August 2014. <http://devpolicy.org/pacific-islanders-in-australia-where-are-the-melanesians-20140828/> last accessed 19/2/2017.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* (DevPolicy).

<sup>10</sup> World Bank Data. Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) 1977-2015.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS>

<sup>11</sup> DevPolicy Blog: From the Development Policy Centre. *The persistently high cost of Pacific remittances.* November 2015.

<http://devpolicy.org/the-persistently-high-cost-of-pacific-remittances-20151117/> last accessed 19/2/2017.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship. *Community Information Summary: Sri Lanka born.* [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2014/srilanka.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/srilanka.pdf) last accessed 22/2/17.

### 3.1 Conflict-induced Migration

Currently there are more than 21.3 million<sup>13</sup> refugees fleeing conflicts and persecution in the world. In addition to the humanitarian imperative to assist people in need, mass migration flows impact on Australia's own stability.

**Recommendation:** Australia's foreign policy should respond to this challenge in three parts:

1. By addressing root causes of conflict and supporting peacekeeping measures to reduce the need of people to flee.
2. Through application of a humane refugee policy that is consistent with international refugee law and builds on Australia's past successes in welcoming refugees after World War II and the Vietnam War.
3. By contributing to international solutions to forced displacement and by making a significant commitment to the Global Compact process.

Refugee diasporas in Australia already provide information and advice to asylum seekers as well as significant assistance in resettlement of new arrivals. The Syrian community is currently very active in preparing for the arrival of humanitarian entrants and in helping them navigate Australian society. The Melbourne-based Syrian Community/Humanitarian Community Forum, for example, links NGOs and service providers with the Syrian diaspora to coordinate settlement support in Australia.

### 3.2 Climate

One of the greatest threats to human security and prosperity in our region is the increasing impact of climate change and climate related events.

A 2016 World Bank report highlighted the terrible consequences of the connection between extreme weather and extreme poverty, resulting in US\$520 billion in consumption losses and pushing more than 26 million people into poverty every year.<sup>14</sup>

For our neighbours in the Pacific, rising temperatures that impact on fish stocks and livelihood generation are placing increasing pressure on communities. Climate-induced forced migration is a very real possibility that should be taken into account in Australia's foreign policy.

In Africa, climate change will have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities where extreme weather conditions intersect with conflict and instability.

Pacific and African diasporas respond to weather-related disasters through coordinated fundraising for emergency relief and also through remittances that boost household resilience. The impact of this work can be amplified through initiatives that facilitate remittance sending or which assist diasporas to coordinate fundraising efforts.

### 3.3 Poverty and Increasing Inequality

While overall global poverty is reducing, inequality is on the rise. In 2016, the 62 richest people in

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR. *Figures at a Glance*. June 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/figures-at-a-glance.html> last accessed 22/2/17.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank. *Breaking the Link between Extreme Weather and Extreme Poverty*. November 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/11/14/breaking-the-link-between-extreme-weather-and-extreme-poverty> last accessed 24/2/17.

the world owned the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world (3.6 billion people).<sup>15</sup> By 2017, this number has shrunk to just 8 men.<sup>16</sup>

In 2012 The World Economic Forum (WEF) asserted that rapidly entrenched inequality was the risk most likely to manifest in the next ten years.<sup>17</sup> The IMF has highlighted that persistent and growing inequality is also bad for economic growth. They found that increasing the incomes of the bottom 20 per cent led to higher growth, while increases for those in the top 20 per cent led to lower growth outcomes<sup>18</sup>.

International development assistance is particularly effective at targeting inequality as programs are focussed on people living in extreme poverty and conditions of marginalisation.

As complementary (but largely invisible) actors in the development/humanitarian space, diasporas are able to target inequality by identifying need in areas that lie outside the reach of international agencies. Due to their people to people ties and intimate contextual knowledge they often have privileged access vulnerable populations.

### 3.4 Rising nationalism, isolationism and extremism

Australia's foreign policy should continue to engage with the world and push against the rising politics of nationalism and extremism.

The WEF 2012 report identifies protectionism, nationalism and populism as factors that compound inequality and which could prompt a rapid downward economic spiral.<sup>19</sup> Increases in public support for grievance-parties and isolationist policies both internationally and in and Australia pose a significant threat to economic prosperity.

Diasporas are natural connectors that have the capacity to encourage globalism and transnational connections.

**Recommendation:** As the internationally agreed framework for achieving sustainable peace and prosperity in the world, the Sustainable Development Goals should be placed at the front and centre of Australia's Foreign policy. Working with diasporas is a key way of realising the focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration that is the focus of Goal 17 of the SDGs.

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<sup>15</sup> Oxfam. *62 people own same as half the world*. January 2016. <https://www.oxfam.org.au/media/2016/01/62-people-own-same-as-half-the-world-oxfam/> last accessed 24/2/17.

<sup>16</sup> Oxfam. *Briefing Paper: An economy for the 99%*. January 2017. [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf) last accessed 24/2/17.

<sup>17</sup> World Economic Forum. *Insight Report: Global Risk: Seventh Edition*. 2012. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GlobalRisks\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalRisks_Report_2012.pdf) last accessed 24/2/17.

<sup>18</sup> World Bank data in DFAT *Development for All 2015-2020 Report*. May 2015. p 6. <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/development-for-all-2015-2020.aspx> last accessed 23/2/17.

<sup>19</sup> World Economic Forum. *Insight Report: Global Risk: Seventh Edition*. 2012. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GlobalRisks\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalRisks_Report_2012.pdf) last accessed 24/2/17.

## 4. Supporting a More Prosperous, Peaceful and Stable Region

Australian Foreign Policy can leverage the advantages of its diaspora communities to support a more prosperous, peaceful and stable region. Diaspora communities can particularly contribute in the following areas:

### 4.1 Development, peace and humanitarian response

The Diasporas in Action conference highlighted the role that diasporas are playing as key actors in development, peace and humanitarian relief and fostered discussion of ways in which this collaboration can be optimised. It was recognised that diaspora communities have been working in these areas for many years but their contributions have been largely invisible to traditional actors in Australia.

Diaspora members and their community organisations implement highly responsive and culturally appropriate programs, informed by their intimate knowledge of people and place. They often have access to parts of affected countries inaccessible to official and non-government relief efforts.

There is an underlying logic to enhancing the engagement of diaspora communities in development and relief efforts. It is cost-effective, is emblematic of an innovative approach and is in line with the global localisation agenda.

### 4.2 Remittances

The developmental impact of remittances receives too little attention, especially given their level (as noted above in the Context section). Remittance flows from Australia represent an investment in African, Asian and Pacific economies that not only support families (particularly significant during humanitarian crises), but also assist in establishing businesses.

### 4.3 Trade and investment

Diasporas recognise the vital role of trade, resource extraction and investment in their countries of origin, and the need for development and peace as preconditions for sustainable and equitable economic development. They apply their understanding of contexts and processes in both Australia and their countries of origin to forge business links and investments. Among the African diaspora alone there exists a range of business councils and chambers of commerce that seek to build trade and investment links between the two continents.

### 4.4 Knowledge and networks

Diasporas represent a valuable source of information and knowledge about their countries of origin as many maintain strong links with civil society organisations, businesses and governments in these countries. In situations of humanitarian crises, they have up-to-date contextual information sourced via their personal contacts.

They are also highly motivated to raise public awareness about the humanitarian issues in their countries of origin, and can put a “human face” to the crises that resonates with the Australian public.

## 5. Building Capabilities and Assets

Diaspora communities can add significant value to Australia's programs and strategic interests. However as this field is still in its infancy in Australia, an investment is needed to leverage existing capabilities and realise this largely untapped potential. This can be achieved through a two-pronged approach by:

- building government, NGO, university and private sector capability to engage with diasporas, and
- supporting and resourcing diaspora initiatives.

The role of diasporas in development, peacebuilding and humanitarian response is only beginning to be examined in Australia. There is an urgent need for research, knowledge sharing and exploratory programming (particularly looking at overseas good practice) for Australia to understand how diasporas operate and how their value add can be enhanced. This approach should be prepared to accept some calculated risks and pilot innovative programs that engage with diasporas through an assets-based approach.

The majority of diaspora organisations are largely volunteer run and poorly resourced as they have very limited access to funding for international programs. In many cases, the smaller agencies also seek capacity building for their organisations to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of their programs. **The single biggest factor that would enhance diaspora contributions in this space would be the availability of funding streams coupled with capacity building support if required.**

### Recommendations:

The Australian government can harness diaspora knowledge, capabilities and networks to enhance Australia's foreign policy objectives by:

- 1. Building government, NGO, university and private sector capability to engage with diasporas.**
  - Formal acknowledgement of the current and potential role of diaspora communities in Australia's development cooperation and relief programs, as well as in broader international relations.
  - Building an evidence base in Australia for diaspora interests and activities, demonstrating alignment with foreign policy objectives.
  - Lessons learned from the increasing wealth of experience of other governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies in engaging with diaspora communities and their organisations.
  - Creation of expectations within DFAT country desks that they engage with diaspora communities and their organisations in the development of their programs.
  - Equipping country desks and other international relations areas of DFAT (such as the Australian Mission to the UN) to effectively engage with diaspora communities and their organisations. This could be through the creation of a Diaspora Unit.
- 2. Supporting and resourcing diaspora initiatives and amplifying diaspora capabilities**
  - Establishing a program that resources and supports diaspora-led initiatives in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian response. Existing programs by other donor governments

- provide good practice examples.
- Facilitating a more favourable remittance regulatory environment that allows low-cost, safe and sustainable remittance transfer, particularly to Pacific nations and to fragile states such as Somalia.
  - Establish a mechanism for engagement with diaspora communities in policy discussions.
  - Engage with diaspora business councils to enhance opportunities for trade, investment and job creation.
  - Establishment of diaspora volunteering programs, particularly professional short-term knowledge transfer.
  - Engagement with diaspora communities and their organisations in cross-cultural training for pre-departure briefings of development and humanitarian workers (NGO and private sector), post staff and defence personnel.
  - Facilitation of joint programming between diaspora communities and their organisations and non-government Australian development and relief organisations.
  - Support for diaspora/University/NGO research partnerships, building an evidence base for future programming of diaspora-led initiatives.

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