



Australia's International Development Contractors Community

Clear coherent COVID plan for the region

The Australian Government's just-released COVID-19 international development strategy is a strong and clear statement of shared destiny with our immediate neighbours.

We welcome the plan's focus on the Pacific, Timor Leste and Indonesia. As we grapple with the full impacts of the crisis, IDCC urges Australia to extend cooperation throughout South East Asia to safeguard Australian health security and economic interests. A stable region is central to Australian security.

We note the sobering facts presented in the statement that world hunger may double as a result of COVID-19 and that 75,000 workers in Fiji's tourist and hospitality industries may lose their jobs.

The government's *Partnerships for Recovery* strategy foreshadows a well-founded and coherent Australian response that incorporates many of the principles the International Development Contractors Community had urged the government to adopt.

These principles include responding to immediate health needs, but also anticipating economic impacts yet to be fully felt; focusing on the vulnerable at every stage, especially women and girls; and innovating to achieve better results.

COVID19 is fast-forwarding the future. Our members are well placed to support the statement's intent to swing our development cooperation more firmly behind local efforts and in the process build stronger capacity - and stronger relations.

The plan sets a new benchmark for whole of government coordination to support sustainable development in the region. Its emphases on clear and simple plans covering all Australian government efforts, transparency and accountability are very welcome.

The Government should be particularly commended for its 'humanitarian corridor' that has enabled food, medicine and essential freight to be supplied to the region while managing quarantine issues. Likewise, visa changes allowing Pacific workers to remain in Australia give substance to our policy of enhanced relations.

The International Development Contractors Community welcomes the opportunity to work with the government to streamline and speed up operations and develop new forms of cooperation. Our members are committed to delivering value for money.

Already the Australian government, with its partners, has repurposed close to \$300m of existing activities. Our members have worked tirelessly with the Australian Government to ensure health personnel and supplies are available and essential services are maintained. While the repurposing has allowed a speedy, effective initial response we urge the government not to move funds away from activities that contribute to the overall stability and well-being of our region.

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