

NZADDs Comments on Draft NZ Aid Programme Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2018/2019

NZADDs is a group of people working together to expand analysis, understanding and open discussion of New Zealand’s aid and development work. NZADDs values intellectual independence and does not accept any funding or other support that will undermine this. We have significant experience and knowledge of international development work. Our vision is for New Zealand aid and development work to make a significant contribution to eliminate poverty and suffering, and achieve social justice, prosperity and well-being for all people.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft NZ Aid Programme Strategic Plan. We acknowledge the hard work that has gone into creating the Draft Strategic Plan. Our comments are as follows.

Things we are pleased to see:	Things we are concerned about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing efforts to focus and concentrate NZ ODA, such as targeting 75% of ODA towards two or three priorities in bilateral country engagements. • Continued focus on the Pacific, with the recognition that more populous Pacific countries require greater NZ ODA. • NZ taking a global advocacy role on behalf of Pacific Island and small islandstate development challenges. • Recognition that investing in staff capability is important to manage a modern, sophisticated ODA programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recognition that economic growth is not an end in itself, but a means to achieving sustainable and inclusive development. • Insufficient attention to poverty and to how to best distribute the benefits of economic growth that the ‘market-led approach’ is supposed to bring. • The ongoing and deepening role New Zealand’s ‘strategic’ and commercial interests play in ODA decisions. • Insufficient attention to gender: there is no mention of gender in the 12 investment priorities and it is not clear how gender equality will be integrated into initiatives. • Lack of evidence that country context is seriously considered. It is widely accepted that for successful development, country context is the dominant consideration. For example, the Plan asserts that “we will replicate development approaches that work well in one country in others” (p.6). This might be a good idea in some situations, but it is not a rule. Development approaches can not simply be ‘replicated’.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted investment in research on Pacific development issues. • Continued emphasis on renewable energy in the Pacific. • Recognition of the potential for agriculture to increase incomes and food security, particularly for the rural poor. • Engagement in Africa. • Emphasis on increasing engagement with the least developed ASEAN countries, such as Myanmar. • Health and education as core priorities for the Pacific. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to this, the underlying assumption that development occurs by applying “world class New Zealand expertise and knowledge” in technical areas, to developing countries. Technical expertise is often necessary, but does not automatically produce successful development work. • No evidence NZ is addressing the latest thinking about ODA and donor country development strategies, eg: policy coherence for development; differentiated approaches to poverty reduction in middle-income countries, and fragile and conflict-affected countries; global public goods; and climate change financing. • No mention of how NZ will use its seat on the Security Council to address development issues and ameliorate humanitarian crises. • It is not clear where the funds will come from for increased ODA to ASEAN and Pacific countries with larger populations, including Fiji. • Decreased emphasis on multilaterals, taking NZ below the DAC average for multilateral investment, damaging NZ’s ability to engage in policy dialogue. • Most of the world’s poor live in Africa’s fragile states. Yet, only an estimated 2% of NZ ODA went to Africa and the proposed increase to 3.5% remains less than the unrealised 4% proposed for 2014-2015, while more than half goes to a few stable, middle-high HDI countries. NZ ODA to Africa is ad hoc, with no strategy or rationale.
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Our comments are based on the NZADDs principles, as follows.

- Transparency and accountability are central to fair and effective New Zealand aid and development work.
- Research, critical analysis and evidence-based action are central to effective and efficient development work.
- The elimination of poverty and suffering, and the expansion of people’s opportunities and rights, is sufficient justification for NZ’s international aid and development work.
- Effective and efficient action is founded on professionally informed decisions, using the latest evidence, carefully thought through, and subject to wide and critical consultation.