

# Australian aid for women: where, what and how well?



[terence.wood@anu.edu.au](mailto:terence.wood@anu.edu.au)

## **Australian aid has had a strong gender emphasis for nearly two decades**

*“Australia’s aid program is about helping the people of our region lift themselves out of poverty. Gender equality is fundamental to achieving this....”* Alexander Downer

*“In the Pacific region, investments in women bring dividends to the entire region, including Australia, in terms of stability, prosperity and productivity.”* Julia Gillard

*“Promoting gender equality is smart economics, and the right thing to do...”* Julie Bishop.

*“I am also proud that as a partner, Australia will bring its priorities to the table by including gender equality, climate change and disability equity as core issues for action.”* Pat Conroy

## But what does this mean in practice?

Very hard to get a sense of the overarching big picture. Hard because data are poor.



**But good news is that Australian data have gotten better in recent years:**

My research takes advantage of this and focuses on two questions:

What types of work is Australian aid for women's empowerment more likely to be focused on, and where is it more likely to go?

What traits or features of Australian aid projects are associated with better gender outcomes in those projects?

Brief talk: read discussion paper and blog posts.

<https://devpolicy.org/>

# Terminology...

**Principally gender focused if:** “Gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results.”

**Significantly gender focused if:** “Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.”

**Not gender focused:** self-evident.

**Not relevant:** some aid spending (admin for example) isn't applicable. Excluded from my analysis.

# Focus (2017-2021)



Australian Government  
AusAID

## Gender equality in Australia's aid program – why and how

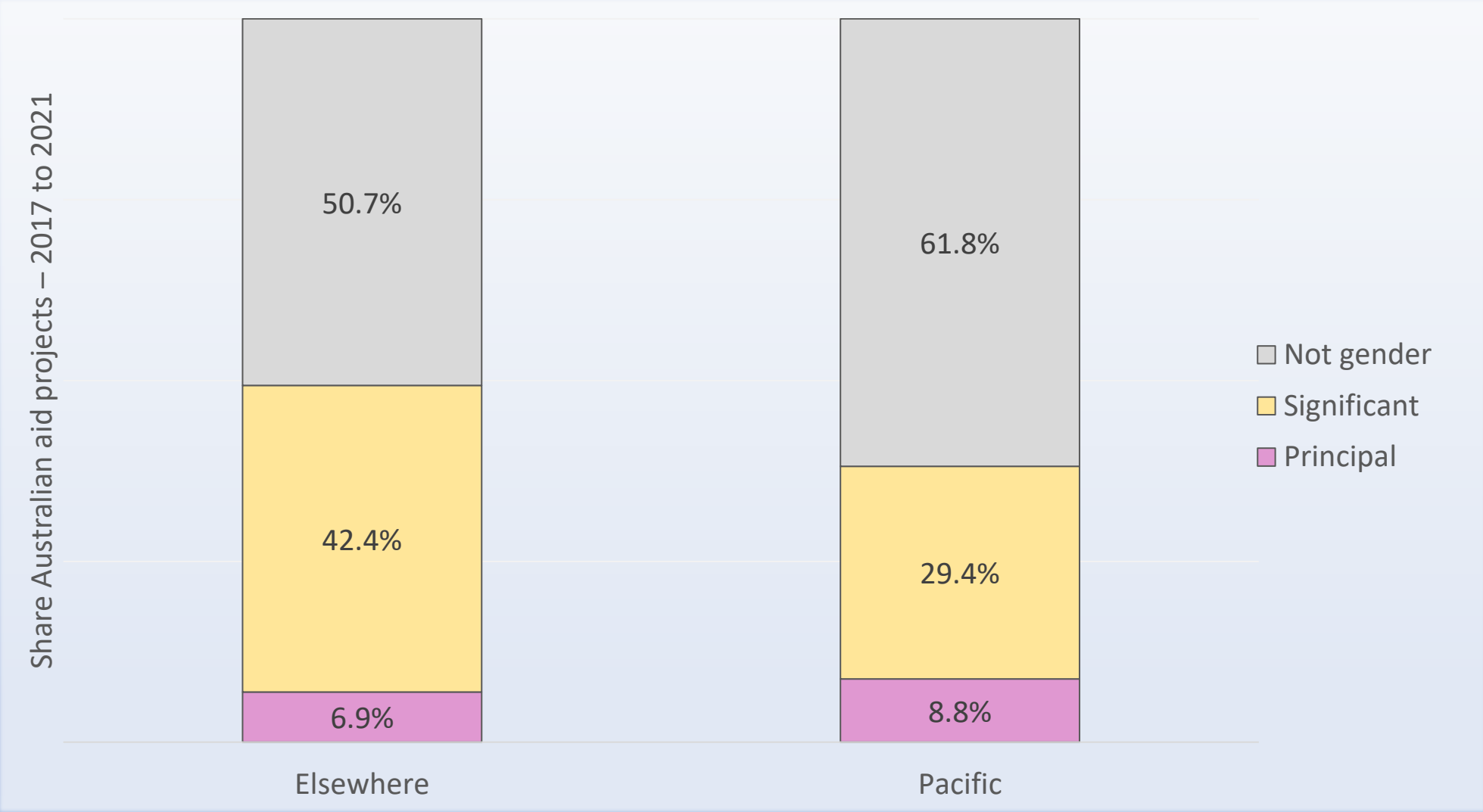
MARCH 2007



[www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)

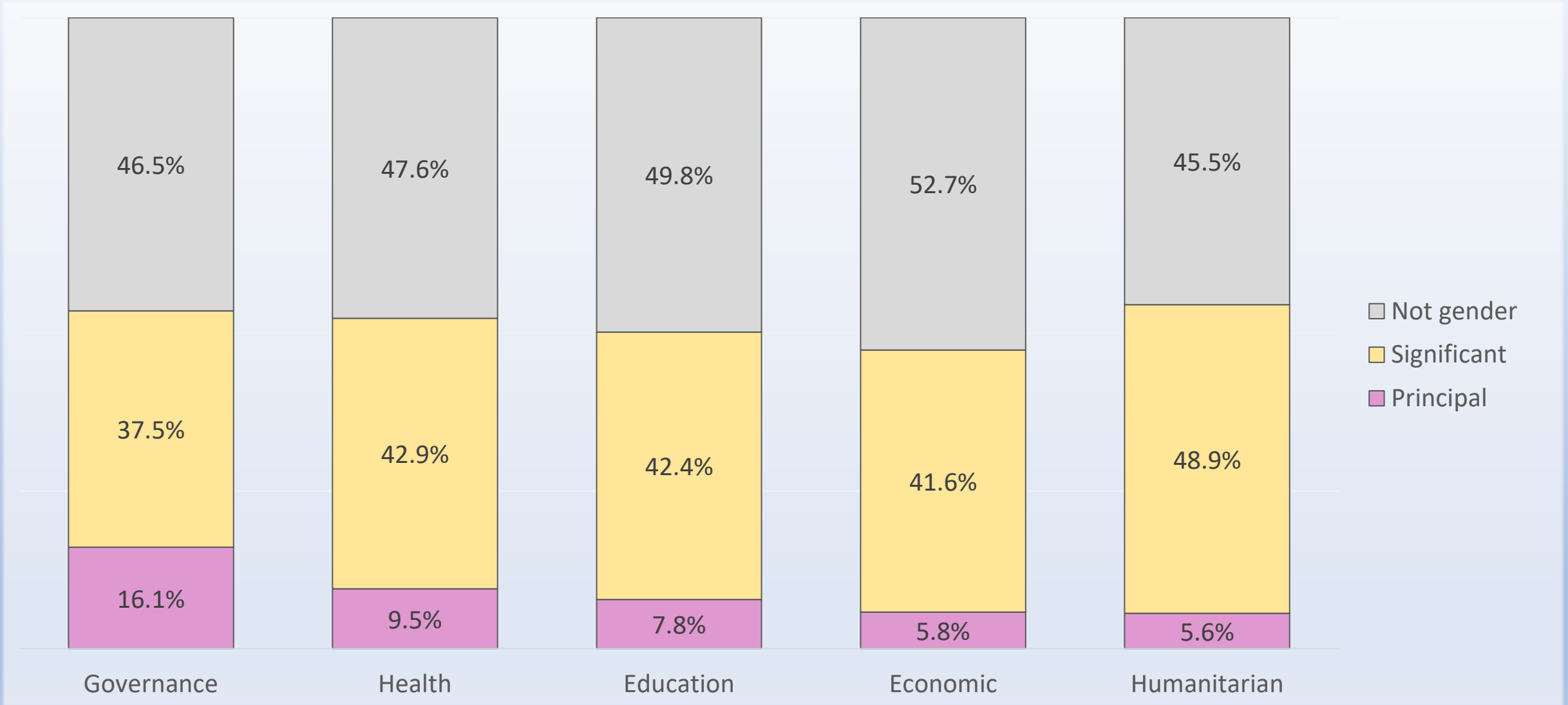


# Projects in the Pacific are less likely to be focused on women...



Driven by significant, not principal.

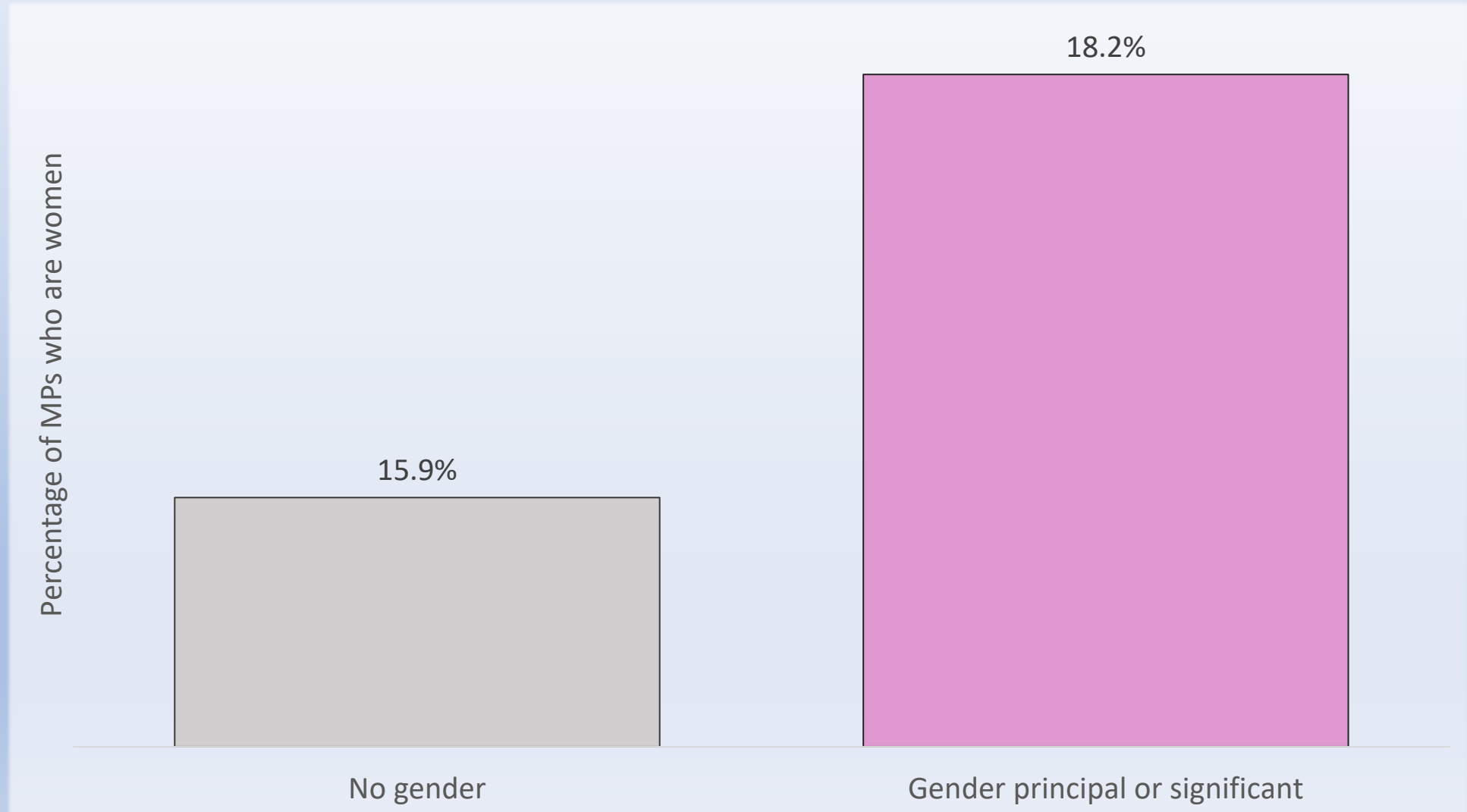
# Gender by sector: governance and humanitarian



Governance largest principal; humanitarian largest significant



# Projects more likely to have gender focus in places where women already more empowered

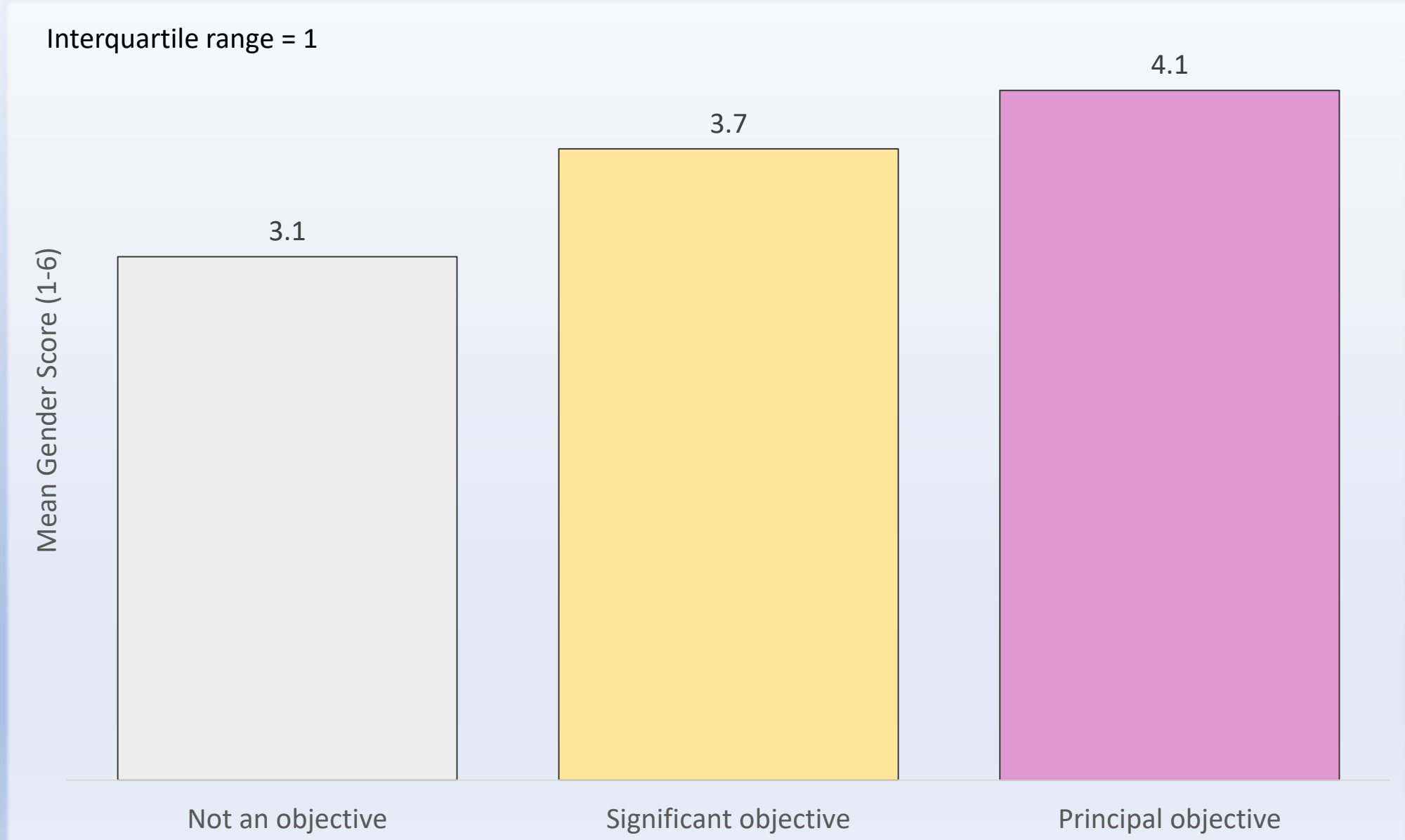


## Performance (2019-2022)

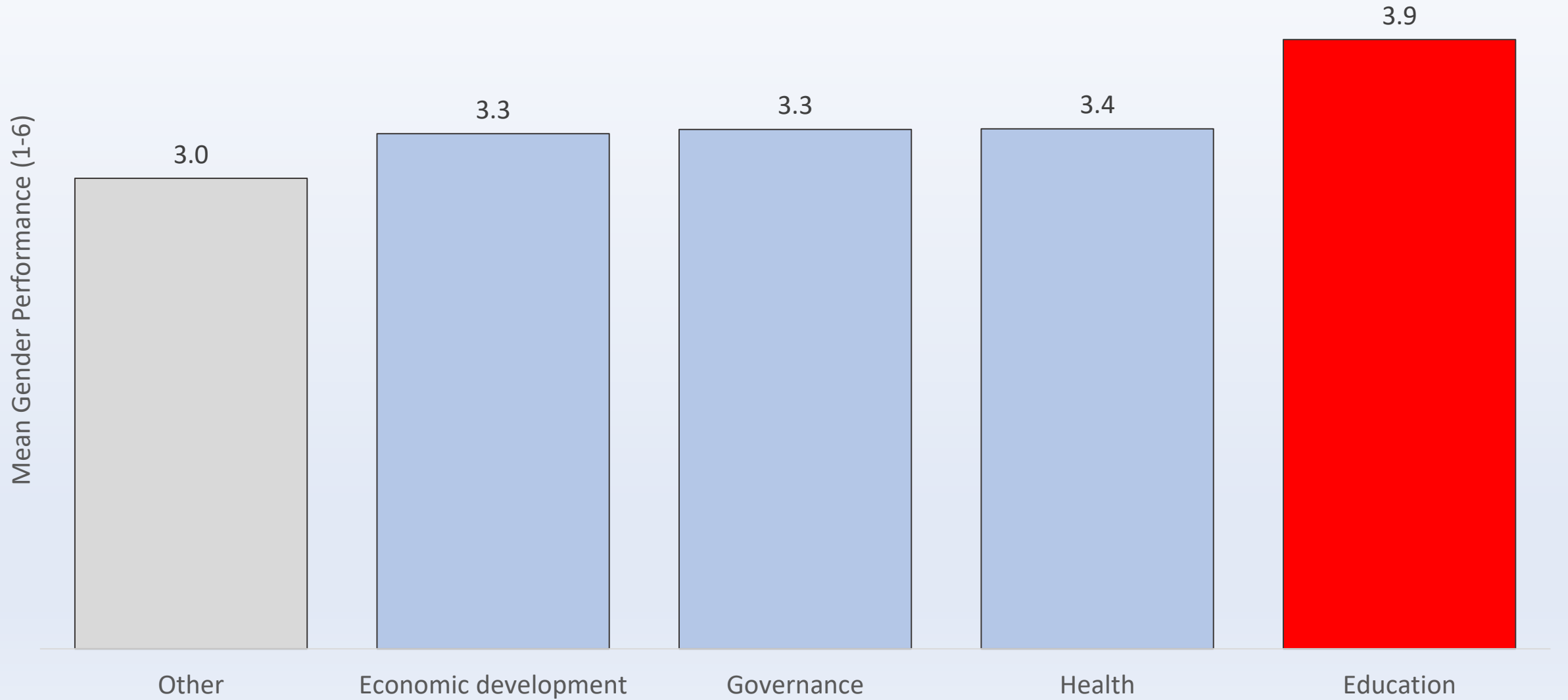


From DFAT's aid project assessments: "Did the investment make a difference to gender equality and empowering women and girls?"

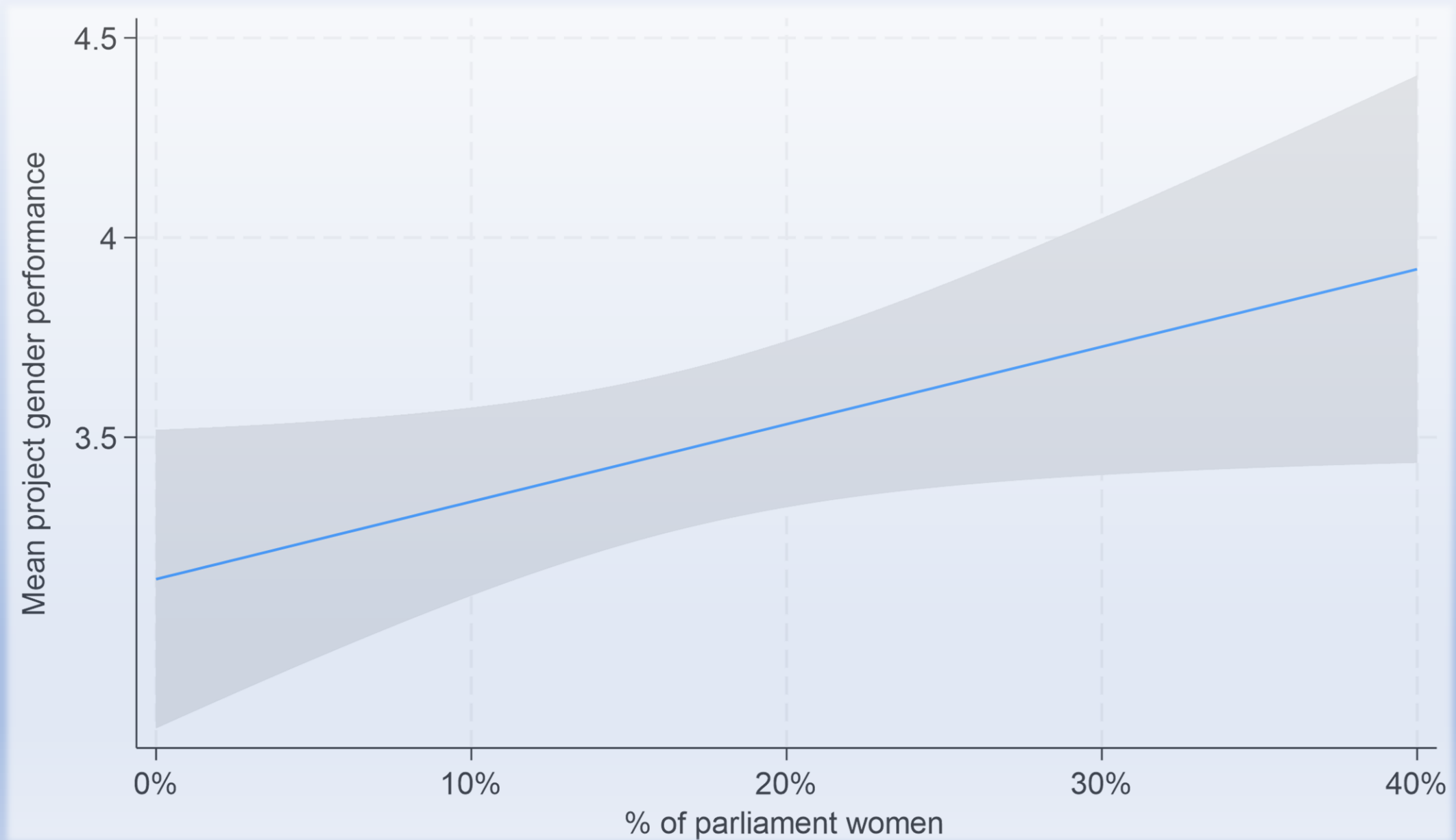
# Projects with a women's empowerment focus have better gender outcomes...



# Performance by sector



# Projects perform better in countries where women's empowerment is higher



## To conclude...

### **One clear finding:**

Projects with a specific gender focus deliver better gender outcomes (as measured).

### **And two big questions:**

Why is the gender focus (significant category) lower in the Pacific?

Is Australia right to focus more gender aid on countries where women are more empowered? Gender aid does seem to work better in these countries.

# Questions?

[terence.wood@anu.edu.au](mailto:terence.wood@anu.edu.au)

