



2019 AAC panel on women's movements in the Pacific (Credit: Christine Deng/Twitter)

Gender equality is core business for us all

By Lois Knight and Joanne Choe

Addressing gender inequality is core business for the Australian Government's aid program, and it should be core business for all of us. Managing contractors – who deliver 20 per cent of Australia's aid program – have a big role to play.

In our roles at Cardno, we are lucky enough to work with the [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Support Unit](#) and to be part of the Australian Government's biggest ever commitment to gender equality.

However, there is so much more we can do as development practitioners, and more that Cardno can do in the programs we run. We want to share our approach to integrate gender equality in our core business and encourage other implementing partners, including managing contractors, to do the same.

Today we launch our new [gender equality policy](#) which commits us to working through systems and processes and embedding standards and guidance to ensure gender equality is truly and substantially on the agenda.

We commit to doing things better in areas where we have direct influence. Some of these are:

Teams: the first and most obvious place is in our own teams. Looking at issues of gender balance, the training we provide to increase the level of gender awareness, and ensuring we provide checklists and other technical resources to help individuals consider gender in their own work. We will undertake our own gender analysis in countries where we operate to ensure our teams are supported in the right ways and are acutely aware of the gender norms, dynamics and gender equality challenges in the context in which they live and work.

Recruitment: our recruitment strategies will very deliberately put gender equity and diversity at their core. To complement our unconscious bias training, we will aim for gender balanced recruitment and selection panels and candidate shortlists and consider our use of language in vacancy announcements to ensure we are attracting both women and men.

Procurement: we will closely examine the work we do around procuring consultants, design teams and services for sub-contracting to see how we can

apply a gender lens to procurement. We can do more to ensure that women as individuals, members of teams, and as leaders of companies and consortiums, are engaged fully and equally in our procurement processes.

Bids: when we respond to DFAT tenders, we aim to achieve gender balance in the composition of our teams, but also ensure the whole team has a level of awareness and commitment to gender equality. We will apply gender expertise to every bid and put forward teams which comprise of people who understand the gender equality challenges in the country/sector/program at hand, and have ideas, plans and a clear commitment to take these forward.

This is not an exhaustive list, but a clear starting point.

For true change to occur, there must be commitment to gender equality across the whole aid sector. From design and tendering, to how we manage our programs and deliver activities; at every stage we must address our biases, both conscious and unconscious, and step up our efforts to advance gender equality.

Embracing diversity as a [development effectiveness principle](#) and practice will go some way to addressing gender issues in programming and delivery. We are working to understand what it means for our programming to consider the intersections of vulnerability, and to be disability and LGBTQI+ inclusive.

There is much work to be done, including broadening the ownership and responsibility beyond predictable champions. We can't afford gender equality to remain a niche area where gender specialists work on the fringes of the big programs.

Cardno's new policy is part of a long-term process to reflect, learn and work differently to transform gender and power relations through our programs, which will lead to real change.

All implementing partners can and must put women's rights at the centre of all

the programs we manage, or we will miss the enormous opportunity we have to mobilise to achieve gender justice.

About the author/s

Lois Knight

Lois Knight is a Principal at Cardno International Development and Contractor Representative for the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Support Unit.

Joanne Choe

Joanne Choe is Cardno's Regional Manager for the Pacific, supporting initiatives such as the Pacific Women Support Unit, Women's Leadership Initiative and Solomon Islands Resource Facility.