

January 2024 aid news

by Development Policy Centre

31 January 2024



Australian aid

During her recent visit to the Middle East, foreign minister Penny Wong announced an allocation of \$21.5 million in **additional humanitarian assistance** for civilians affected by the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Jordan and **called upon Israel** to facilitate increased access to Gaza for humanitarian aid.

Australia will **“temporarily pause” the disbursement** of \$6 million from this package allocated to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in light of allegations that UNRWA staff may have been involved in the 7 October Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel. UNRWA has stood down the staff that have been identified and the UN is investigating the allegations. The UN Secretary General has **called upon Australia** and other donors to reverse the suspension, citing the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The foreign minister’s visit precedes a busy year of international meetings and events in which Australia’s international development efforts will likely feature, including:

- **PNG Prime Minister James Marape’s address to the Australian Parliament** (Canberra, February);
- **ASEAN-Australia Special Summit** (Melbourne, March);
- **Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting** (Tonga, August);
- **“Summit of the Future”** (UN New York, September);
- **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting** (Samoa, October);
- **COP29 UN climate change conference** (Azerbaijan, November); and
- **G20 Summit** (Brazil, November).

Australia’s global aid will also be in focus in several multilateral processes in 2024, including:

- the replenishment of the Asian Development Bank’s concessional financing arm, the **Asian Development Fund** (Georgia, May);
- efforts at this year’s **World Health Assembly** to improve the sustainability of the

World Health Organization's funding model (Geneva, May-June);

- the launch of the 2026-30 funding replenishment of [Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#), (France, June); and
- the 2025-28 replenishment of the World Bank's concessional financing arm, the [International Development Association](#) (final meeting in Washington DC, December).

The OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) [final aid statistics](#) for 2022 confirm Australia's plummeting aid generosity, with aid-to-GNI falling from 0.22% in 2021 to 0.19%, below that of key allies and partners like the UK (0.51%), Japan (0.39%), Canada (0.37%), the US (0.23%), and New Zealand (0.22%).

Aid from DAC member countries rose to a record US\$211 billion in 2022, boosted by large flows to Ukraine and eligible support for refugees in donor countries. This represented a 17% real increase on 2021 and 0.37% of DAC members' combined GNI. Aid to least-developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa fell.

Australia's Deputy Chief of Army, Major General Cheryl Pearce, [has been appointed](#) as the UN's new deputy military adviser for peacekeeping operations.

Regional and global aid

Nauru's recent decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China has [fuelled speculation](#) about what financial inducements might have been involved and whether a reduction in Australia's funding for the country's Regional Processing Centre may have been a factor.

The Economist reports on [the changing shape](#) of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Southeast Asia.

The World Bank's 2024 global [economic forecast](#) warns that weakening global growth will "leave many developing countries—especially the poorest—stuck in a trap: with paralysing levels of debt and tenuous access to food for nearly one out of every three people."

The UN's 2024 humanitarian overview [estimates that](#) nearly 300 million people around the world will need humanitarian assistance and protection due to conflicts, climate emergencies and other drivers.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [has pledged](#) a record US\$8.6 billion in annual funding in response to falling global health funding for low-income countries.

Recent publications

What is Australian gender equality aid spent on? What brings better outcomes for women? Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper by Terence Wood

A new special issue of the *Development Policy Review* features Pacific perspectives on aid and development.

The Economist looks at new trends in global philanthropy.

Adam Tooze explores Myanmar's "polycrisis"

The International Crisis Group has published its assessment of ten conflicts to watch in 2024.

Disclosures:

Material for this update has been collected by staff of the Development Policy Centre; editorial responsibility lies with Cameron Hill. The Centre's work on Australian aid is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Author/s:

Development Policy Centre

The Development Policy Centre is part of the Crawford School of Public Policy under the College of Law, Governance and Policy at The Australian National University.

Link: <https://devpolicy.org/january-2024-aid-news-20240131/>