

March 2023 aid news

by Development Policy Centre

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Our monthly update of news and analysis on aid and international development, with a focus on Australian aid.

Australian aid

Australia has provided \$4.35 million to date to [assist with Vanuatu's ongoing response](#) to the damage caused by tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin. The government has also deployed HMAS Canberra to ship relief supplies, and aerial surveillance to assist with damage assessments. The twin cyclones, as well as an earthquake, affected almost half the country's population and have raised the [prospect of food shortages](#). Fiji is also [providing personnel and assistance](#) to support the relief effort.

Faith and NGO leaders have launched a renewed push to get the government to [do more to respond to the dire food insecurity situation](#) and famine risks facing tens of millions of people in the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Afghanistan and Syria. New [polling conducted as part of the campaign suggests](#) that a growing majority of Australian voters (60%) support aid to developing countries, up from 52% in 2019 and 57% in 2021.

To mark International Women's Day, Australia's new Ambassador for Gender Equality, Stephanie Copus Campbell, [addressed a UN Security Council open debate](#) on Women, Peace, and Security.

Experts and advocates marked [World Tuberculosis Day](#) with events around Australia and at Parliament House aimed at drawing attention to the 1.6 million deaths caused by TB each year and to show solidarity to the millions of people affected.

DFAT will establish a new \$3.5 million [Inclusion and Equality Fund](#), "Australia's first dedicated fund to support LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations and human rights defenders, international partnerships and networks – helping address social stigma and legal discrimination".

DFAT has released its [Annual Development Evaluation Plan](#) for 2023. Evaluations to be completed/published in 2023 include 19 for the Pacific, 15 for Southeast Asia, three for South and West Asia, two for Africa and the Middle East and eight for global and sectoral programs.

Regional/global aid

A delegation from the China International Development Cooperation Agency visited Solomon Islands and [signed a new MOU with the government](#) to advance cooperation under Beijing's Global Development Initiative.

China and Myanmar have reportedly resumed [preparatory work on a controversial rail project](#) linking China's southwest with Myanmar's Rakhine coast. The project would run through several active conflict zones in Myanmar.

China has provided financing assurances that have facilitated a US\$3 billion [IMF bailout package for Sri Lanka](#). The deal may provide a debt restructuring template for other countries in Asia and Africa where China is a major creditor.

Japan has [pledged US\\$75 billion](#) in public and private development finance to the region to 2030 as part of its new Indo-Pacific strategy.

The US has launched its new 10-year [strategy to prevent conflict and promote stability in Papua New Guinea](#). The strategy aims to “enhance and integrate U.S. diplomacy, development, and security sector engagement in PNG”.

The head of the US Congress' Pacific Islands Caucus, Democrat Ed Case, has expressed [optimism that the US will be able to deliver](#) on the Biden administration's increased aid pledges to the Pacific and on climate change. These pledges are subject to congressional approval, however, and some House Republicans are reportedly [seeking a 45% cut to the foreign aid budget](#).

The EU's development finance institution, the European Investment Bank (EIB), has opened a [new representative office in Fiji](#). The EIB's pipeline of activities in the Pacific includes renewable energy (a hydropower plant project in Fiji), water and sanitation (a project in Timor-Leste) and connectivity (rehabilitation and greening of port infrastructure in PNG and a multipurpose port in Kiribati).

Administrator Samantha Power has launched [USAID's new overarching policy framework](#). The framework establishes three overarching priorities to “drive progress through and beyond [its] programs: first, to confront the greatest challenges of our time; second, to embrace new partnerships; and third, to invest in USAID's enduring effectiveness”.

USAID's new policy framework



Source:

Policy framework: driving progress beyond programs.

In a refresh of its 2021 “integrated review”, the **UK government has updated its development priorities**. It has also strengthened aid management arrangements, with a new second Permanent Secretary within the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) responsible for development programs, and a new FCDO-Treasury governance structure to oversee aid spending.

Separately, the FCDO has also released its **new strategy on international gender equality** to 2030. As well as increasing support for local grassroots organisations, the strategy commits to the UK “becoming a world leading centre for research, evidence and expertise in gender and development”.

The **IMF has reached agreement with Ukraine** on a funding package worth US\$15.6 billion, the first time that the organisation has loaned to a country at war.

Former President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, has been appointed the **head of the New Development Bank** which is principally financed by the “BRICS” countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Despite the US nomination of Ajay Banga as the next head of the World Bank, **civil society groups are still pressing** for shareholders to pursue a merit-based, open and transparent selection process.

The World Bank’s new **Pandemic Fund is reportedly around US\$5.2 billion short** when it comes to the first round of applications it has received from developing countries seeking funding for public health surveillance, laboratory systems and workforce.

International donors announced over US\$826 million in **new pledges to Education Cannot Wait (ECW)**, a UNICEF-managed facility which supports the education of girls and boys living in emergencies and protracted crises. Germany and the UK were the two largest official donors. According to the facility’s website, **Australia has**

not provided funding to ECW since 2019.

Books, reports, articles, podcasts etc.

According to the UN's new [World Water Development Report](#), in 2020 26% of the world's population (2 billion people) did not have access to safely managed drinking water services, and an estimated 46% (3.6 billion) lacked access to safely managed sanitation. On average, 10% of the global population lives in countries with high or critical water stress.

The International Crisis Group has released a new [report on how the Taliban's bans on women](#) in universities and many workplaces have deepened the human rights, humanitarian and development crisis in Afghanistan.

The [Peace Research Institute Oslo](#) and the [Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies](#) explore the ethical "red lines" for humanitarian agencies working in Afghanistan.

ACFID's humanitarian advisor, Natasha Chabbra, discusses global humanitarian challenges and reforms to Australia's approach on the [latest Good Will Hunters-ACFID podcast](#).

And the Statecraftiness podcast explores [the elusive quest for "police reform"](#) despite decades of donor capacity building and training programs in the Pacific.

Disclosures:

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

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