

## What is Australian gender equality aid spent on? What brings better outcomes for women?

Terence Wood

### Abstract

More than 40 per cent of Australian bilateral aid is focused on gender equality. In recent years Australia has more accurately reported which of its aid projects are focused on gender. It has also improved the robustness of its aid performance reporting. This paper takes advantage of these changes and asks the following questions: what types of projects are most likely to be focused on gender equality? And what features of aid projects and recipient countries are associated with better project outcomes for women?

Key findings are that education, health and governance projects are more likely to be focused on gender. Projects in the Pacific are less likely to have a gender focus. Projects are more likely to have a gender focus in countries where women's empowerment is already higher. In terms of outcomes for women, projects with an explicit focus on gender clearly perform better. Education projects also perform better, and there is some evidence that projects in countries where women's empowerment is already higher have better outcomes.

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## **What is Australian gender equality aid spent on? What brings better outcomes for women?**

“Australia’s aid program is about helping the people of our region lift themselves out of poverty. Gender equality is fundamental to achieving this....” Foreign Minister Alexander Downer (Downer, 2007, p. 5)

“In the Pacific region, investments in women bring dividends to the entire region, including Australia, in terms of stability, prosperity and productivity.” Prime Minister Julia Gillard (Gillard, 2012, p. 1)

“Promoting gender equality is smart economics, and the right thing to do – we cannot transform our world unless the place of women within it is transformed. The Australian Government has a steadfast and ongoing commitment to be at the forefront of efforts to promote the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in our Indo-Pacific region.” Foreign Minister Julie Bishop (Bishop, 2016, p. 1)

“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.” Minister for International Development and the Pacific Pat Conroy (Conroy, 2023, p. 4)

“The Australian Government is committed to doing its part to deliver the SDGs – all of them. We recognise that the aspirations we champion in our region – peace, stability, prosperity – can only be achieved if we continue to see progress on gender equality.” Foreign Minister, Penny Wong (Wong, 2023, p. 1)

### **1. Introduction**

Gender equality has been a priority for the Australian aid program for the better part of two decades. Not only has gender equality had support from aid workers, but — as the quotes above illustrate — it has enjoyed considerable political backing, regardless of the ideology of the government of the day. It has been emphasised in white papers, overarching aid policies, and in specific guidelines for aid practice (for examples, see: AusAID, 2006, 2007, 2011; DFAT, 2016, 2022b; DFAT, 2023a). Over a period of time when many other aspects of Australian government aid have changed dramatically, gender has remained an important constant.

Yet this ongoing support for a gender focus has not always been coupled with transparency. It has often been difficult to ascertain in what ways or in what types of countries Australia has spent its gender equality aid. Nor has it been easy to get a sense of what types of aid projects have brought better outcomes for women. In particular, two challenges have made this hard. Both challenges are related to reporting.

The first challenge has stemmed from the fact that for a long time the Australian aid program operated in an environment where there were ambitious gender targets for aid programming, while at the same time rules as to what types of aid could be claimed as having incorporated a focus on gender equality were weak. This led to a situation where some aid projects that had only very tenuous connections to gender equality were recorded as being gender-relevant in Australia's aid reporting to the OECD, which is the sole source of data that can be used to study aid spending at the project level (Wood, 2022). The second issue was that the only comprehensive data on the performance of Australian aid, including the performance of projects in outcomes for women, came from Australian aid workers' self-assessments of projects they managed. There was an obvious risk in this sort of data: that performance would be overstated (Wood et al., 2020). And, indeed, recent research has shown that overly kind estimates of project success have been an issue in non-gender-related aspects of Australian aid performance reporting (Howes et al., 2023).

These have been serious issues, which have, in the past, made it hard to study the gender focus and performance of Australian aid. However, two recent improvements in Australian aid reporting have made available data considerably better than it used to be. The first of these is that in 2016 the OECD released more rigorous, although only voluntary, criteria about what level of focus on gender equality was required before aid could be claimed to be gender related in reporting to the OECD (GENDERNET, 2016). In 2017, Australia adopted these criteria in its reporting, with the result being that Australia's OECD data since 2017 more accurately indicate which projects have a genuine gender focus (Wood, 2022). The second improvement involved the sending of project appraisals for projects that had just concluded to external evaluators tasked with validating the accuracy of Australian aid program staff members' assessments of project performance, including project outcomes for women (the evaluators are also able to request inaccurate appraisals be corrected). Validation contributed to a notable

improvement in the accuracy of appraised project performance data (Howes et al., 2023).

Neither of the changes in Australian aid reporting guarantees that reported data are perfect, but data are now better than they once were.

In this paper I take advantage of these changes to provide the most systematic analysis of Australian aid and women produced to date. I analyse what types of Australian aid work are most likely to have a gender focus, and what types of countries Australian aid projects are most likely to have a gender focus in. I also carefully study traits associated with better reported outcomes for women at the project level.

My key findings are that, when other factors are controlled for, education, health and governance projects are more likely to be strongly focused on gender than projects focused on economic development. Projects in poorer countries are also more likely to have a gender focus, as are projects in countries where Australia has a larger aid presence. Controlling for other variables, projects in the Pacific are less likely to have a gender focus. Controlling for other factors, countries where women's empowerment is higher tend to receive more gender equality aid.

When it comes to Australian aid projects' reported outcomes for women, when other variables are controlled for projects with an explicit gender focus have clearly better outcomes. Education projects also perform better on average. There is also some evidence that projects in countries where women's empowerment is higher have better outcomes too.

From here, this paper proceeds as follows: first I introduce the data used in my analysis, discuss my methodological approach, and outline data challenges. Then I report on my findings before concluding with discussion of what the findings reveal about Australian aid and women.

## **2. Data and methods**

In this paper I focus on two specific questions: which project and country traits are associated with a greater likelihood that projects are focused on gender equality? And which project and country traits are associated with projects that deliver better

outcomes for women and girls? To answer these questions I draw on two different datasets and use two different methods. In this section I describe the data and methods used to answer each question in turn.

## 2.1 Data on the focus of Australian gender equality aid

Every year Australia reports on project spending to the OECD. These data are then made available for download from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System database (CRS).<sup>1</sup> As a resource, the OECD's CRS data are valuable. They are, however, only as good as donor reporting. In Australia's case, reporting is of reasonable quality and reporting issues are unlikely to introduce significant biases into analysis, other than those related to the issue discussed below (Wood et al., 2021).<sup>2</sup>

When donors report on projects to CRS, they report on annual project spends (or, in Australia's case, what appears to be transaction-level data, which can be aggregated up to provide annual project totals). They also report where projects are run. In addition, they report on the sectors, such as health and education, that projects are focused on. Because gender equality can be an important objective in many types of projects — for example, an economic development project might focus on opportunities for women, a health project might focus on women's health — gender is considered a “crosscutting” issue in CRS reporting. As a crosscutting issue, gender is captured by a separate marker in CRS data. This marker denotes whether a particular project:

- Is “principally” focused on gender work.
- Has a “significant” gender component.
- Is not focused on gender.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CRS data are available here: [stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=CRS1](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=CRS1). A specific dataset of gender focused projects is available here: [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV\\_DCD\\_GENDER](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER). The latter dataset may be more useful for those interested solely in gender. I used the entire CRS dataset, however, because I needed to know about both projects focused on, and not focused on, gender. There is a lag in reporting: CRS data are released over a year after the fact.

<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the quality Australian reporting is unlikely to seriously bias most types of analysis. However, the data have problems for some specific uses – historically, gender has been an issue, as discussed. Aid to help countries tackle climate change is another area where there are issues.

<sup>3</sup> The terms ‘principal’ and ‘significant’ are those used in OECD reporting; reflecting this, I use them in this paper.

These options are mutually exclusive: a project can only be coded as one of the three. Some other donors have projects that are “not screened”, for their gender relevance. In Australia’s case all projects are currently screened. However, a small amount of project aid is devoted to aid that is not, and could not, be gender-relevant. (For example, certain administrative costs and some types of budget support.) Projects in this category have formed only 0.4% of Australian aid projects since 2017, and I excluded them from my analysis.

A major issue in donor reporting on the gender focus of aid is that, while guidelines on what counts as gender-related aid have always existed, they have provided considerable leeway for donors to claim projects as gender-related if they so wanted to even when gender links were weak (George & Gulrajani, 2023; Grabowski & Essick, 2020). In 2016, the OECD’s GENDERNET produced new guidelines for the types of projects that could be claimed as gender-related (GENDERNET, 2016). While not all donors have signed up to these guidelines, Australia has (Wood, 2022). According to the guidelines, a project should only be claimed to be principally gender focused if:

Gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective. (GENDERNET, 2016, p. 2)

A project should only be claimed to be significantly gender focused if:

Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.

The gender equality objective must be explicit in the project/programme documentation and cannot be implicit or assumed.

The project/programme, in addition to other objectives, is designed to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls, reducing gender discrimination or inequalities, or meeting gender-specific needs. (GENDERNET, 2016, p. 2)

These are clear guidelines (and more detailed guidance is provided in the OECD document cited above, with even more guidance is available from the OECD). Unfortunately, however, the OECD itself does not rigorously audit donor reporting. And, it is unclear from the perspective of an external researcher how much internal auditing DFAT does of individual project managers' reporting. Nevertheless, adopting the new markers led to a nearly 20 percentage point fall in the share of Australian aid claimed to be either principally or significantly gender related. Australia's gender reporting may not yet be perfect, but Australia is clearly more rigorously applying appropriate criteria when determining whether projects are principally or significantly gender-related than it once was.

In the research that underpins the first part of this paper, I took advantage of this improvement to study which project and country traits were associated with whether a project had a gender focus or not. I looked at two specific types of factors: those to do with recipient countries (for example, a country's GDP per capita and quality of governance) and those to do with projects (for example a project's sector, or size). This broad approach has been used previously in aid analysis studying traits associated with where different donors focus their aid (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Dreher et al., 2010). It has also been used to study whether gender disparities affect aid volumes as well as aid to different sectors (Dreher et al., 2015). To the best of my knowledge, however, it has never before been focused on gender aid as measured by OECD markers.

In the analysis that I report on here I used multinomial logistic regressions which compared the relationship between independent variables (project and country traits) and the likelihood that a project was principally, or significantly, gender related, versus the likelihood that it was not gender focused.<sup>4</sup>

To take advantage of improved Australian gender reporting, all of my data came from 2017 until 2021 (which is the most recent year with data currently available in CRS).

Summary statistics for my dependent and independent variables are shown in Table 1.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a question whether such an approach fits with the so-called Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives condition required of multinomial logit regressions. I have performed standard tests in the results and they suggest the approach is ok with the data I have used. However, such tests are themselves imperfect, and in future work there is scope to expand on my analysis here with other modelling methods.



**Table 1 - Descriptive statistics (focus)**

	%	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dvn.	N
Gender						
Principal	8%					2,035
Significant	36%					9,510
Not gender	56%					14,517
Sector (simple schema)						
Economic	19%					4,858
Education	10%					2,529
Governance	18%					4,655
Health	20%					5,315
Humanitarian	5%					1,345
Other	28%					7,334
Overheads	0%					26
Pacific						
Elsewhere	61%					14,957
Pacific	39%					9,621
Population (ln)		7.31	21.07	15.51	2.94	23,069
GDP per capita (ln)		5.38	10.16	7.93	0.73	22,886
Women in parliament (%)		0.00	61.25	16.95	12.24	22,797
Government Effectiveness		-2.45	1.10	-0.39	0.62	22,773
Total Australian aid to country (ln)		-13.82	6.37	3.15	2.14	24,578

Most of the variables that I used in my analysis are self-explanatory; however several need more explanation.

First, I categorised projects into separate sectors. These were based on the categories used in OECD reporting. But, because OECD reporting contains a very detailed list of different sectors, I grouped sectors to the highest, easily interpretable, level.

Second, in terms of project location I simply grouped Australian projects into whether they were in the Pacific or not. This was because the Pacific receives a very large share of country-allocable Australian aid (Wood et al., 2021). Because of this, and because there is clear evidence of differing overall performance between Australian projects in the Pacific and Australian projects elsewhere (Wood et al., 2020), the division was simple and relevant to Australian aid policy.

Third, I used the percentage of women in parliament (or in a country's lower legislative chamber if it was not a parliament) as a proxy of women's empowerment. I did this for data-related reasons. While other good measures of women's empowerment exist, such as the UNDP's Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index (UNDP,

2023), these indices are missing data for many Pacific countries. And the importance of the Pacific to Australian aid precluded using these indices. On the other hand, it was possible to obtain full data on women in parliaments for almost all Pacific countries (as well as almost all aid recipient countries globally) from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2022) and the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (Secretariat for the Pacific Community, 2023). This made the political measure appealing from a data-availability perspective.<sup>5</sup> What is more, the share of MPs in parliament who are women is a Sustainable Development Goal indicator, a constituent part of both the Women's Empowerment Index and the Global Gender Parity Index, and a meaningful gauge of an important aspect of women's empowerment. Women's political representation is also correlated at a country level to at least some degree with many of the other indicators that comprise the Women's Empowerment Index and the Global Gender Parity Index. In other words, the measure reflects overall women's empowerment to a non-trivial extent. Ideally, I would have used a fuller measure such as an index. But, as a proxy, women MPs seems the best available measure that does not lead to the exclusion of many of Australia's most important aid partners. Finally, my measure of quality of governance — government effectiveness — is standard and came from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank, 2023).

All of my project-related variables came from the OECD's CRS dataset (OECD, 2022) while all other country variables came from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2022). Because country-level variables could not be applied to regional projects, I excluded regional projects from all analysis in which country-level variables were included as independent variables.

## **2.2 Data on the Australian aid projects' reported outcomes for women**

In the second part of the paper, I cover the reported outcomes that Australian aid projects have for women. The approach I used in my analysis was similar to that used in other studies focused on aid project performance (for example, Bulman et al., 2017;

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<sup>5</sup> Another alternative would have been to do as Dreher et al. (2015) did and construct my own measures of gender discrepancies in key areas such as life expectancy. However, once again good quality, up to date, sociodemographic data is scarce enough in the Pacific to render such an approach problematic.

Denizer et al., 2013; Feeny & Vuong, 2017; Honig, 2018) although, once again, my study is the first that I am aware of to focus on gender outcomes.

My analysis of project gender performance was regression-based, drawing, in the first instance, on OLS regressions. (Results from ordered logistic regressions were very similar and are provided for comparison in the appendices). The dependent variable in my analysis was data from Australian aid program assessments of the performance of its own projects (for full descriptions of how these data were obtained see: Howes et al., 2023; Wood et al., 2020).

All Australian aid projects with a budget of over AU\$3,000,000 (about \$2,000,000 USD) are appraised each year (DFAT, 2022a, p. 66). Projects are appraised yearly while they are operating and receive one final appraisal on completion; both types of appraisals are included in the dataset that I used (DFAT, 2022a). Project appraisals contain descriptions of the aid project and what happened as the project was run. They also contain scores on a one to six scale reflecting perceived project performance (DFAT, 2022a). Performance is assessed in a range of areas, two of which were of particular use for this study. The first was a measure of how well a project has made, “a difference to gender equality and empowering women and girls” (DFAT, 2020, p. 3), a measure which I used to gauge gender performance.<sup>6</sup> This is assessed on a one to six scale (six being better). The second set of scores I used was to do with overall project effectiveness and efficiency. Once again, these use one to six scales. Following Howes et. al. (2023) I took the mean of effectiveness and efficiency and used it as a score of overall project performance, which I used as a control in some regressions.

One might reasonably question the validity of data produced by internal appraisals of project performance: there is a risk that aid program staff will be overly generous when assessing the performance of their program’s projects. However, data of this sort have a long history of being used in the study of aid project performance, including Australian aid project performance (for example, Briggs, 2019; Denizer et al., 2013; Feeny & Vuong, 2017; Honig, 2018; Howes et al., 2023; Wood et al., 2020, 2022). Scholars who have used this type of data in the past have pointed to internal checks designed to prevent

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<sup>6</sup> In 2021 this was changed to also include: “Did the investment make a difference for people with disabilities?”.

inaccurate assessments (Denizer et al., 2013), or have argued that even if overall scores are inflated, differences in the relative performance of projects will still provide meaningful information on which types of projects tend to perform better (Wood et al., 2020). In this study, I draw on both justifications. First, because I am interested in the types of project and recipient country traits associated with better project ability to improve outcomes for women, rather than the overall performance of Australian aid in improving the lives of women, I undertook some of my analysis on the assumption that I could safely use the data for the purpose of comparing relative project performance without particular concern about absolute score inflation. Second, in 2019, the Australian aid program introduced a more rigorous system of project appraisal involving a central unit and external contractors who doublechecked the performance scores of completed projects. Other research has shown that this led to a significant fall in project appraisal scores for effectiveness and efficiency as external validators downgraded scores when evidence of actual project performance was lacking (Howes et al., 2023). As part of the study reported on in this paper I tested whether external validation affected gender scores in a similar manner to its impact on effectiveness and efficiency (I present the results of these tests in this paper). I then re-ran my performance regressions only using projects with appraisal scores that were externally validated to check whether the findings of regressions run on the full population of project assessments were similar to findings from regressions only run on data from validated projects.

The independent variables that I used in my gender outcomes regressions were similar to those used in my regressions studying what traits are associated with Australian aid projects having a gender focus. There were slight differences due to data availability but the variables were largely the same. The most important difference is that in my study of gender outcomes I also included whether a project had a principal gender focus, a significant gender focus, or no gender focus as a key independent variable of interest (recall that the variable was the dependent variable in my first set of regressions). I did this to test whether an explicit gender focus improved reported outcomes for women.

I ran two sets of regressions when studying reported project outcomes for women. In the first, project outcomes for women was the dependent variable and a suite of project and country traits were the independent variables. The second set of regressions were

very similar except that I also controlled for overall project effectiveness and efficiency. I did this to account for the fact that some projects may have good outcomes for women simply because they are successful projects in general. By controlling for effectiveness and efficiency, I was, in the second set of regressions, looking for traits that were associated with projects which perform better, or worse, in terms of gender outcomes than they performed overall.

Details of my key dependent and independent variables in the gender performance regressions are shown in Table 2. All of the project variables came from the DFAT project dataset. All of the country variables came from the Worldwide Governance Indicators and the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2022, 2023). As in my regressions on gender focus, I had to exclude regional projects from my analysis when I included country traits in performance regressions.

The DFAT project performance dataset spans from 2014 to 2022. However, data on whether a project is gender focused or not only exist from 2018 onwards. Data that were verified by external assessors only exist from 2019 onwards. This means the sample size in my regressions varied considerably depending on the model used. Regressions run on country traits alone had the largest sample because they drew on data stretching as far back as 2014. Regressions which had project traits as independent variables all included gender focus as a project trait. As a result these regressions only used data spanning as far back as 2018. Regressions run on externally validated project performance scores only used project completion assessments (these were the only assessments that were validated) and only drew on data from 2019 onwards. Because the different regressions span different time periods, I re-ran them with year fixed effects to address the potential issue of trends in performance over time (see Tables A2 and A3) in the appendices. Adding year fixed effects changed results very little.

**Table 2 - Descriptive statistics (performance)**

	%	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dvn.	N
Gender objectives?						
Not an objective	57%					936
Significant objective	32%					522
Principal objective	12%					197
Gender performance		1.00	6.00	4.04	0.89	3,096
Overall performance		1.00	6.00	4.27	0.65	3,096
Project budget (ln)		12.03	20.25	16.80	1.14	3,096
Duration (years)		0.16	27.02	6.92	2.98	3,096
GDP per capita (ln)		5.56	9.87	7.60	0.56	2,100
Government Effectiveness		-2.14	0.82	-0.42	0.55	1,919
Women in parliament (%)		0.00	40.00	15.65	10.97	2,081
Sector (simple)						
Economic development	25%					788
Education	18%					563
Health	14%					426
Governance	25%					786
Other	17%					533
Is project in Pacific?						
Elsewhere	63%					1,941
Pacific	37%					1,155
Project type						
Ongoing project	84%					2,602
Completed project	16%					494
Appraisal externally validated?						
No	94%					2,925
Yes	6%					171

### 3. Results

In this section I present my main results. I do so in two parts: first I look at the project and country traits associated with whether Australian aid projects have gender equality objectives or not. Then I look at project and country traits associated with whether aid projects are assessed as performing better or worse in terms of outcomes for women.

#### 3.1 Traits associated with whether projects have a gender equality focus

Table 3 shows the results of multinomial logistic regressions in which the dependent variable had three categories: a project has no gender equality focus (which is the comparator category), a project has a significant gender focus (as reported by Australia in its OECD reporting), or a project has a principal gender focus (as reported by

Australia to the OECD). The results table shows the results from three models. In the first, only project traits were included as independent variables. In the second, only country traits were included. In the third, all traits were included. In most instances the findings in the third model do not differ much from those in the first two models. As I result, I will focus my discussion on Model 3.

The first panel of the table shows the relationship between the independent variables and the likelihood that a project is principally gender focused. The second part of the table shows the relationship between the independent variables and the likelihood that a project is significantly gender focused. The coefficients in the tables are logits (log odds ratios).

Also, because logits are hard to interpret, in Figure 1 I show results from Model 3 plotted as average marginal effects on predicted probabilities. This is a more intuitive measure, although it should be noted that in a few instances estimates produced this way are not always consistent with the results in the regression table. When discussing results, my discussion is focused on the actual regression results.

The findings show that — controlling for other factors — education, governance and health projects are clearly more likely to have a principal gender focus than projects focused on economic development (the comparator sector). This association is most pronounced in the case of governance projects. When the gender significant measure is looked at, all of these sectors seem as if they may be more likely to have a gender focus than economic development projects. However, only the health sector's difference is statistically significant for this measure. Humanitarian projects also appear to be more likely to have a gender focus; however, the statistical significance of the relationship is weak for the gender significant category and not present at conventional levels for principal.

When only project traits are looked at, projects in the Pacific appear less likely to have a significant gender focus than projects elsewhere. Although, once country traits are also added to the model the relationship is only statistically significant at  $p < 0.1$  for the gender significant marker. The coefficient is also negative for principal projects but is not statistically significant at conventional levels. Larger projects are clearly less likely

to have a significant gender focus and, but there is no clear relationship between project size and a gender principal focus.

In terms of country traits, controlling for other factors, projects in wealthier aid recipients are less likely to have either a significant or principal gender focus (at  $p < 0.1$ ). On the other hand, projects in countries where Australia has a large aid presence are clearly more likely to have a gender focus (both significant and principal). Projects are less likely to be gender significant in better governed countries. (The relationship for gender principal is unclear.) Projects in countries where women's empowerment is higher (as measured by women in parliament) are more likely to have a principal focus on gender equality. Projects in countries where women's empowerment is higher may also be more likely to have a gender significant focus. However, the relationship is not statistically significant when a full suite of traits is controlled for.

**Table 3 - Regression results, traits associated with gender focus**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<b>Principal</b>			
Sector (compared to Economic)			
Education	0.37** (0.15)		0.40*** (0.15)
Governance	1.14*** (0.13)		1.13*** (0.15)
Health	0.60*** (0.14)		0.53*** (0.14)
Humanitarian	0.05 (0.23)		0.14 (0.22)
Other	-1.11*** (0.13)		-1.06*** (0.13)
Overheads	-0.85 (1.12)		-16.08*** (0.37)
Annual project spend (ln)	0.05** (0.02)		0.02 (0.02)
Pacific	-0.07 (0.19)		-0.42 (0.43)
Population (ln)		-0.03 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.06)
GDP per capita (ln)		-0.22* (0.13)	-0.26* (0.14)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.22*** (0.08)	0.17* (0.10)
Government Effectiveness		0.20 (0.16)	0.27 (0.18)
Total annual Aus aid to ctry (ln)		0.33*** (0.05)	0.30*** (0.05)
Constant	-2.67*** (0.21)	-5.67*** (1.46)	-4.30** (1.71)



**Table 3 - Regression results, traits associated with gender focus (continued)**

<b>Significant</b>			
Sector (compared to Economic)			
Education	0.01 (0.08)		0.04 (0.08)
Governance	0.06 (0.10)		0.11 (0.11)
Health	0.13** (0.06)		0.15** (0.06)
Humanitarian	0.39** (0.20)		0.39* (0.21)
Other	-0.83*** (0.07)		-0.77*** (0.07)
Overheads	-16.21*** (0.31)		-16.17*** (0.30)
Annual project spend (ln)	-0.07*** (0.01)		-0.09*** (0.01)
Pacific	-0.59*** (0.13)		-0.38* (0.20)
Population (ln)		0.06*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)
GDP per capita (ln)		-0.14* (0.08)	-0.17** (0.08)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.12*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)
Government Effectiveness		-0.29*** (0.10)	-0.25*** (0.09)
Total annual Aus aid to ctry (ln)		0.06*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)
Constant	0.65*** (0.14)	-1.68* (0.90)	0.03 (0.91)
Observations	24578	22387	22387

Coefficients are logits from multinomial regression models. Robust standard errors clustered at the recipient country level. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

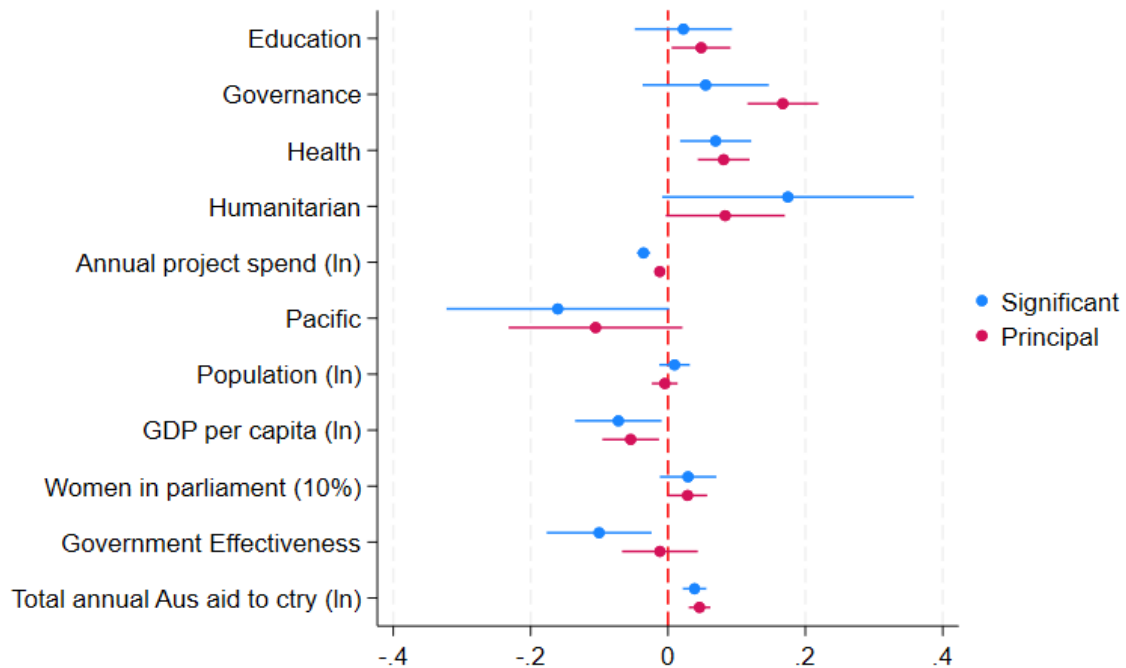
Of these findings, the relationship that suggests governance projects are the most likely to have a principal gender focus makes sense: governance is a fairly natural home for projects with a central focus on gender equality.

The finding that projects in the Pacific are, if anything, less likely to be focused on empowering women is puzzling in the first instance and is something I will return to in the discussion.

The fact that projects in poorer and more poorly governed countries are more likely to have a significant gender focus seems suggestive of good aid practice: these are the types of countries where it would be of paramount importance to make sure that the gendered impacts of aid work were most carefully taken into account (mainstreamed)

in projects where gender was a focus albeit not the principal motive of the project.

**Figure 1- Margins plot of regression results, traits associated with gender focus**



95% confidence intervals are shown in the chart. The x-axis shows the change in the probability that a project will have a significant or principal gender focus (versus having no gender focus) associated with a one unit change in the independent variable in question (or a change from the comparator category for categorical variables). Probabilities are calculated using average marginal effects. The vertical red line denotes no change. The largely meaningless “other” and “administrative” sector categories are excluded from the chart for legibility’s sake.

Finally, the finding regarding women’s empowerment (as proxied by political representation) is intriguing. If one is willing to accept that political representation is a reasonable proxy of women’s empowerment more generally — and, as I have explained, there is a case for doing so — the positive correlation could be taken as evidence that Australia is focusing its women’s empowerment efforts in the wrong place: countries where empowerment is already relatively high, rather than where need is greatest.

An alternative, and much more optimistic, interpretation is that perhaps women’s empowerment is high in these countries because Australia has been focusing its gender aid in these countries, and it has been working, improving measured women’s empowerment. The finding would fit with recent research from Africa, which suggests that aid in general contributes to increased political empowerment for women (Annen & Asiamah, 2023). However, such an interpretation of my findings does not fit with the fact that, as I demonstrate in Table A1 in the Appendices, when I re-ran my analysis focusing only on countries where Australian aid is less than 1 per cent of recipient GDP

(countries where it is very unlikely that Australia's efforts would have influenced the gender composition of parliament) the positive correlation between women's empowerment and Australian gender aid became more clear, not less. Australian aid may help empower women, but it would be premature to draw this conclusion from my findings here.

A third way of looking at the finding is that perhaps the best environment for gender equality projects is not countries where women's empowerment is currently very low: rather, perhaps gender equality aid projects are more likely to work where there is already some domestic progress being made. If that is the case, perhaps Australia is tending to focus more of its gender aid on places where it thinks it is more likely to work. I will return to this point after I have discussed the performance of Australian projects in improving the lives of women.

### **3.2 Traits associated with better outcomes for women**

In this section I move to the question of how well Australian aid projects perform in terms of outcomes for women. The dependent variable that I used in the analysis reported on here came from project assessment data produced by aid program staff.

This is an imperfect data source, but project appraisals can still be useful if one is willing to trust that, even if overall project performance scores are inflated, the relative difference between projects, and projects of different types, still broadly reflects differing performance. Moreover, as explained in the methods and data section, in 2019 Australia put more rigorous project appraisal validation processes in place to improve the quality of the project assessments that it received from its staff. This meant I could focus at least some of my analysis on the better quality, more independent, data from assessments of projects completed in 2019 and subsequently.

This section proceeds as follows. First, I report on difference in difference analysis that I conducted to see whether introducing external validations changed the scores of reported project outcomes for women in 2019 and thereafter. Then I report on the results of regressions that I ran to study the correlates of better performance on the outcomes for women measure used in appraising Australian aid projects. Finally, I

report on regressions run to study the traits associated with projects that performed better (or worse) on the measure of outcomes for women than they did overall.

### **3.2.1 Did more rigorous appraisal validation change scores of projects' performance for women?**

Figure 2 is an event study of the effect of the introduction of external validation of performance appraisals on scores of individual projects' outcomes for women.

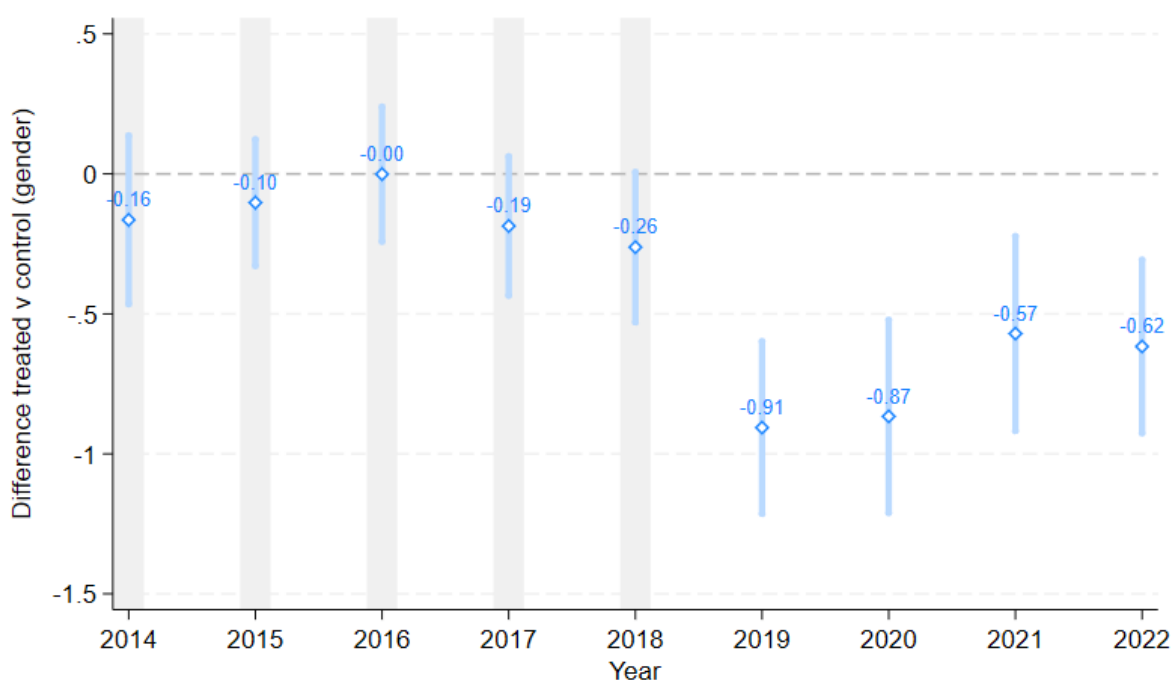
The y-axis shows the average difference between women's outcomes scores given to ongoing projects, which have never been subject to external validation of their appraisal scores and scores given to completed projects which were subject to external validation of project assessments from 2019 onwards.

The chart shows two points of note: first, prior to 2019 ongoing and completed projects tended to have very similar reported outcomes for women. Importantly, there was no clear difference in the trends between ongoing and completed projects (in other words, the parallel trends assumption, which is of importance to difference in difference analysis, was met). Second, there was a clear drop in the assessed performance of completed projects' reported outcomes for women in 2019, and the scores awarded to completed projects have stayed worse than those awarded to ongoing projects ever since. No other major changes in Australian aid practice occurred in 2019 that were a likely source of the change in scores in that year. The change is almost certainly a product of the introduction of more rigorous project appraisal validation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of the 2019 change and assessing its impact on project appraisals see Howes et al. (2023). It is worth noting that so-called "forbidden comparisons" which can undermine the validity of difference in difference analysis are not present in the analysis presented here owing to projects exiting the dataset once they receive their final appraisal.

**Figure 2 – Event study showing the difference in assessed outcomes for women between ongoing and completed Australian aid projects**



The finding presented in Figure 2 is important for the analysis presented in the rest of this paper: appraisal quality very likely improved for completed projects in 2019. Therefore, findings present in data that from completed projects from 2019 may well provide a better sense of the correlates of project performance than data from ongoing projects or completed projects prior to 2019. It is always possible that they will not, this could be the case if performance was inflated across the board in project appraisals, rather than being particularly overstated in certain types of projects. However, given the evidence that scores were overstated prior to the introduction of external assessments, it seems prudent to check.

### 3.2.2 What traits are associated with better outcomes for women?

The simplest way to guard against the influence of overly generous appraisals in projects where appraisals were not externally validated is to run regressions only using data from appraisals that were externally validated. However, this is also problematic as only 73 projects with data for all available variables of interest had externally validated appraisals. Focusing only on a sample this small could produce false negatives. To overcome these issues, I first ran my regressions on all projects in the performance dataset, and then re-ran regressions making use of only projects with externally

validated appraisals. I then compared results, being particularly wary of any finding where the value of the point estimate for the independent variable in question changed dramatically between regressions run on the full sample and regressions run only on data from externally validated appraisals.

Results from OLS regressions in which the dependent variable was reported outcomes for women and the independent variables were project and country traits of interest can be seen in Table 4.<sup>8</sup> The first model in Table 4 shows findings using all available data but focusing only on project traits, the second model focuses on country traits, the third includes all data and focuses on all traits of interest. In the fourth model, I limit the data to just externally validated appraisals. Results from Models 3 and 4 are shown in Figure 3.

Projects with either a significant or principal gender focus are associated with better outcomes for women, and the estimated effect of principal projects is larger than that of significant projects (although the difference between the two is not clearly statistically significant itself). This finding is unsurprising perhaps, but it does serve as reinforcement for the idea that outcomes for women are better when gender equality is focused on in the design and operation of projects.

Compared to projects focused on economic development, education projects have better outcomes for women. There is little evidence of other sectoral differences though. When project traits are looked at just on their own in Model 1, projects in the Pacific have worse outcomes for women than projects run elsewhere. However, this finding vanishes when country traits are controlled for, reflecting a broader finding about aid effectiveness in the Pacific – the issue is not the Pacific itself but rather specific challenges that come with giving aid to some Pacific countries (for a full discussion see: Wood et al., 2022).

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<sup>8</sup> Robustness tests of the results presented here, run with year fixed effects are included in Table A2 in the appendices. Adding year fixed effects changes very little. Robustness tests in which the dependent variable is treated as ordinal and regressions run as Ordered Logistic Regressions are presented in Table A4 in the appendices: the results are very similar.

**Table 4 – Correlates of outcomes for women**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Significant objective	0.53*** (0.06)		0.57*** (0.08)	0.54* (0.27)
Principal objective	0.93*** (0.08)		0.75*** (0.12)	1.20*** (0.42)
Education	0.33*** (0.09)		0.31*** (0.12)	0.88** (0.37)
Health	0.12 (0.08)		0.10 (0.12)	0.13 (0.38)
Governance	0.08 (0.08)		0.17* (0.10)	0.37 (0.37)
Other	0.06 (0.09)		0.08 (0.11)	0.13 (0.35)
Pacific	-0.20*** (0.06)		-0.07 (0.12)	0.34 (0.48)
Budget (natural log)	0.10*** (0.03)		0.10** (0.04)	0.16 (0.13)
Duration (years)	-0.00 (0.01)		-0.01 (0.02)	-0.11** (0.05)
GDP per capita (ln)		0.09 (0.09)	0.12 (0.12)	-0.57 (0.45)
Government Effectiveness		-0.15* (0.09)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.00 (0.41)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.10*** (0.04)	0.11* (0.06)	0.34 (0.23)
Constant	1.94*** (0.47)	3.17*** (0.77)	0.98 (1.17)	4.61 (3.77)
Observations	1655	1902	784	73

Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

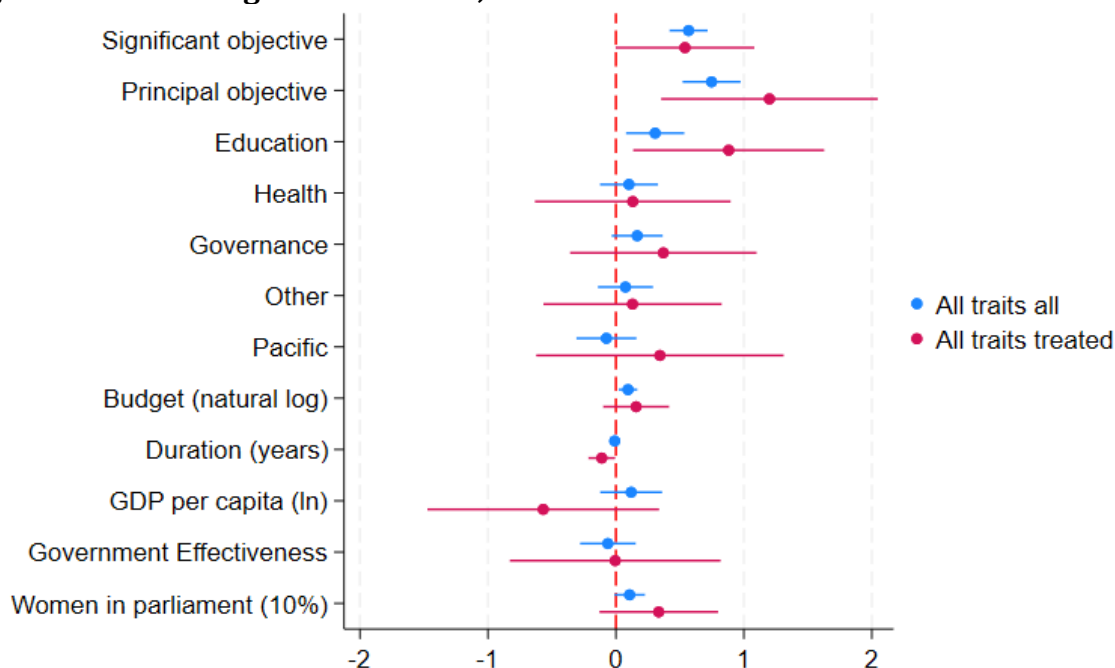
\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

There is some evidence that larger projects have better outcomes for women, although the coefficient for project size, while still positive, ceases to be statistically significant when the sample is reduced to only externally validated projects.

Neither governance nor GDP per capita are clearly associated with better or worse outcomes for women. However, women's empowerment — as proxied by the share of MPs who are women — is clearly positively correlated with better project outcomes for women when only country traits are looked at and is still correlated at  $p < 0.1$  when project and country traits are included in the full model. The coefficient for women's empowerment actually gets larger in the regression run with only externally validated project data, but it ceases to become statistically significant at conventional levels ( $p = 0.15$ ), quite possibly simply because of the smaller sample size. Taken together

these findings are strongly suggestive of a positive relationship between the level of women’s empowerment in a country and positive project outcomes for women. The most plausible explanation for this is that aid projects tend to have better outcomes for women in places where women’s empowerment is already higher.

**Figure 3 – Plot of regression results, traits associated with outcomes for women**



95% confidence intervals are shown in the chart. The x-axis shows the change in performance on the 1-6 performance scale associated one unit change in the independent variable in question. The vertical red line denotes, “no change in performance”.

### 3.2.2 What traits are associated with outcomes for women that are better or worse than overall project performance?

One potential limitation of the findings presented above is that projects may have good outcomes for women simply because they are successful projects. Similarly, projects could have bad outcomes for women simply because they failed more generally. Worse still, because of the subjective nature of project assessments, assessors may be unduly inclined to award higher women’s outcome scores to projects which have done well otherwise. Similarly, assessors might miss comparatively good performance in improving outcomes for women in projects which have largely been unsuccessful overall. If this was the case, there would be a risk that traits that were generally associated with project success or failure might seem related to performance in improving outcomes for women, even when they had no direct impact in this area, but rather had all of their impact via their effect on overall project success.



To address this issue, I reran the performance regressions from Section 3.2.1 with overall project performance included as a control. Doing this effectively allowed me to test for traits associated with projects that did better or worse in terms of outcomes for women than they did overall.<sup>9</sup>

The results of these regressions are shown in Table 5 and Figure 4.

Some of the findings are similar to those from the previous regression models. The coefficients for gender significant and gender principal projects are positive (clearly positive for principal). Projects which take gender into account in their design, or have an explicit gender focus, perform better in terms of outcomes for women than they perform overall. It is possible that this finding stems from assessment bias: when aid program staff know they are appraising a project that was meant to help women, they might be more likely to give it a favourable performance score for outcomes for women than they would otherwise. However, the finding, particularly for gender principal projects, remains clear even when the sample is limited only to projects with externally reviewed appraisals. This provides stronger evidence that the effect is real, and not a simple product of assessment bias.

There is also a positive association between overall project performance (based on projects' effectiveness and efficiency scores) and outcomes for women. This is unsurprising: projects that are successful overall tend to perform better in most aspects of their functioning, including outcomes for women.

Education projects are more likely than economic development projects to have better outcomes for women even when overall project performance is taken into account. No other sectors clearly outperform economic development projects though. Similarly with overall performance accounted for, there is no evidence that projects have better or worse outcomes for women in the Pacific. Evidence for any effect associated with project size, duration or recipient GDP per capita is also very weak or non-existent.

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<sup>9</sup> Robustness tests with year fixed effects are included in Table A3 in the appendices. Adding year fixed effects changes very little. Robustness tests in which the dependent variable is treated as ordinal and ordered logistic regressions run are presented in Table A5 in the appendices: the results are very similar.

**Table 5 – Correlates of outcomes for women controlling for overall performance**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Significant objective	0.51*** (0.05)		0.53*** (0.07)	0.48* (0.25)
Principal objective	0.89*** (0.07)		0.71*** (0.09)	1.19*** (0.26)
Effectiveness & efficiency	0.56*** (0.04)		0.51*** (0.05)	0.60*** (0.12)
Education	0.24*** (0.08)		0.21** (0.10)	0.77** (0.34)
Health	0.13* (0.08)		0.11 (0.11)	0.20 (0.33)
Governance	0.06 (0.07)		0.12 (0.09)	0.18 (0.31)
Other	0.06 (0.08)		0.06 (0.10)	0.25 (0.32)
Pacific	-0.05 (0.05)		-0.02 (0.11)	0.47 (0.40)
Budget (natural log)	0.07*** (0.02)		0.05 (0.03)	0.13 (0.10)
Duration (years)	0.00 (0.01)		0.00 (0.01)	-0.10** (0.04)
GDP per capita (ln)		0.09 (0.09)	0.23** (0.11)	-0.28 (0.39)
Government Effectiveness		-0.15* (0.09)	-0.19* (0.10)	-0.21 (0.35)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.10*** (0.04)	0.11** (0.05)	0.33 (0.20)
Constant	0.07 (0.42)	3.17*** (0.77)	-1.32 (1.01)	0.48 (3.04)
Observations	1655	1902	784	73

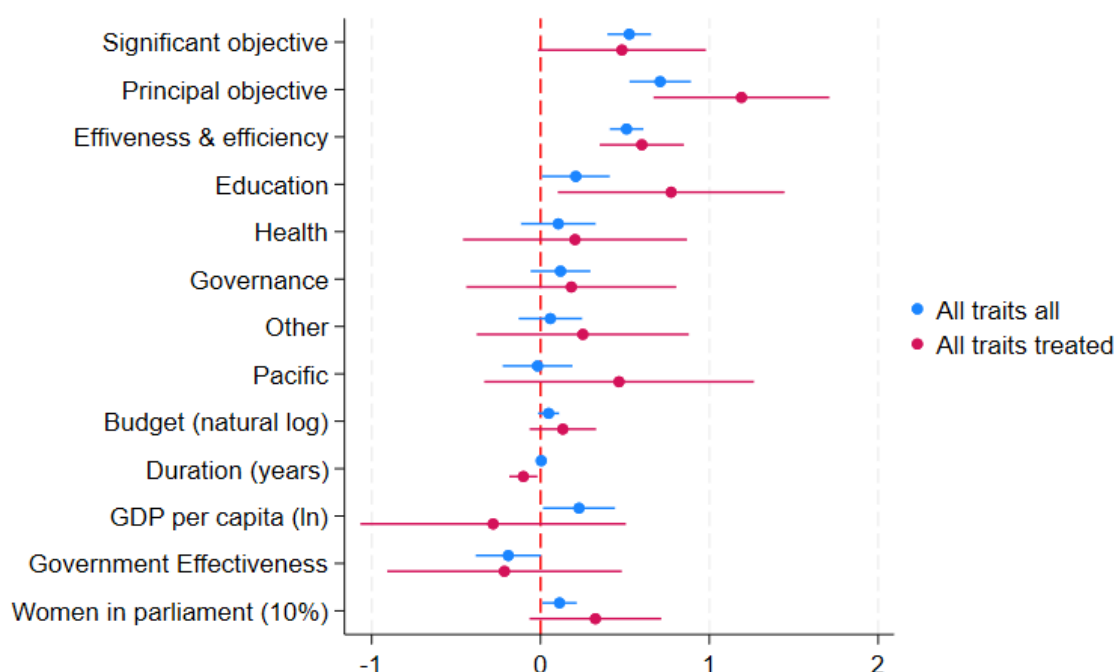
Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

There is, however, suggestive evidence that projects tend to underperform in terms of outcomes for women in countries where governance is weaker, although this finding is not even close to being statistically significant in the small sample of externally validated assessments.

Likewise, the relationship between women's empowerment and outcomes for women is not statistically significant in the regression run using only externally validated assessments. However, the point estimate is positive, and the finding is clearly statistically significant in Models 2 and 3 from the larger sample not restricted to just validated assessments. Taken together, this is reasonable evidence that projects tend to perform better in terms of outcomes for women than they do overall in countries where women's empowerment is already higher.

**Figure 4 – Correlates of outcomes for women controlling for overall performance**



95% confidence intervals are shown in the chart. The x-axis shows the change in performance on the 1-6 performance scale associated one unit change in the independent variable in question. The vertical red line denotes “no change in performance”.

## 4. Discussion

Many of the findings above may have use for aid practice and serve as prompts for future research. However, three sets of findings stand out at this point.

The first is obvious, but it deserves emphasis nonetheless: while a small degree of uncertainty remains owing to possible issues of reporting bias, my study provides good evidence that focusing projects on gender equality, or at the very least taking gender equality into account, leads to projects that have better gender outcomes. Taking time to design aid projects cognisant of the gendered nature of development, and running projects in an ongoing gender sensitive way appears to help deliver better outcomes for women, at least in the case of Australian aid.

The second finding is more of a puzzle: Australian projects appear to be less likely to have a gender significant focus in the Pacific than elsewhere. This is not because they are more likely to have a gender principal aid focus (if anything the relationship

between being in the Pacific and a gender principal focus is also negative). Also, while the results that I have reported come from regressions controlling for other variables, the same negative relationship between projects in the Pacific and a gender significant focus exists when I run a simple bivariate regression controlling for no other traits. This seems odd given the Pacific is an area where Australia has explicitly emphasised its desire to tackle gender issues (Gillard, 2012) and where gender problems are notable in many countries. One possible explanation may be to do with data. Perhaps, although a smaller share of Australian projects in the Pacific are gender significant, those projects which are gender significant are larger than average, or grouped into facilities (tools run by private Australian aid contractors which are used to manage many individual projects) and not reported on in detail in the OECD data. This warrants looking into further, although it should be noted that, in simple bivariate comparisons of dollars spent, a smaller share of overall aid to the Pacific is focused on gender equality than is the case elsewhere. One other alternative would be worrying if true: perhaps Australia is more reluctant to adopt a gender equality focus in the Pacific because gender equality projects there tend to be less successful than elsewhere (recall that lower success in the Pacific was the finding in my performance results before country traits were controlled for). However, it would be premature to conclude that failure aversion of this sort exists at the present point in time. More study is needed, particularly on the structure of aid designed to promote gender equality in the Pacific.

The third finding of interest is one that can be read in two different ways. Controlling for other factors, Australia tends to focus more of its aid for gender equality on countries where women's empowerment, as proxied by political representation, is higher. The finding is not always statistically significant, but the general pattern seems clear. Moreover, it does not appear to be the case that this relationship exists because Australian aid is increasing overall levels of women's empowerment in recipient countries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Note that my evidence does not show that Australian aid is failing to raise women's empowerment. The point here is simply that the correlation presented in this paper does not appear to be the result of Australia's success in this area.

One could read this finding as worrying: shouldn't Australia be focusing more of its aid projects on gender equality in places where empowerment is lower? However, there is a case that gender aid should be focused where it works best. And my regressions on project performance provide strongly suggestive evidence that projects are more likely to have better outcomes for women in places where women's empowerment is higher. Possibly the aid program is working on gender in the right places from an effectiveness perspective.

These findings should not, of course, be taken to be the final word in the quantitative study of Australia's focus on, and performance in, delivering aid to promote gender equality. In addition to scope to build on these findings through other quantitative approaches including experimental approaches, there is still scope to build on the regression based analysis presented here. My regressions on the focus of Australian gender aid might potentially be improved with a more theoretically sound suite of independent variables. I could not draw on an existing quantitative literature on aid for gender equality to guide me in my modelling, but future work might benefit from engaging carefully on relevant qualitative work, both when selecting variables to include in models and when constructing variables such as indices of women's empowerment.

A similar approach could also be used to optimise the models that I have used to study the correlates of performance. In addition, hopefully, Australia will continue to release findings from externally reviewed aid appraisals over time. If it does so, this will provide a larger sample of better appraisals, which can be assessed with more confidence.

## **5. Conclusion**

In August 2023 Australia released its new development policy. Both the targets contained in the policy itself and the political forwards from the Minister for International Development and the Foreign Minister made it clear that Australia plans to continue to afford gender equality a central role in its aid work (DFAT, 2023a). Specifically, the policy states that the aid program will:

ensure 80 per cent of investments address gender equality effectively, and all new investments over \$3 million include gender equality objectives (DFAT, 2023a, p. 26).

Such ambition is striking. Indeed, because so many aspects of development are gendered, it is praiseworthy. Yet aid can be, and is, focused on a very wide range of problems. Aid is also hard to give effectively.

If the ambition expressed in the 2023 policy is to be translated into real improvements in the lives of women, two challenges will need to be surmounted.

The first is mundane, but real: confronted by such exacting objectives, the aid program needs to not succumb to the temptation to meet them by letting its reporting standards lapse. Perhaps, the term “include gender equality objectives” will not automatically lead to the quality of Australia’s reporting to the OECD deteriorating as it tries to meet such an ambitious target amidst other competing demands. In theory this target could be met by including gender objectives even in projects that are reported to the OECD as not gender related. This would not affect data quality and it would be good aid practice. However, DFAT documents suggest DFAT itself envisages the policy having a considerable impact on OECD reporting (DFAT, 2023b, p. 21). To its credit DFAT does have detailed programming guidelines which would seem to make it hard inflate the share of projects reported to the OECD as being gender-relevant without taking gender carefully into account in project design. And perhaps when it comes to project performance, “addressing gender quality effectively” does not mean, “needs to score four or better” in project reporting. Also, it could well be the case that improved project appraisal practices continue, preventing inflated project performance scores. High level targets do not need to lead to definitional creep and inaccurate data. Yet, there remains a risk that the ambition in these targets will lead to a deterioration in the quality of Australian aid reporting. If that occurs, systematic, meaningful study of patterns in Australian gender equality aid will become very difficult.

This leads to the second challenge: giving aid well is hard. If Australia genuinely wants its aid to help women, it needs to give it in a context specific and reflective way. Crucially, it needs to learn lessons from its previous work and apply them to future projects (while still taking context into account). If it wants to do this effectively it needs

data to fuel its learning. Some data can come from qualitative evaluations, which are particularly useful when adapting individual projects. However, it is hard to extract more generalised patterns and findings from qualitative data. Other data will hopefully come increasingly from quantitative impact evaluations. These have weaknesses as well as strengths but given how few evaluations of this sort the aid program undertakes, it will surely benefit from running more. Nevertheless, it will have to run many, many more before it can confidently extract generalisable findings from them. As a result, there is an ongoing role for analysis of the sort presented in this paper. But research of this sort will only be as good as the data available to it.

Indeed, even more basic, general study of trends and patterns in aid for gender equality, as well as performance in improving outcomes for women, will only ever be able to be conducted usefully if data are reasonable.

In this paper I have produced some preliminary research and offered some early insights. Hopefully, in the future, data will become better rather than worse and other researchers, as well as the aid program itself, can make use of performance data as one part of an ongoing learning process — a process that helps ensure that Australia's efforts to promote gender equality using aid are as effective as they can possibly be.

## Appendices

**Table A1 – Regression results, traits associated with gender focus in countries where Australian aid is less than 1 per cent of recipient GDP**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<b>Principal</b>			
Sector (economic omitted)			
Education	-0.13 (0.15)		-0.04 (0.14)
Governance	0.82*** (0.13)		0.83*** (0.14)
Health	0.32** (0.15)		0.24 (0.15)
Humanitarian	-0.05 (0.26)		0.14 (0.24)
Other	-1.40*** (0.15)		-1.25*** (0.14)
Overheads	-15.16*** (0.46)		-15.49*** (0.42)
Annual project spend (ln)	0.10*** (0.02)		0.05** (0.02)
Pacific	-0.47*** (0.15)		-0.95*** (0.36)
Population (ln)		-0.08 (0.05)	-0.14** (0.06)
GDP per capita (ln)		-0.05 (0.16)	-0.10 (0.18)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.19** (0.08)	0.19** (0.08)
Government Effectiveness		-0.10 (0.22)	0.05 (0.26)
Total annual Aus aid to ctry (ln)		0.39*** (0.06)	0.34*** (0.06)
Constant	-2.87*** (0.31)	-7.28*** (2.01)	-5.25** (2.22)



**Table A1 – Regression results, traits associated with gender focus in countries where Australian aid is less than 1 per cent of recipient GDP (continued)**

<b>Significant</b>			
Sector (economic omitted)			
Education	-0.11 (0.10)		-0.06 (0.11)
Governance	0.21 (0.15)		0.26* (0.16)
Health	0.17** (0.08)		0.15* (0.09)
Humanitarian	0.84*** (0.26)		0.87*** (0.28)
Other	-1.00*** (0.11)		-0.92*** (0.11)
Overheads	-15.05*** (0.34)		-15.13*** (0.33)
Annual project spend (ln)	-0.08*** (0.01)		-0.10*** (0.01)
Pacific	-1.26*** (0.28)		-0.92*** (0.32)
Population (ln)		0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)
GDP per capita (ln)		-0.08 (0.12)	-0.16 (0.11)
Women in parliament (10%)		0.12* (0.07)	0.10* (0.06)
Government Effectiveness		-0.37** (0.16)	-0.23 (0.15)
Total annual Aus aid to ctry (ln)		0.09*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.02)
Constant	0.82*** (0.15)	-2.11 (1.37)	0.48 (1.30)
Observations	13616	13412	13412

Coefficients are logits from multinomial regression models. Robust standard errors clustered at the recipient level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table A2 – Performance results re-run with completion year fixed effects**

Model 1 is run on all projects with country and project data. Model 2 is run only on projects with data from externally validated appraisals.

	(1)	(2)
Significant objective	0.57*** (0.08)	0.62** (0.29)
Principal objective	0.74*** (0.12)	1.21*** (0.44)
Education	0.31*** (0.12)	0.94** (0.38)
Health	0.10 (0.12)	0.18 (0.39)
Governance	0.17* (0.10)	0.44 (0.40)
Other	0.08 (0.11)	0.23 (0.39)
Pacific	-0.07 (0.12)	0.45 (0.54)
Budget (natural log)	0.10** (0.04)	0.16 (0.13)
Duration (years)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.11** (0.05)
GDP per capita (ln)	0.12 (0.12)	-0.60 (0.47)
Government Effectiveness	-0.07 (0.11)	0.02 (0.44)
Women in parliament (10%)	0.11* (0.06)	0.37 (0.25)
End year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	784	73

Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table A3 – Gender performance results controlling for overall performance re-run with completion year fixed effects**

Model 1 is run on all projects with country and project data. Model 2 is run only on projects with data from externally validated appraisals.

	(1)	(2)
Significant objective	0.53*** (0.07)	0.48* (0.26)
Principal objective	0.71*** (0.09)	1.23*** (0.25)
Effectiveness & efficiency	0.51*** (0.05)	0.64*** (0.13)
Education	0.21** (0.10)	0.71** (0.34)
Health	0.11 (0.11)	0.19 (0.34)
Governance	0.12 (0.09)	0.12 (0.32)
Other	0.06 (0.10)	0.30 (0.33)
Pacific	-0.02 (0.11)	0.40 (0.45)
Budget (natural log)	0.05 (0.03)	0.12 (0.10)
Duration (years)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.10** (0.04)
GDP per capita (ln)	0.23** (0.11)	-0.24 (0.41)
Government Effectiveness	-0.19* (0.10)	-0.21 (0.36)
Women in parliament (10%)	0.11** (0.05)	0.29 (0.21)
End year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	784	73

Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A4 reproduces the full OLS performance regression (using the full sample with data) that is presented in [Table 4](#) it then provides the results of an ordered logistic regression model run on the same data for comparison's sake.

**Table A4 - Performance ordered logistic robustness test**

	OLS	Ologit
Significant objective	0.57*** (0.08)	1.60*** (0.23)
Principal objective	0.75*** (0.12)	2.12*** (0.35)
Education	0.31*** (0.12)	0.85** (0.33)
Health	0.10 (0.12)	0.16 (0.31)
Governance	0.17* (0.10)	0.41 (0.28)
Other	0.08 (0.11)	0.22 (0.29)
Pacific	-0.07 (0.12)	-0.17 (0.33)
Budget (natural log)	0.10** (0.04)	0.26** (0.10)
Duration (years)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.04)
GDP per capita (ln)	0.12 (0.12)	0.24 (0.33)
Government Effectiveness	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.30)
Women in parliament (10%)	0.11* (0.06)	0.28 (0.17)
Observations	784	784

Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A5 reproduces the full OLS performance regression (using the full sample with data) that is presented in [Table 5](#). (Table 5 reported on gender performance controlling for overall project performance). It then provides the results of an ordered logistic regression model run on the same data for comparison's sake.

**Table A5 - Overperformance ordered logistic robustness test**

	OLS	Ologit
Significant objective	0.53*** (0.07)	1.67*** (0.23)
Principal objective	0.71*** (0.09)	2.30*** (0.34)
Effectiveness & efficiency	0.51*** (0.05)	1.57*** (0.16)
Education	0.21** (0.10)	0.66** (0.33)
Health	0.11 (0.11)	0.22 (0.34)
Governance	0.12 (0.09)	0.36 (0.28)
Other	0.06 (0.10)	0.24 (0.28)
Pacific	-0.02 (0.11)	0.02 (0.34)
Budget (natural log)	0.05 (0.03)	0.16 (0.10)
Duration (years)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.04)
GDP per capita (ln)	0.23** (0.11)	0.62* (0.32)
Government Effectiveness	-0.19* (0.10)	-0.50* (0.29)
Women in parliament (10%)	0.11** (0.05)	0.37** (0.17)
Observations	784	784

Robust standard errors clustered at the project level.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

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