



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



# **INCLUSION STRATEGY**

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION COLOMBO

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## INTRODUCTION

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) addresses gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), both internally and externally, through a number of policies and strategies. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper<sup>1</sup> states ‘Australia’s foreign policy pursues the empowerment of women as a top priority’ and outlines disability inclusion as a cross cutting priority in Australia’s international engagement on development, humanitarian assistance and human rights. In addition, there are number of DFAT gender related policies; the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Strategy 2016<sup>2</sup> the Women in Leadership Strategy<sup>3</sup> the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or Gender Diverse and/or Intersex (LGBTI) Workplace Strategy 2018 – 21<sup>4</sup>.

In addition DFAT has the Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) Strategy 2018-2021<sup>5</sup>, within DFAT, and DFAT’s Disability Action Strategy 2017–2020, the Development for All 2015-2020<sup>6</sup> subtitled ‘Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia’s Aid Program and the DFAT Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019<sup>7</sup>.

Through these policies and strategies, DFAT has acknowledged that social exclusion has significant and detrimental impacts on our work, both internally and externally. This whole-of-Post Inclusion Strategy places inclusion at the core of all advocacy, policy and programming activities of the AHC through a human rights-based approach to social equality.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Inclusion Strategy is to provide a whole-of-Post framework and processes for the systematic consideration of all social factors that cause marginalisation from access to social, economic and political voice and agency. Points of exclusion can include, but are not limited to, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, caste and/or social class and age. It is anticipated that the implementation of this Strategy will contribute to greater equality in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

## CONTEXT

Difference based on gender remains a cause of marginalisation from social, economic and political voice and agency within both the Sri Lankan community and polity. Gender inequality is a major barrier to economic growth and human development in Sri Lanka, whose ranking in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index, in 2020 has dropped to 102<sup>nd</sup> out of 153 countries, from 13<sup>th</sup> out of 115 countries in 2006, due to low levels of labour market participation of women (despite high levels of education); and low levels of political participation. Powerful gender norms on the role of women and men still exist in society and causes marginalisation within society<sup>8,9</sup>. Some families and communities expect women either to remain out of the labour force or to leave the workforce once they are married and have children<sup>10,11</sup>. Women are often expected to bare the

<https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/women-in-leadership-strategy.pdf>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/lgbti-workplace-strategy-2018-21.pdf>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/cald-strategy-2018-2021.pdf>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/dfat-indigenous-peoples-strategy-2015-2019.pdf>

de Alwis, M. 2002. The Changing Role of Women in Sri Lankan Society. *Social Research* Vol. 69, No. 3. pp. 675-691

Jayaweera, S. (Ed.), 2002. *Women in post-independence Sri Lanka*. SAGE Publications Pvt. Limited.

Arunatilake, N. 2020. Systemic Issues Affecting Female Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka. *Voices on South Asia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Women's Status, Challenges and Futures*, 345.

Withers, M. 2017. Working realities and gendered fictions. *Women, work and care in the Asia-Pacific*, 148.

majority of unpaid household and care work, thereby adding significant constraints to their participation in paid employment<sup>12</sup>.

Globally around 15% of any population will have a disability and in a post-conflict context, such as Sri Lanka, the rate should be higher than the estimated 12.9%<sup>13</sup>. Yet the understanding of, and engagement with disability in Sri Lanka, coupled with the shame and stigma for families, has a significant negative impact on the rights and access to health care, education and meaningful community engagement for persons with a disability<sup>14</sup>. The National Disability Policy identifies certain groups as being particularly marginalised, including women and children with disabilities and those with intellectual, psychosocial or severe multiple impairments<sup>15</sup>.

Humanitarian crises such as protracted conflict, the 2004 Tsunami, the Easter Bombings of 2019 and the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak demonstrably lead to the exacerbation of social exclusion<sup>16</sup> for marginalised peoples, in addition to the health, economic, and often even political crises that follow<sup>17</sup>. Inclusive and transformative change surrounding the needs of all marginalised people embedded in the planning for all Humanitarian responses and Disaster Risk Reduction planning can ensure a reduction in any additional marginalisation.

## GOAL

To ensure that Inclusion is at the core of all Australian High Commission policy, diplomacy, investments and processes.

## Commitments

Aligning our Inclusion-focussed efforts across all agencies at Post: in our leadership and advocacy; economic and public diplomacy; development activities, and corporate processes, will enhance our contribution to a stable and inclusive Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

We commit to:

1. Place Inclusion at the core of our **Foreign Policy**. We will advocate for the rights of people of all genders, ethnicities and languages religions, castes and/or social class and disabilities to have a voice in their governance and leadership at all levels of the political spectrum.
2. Place Inclusion at the core of all of our **economic and public diplomacy efforts**. We will ensure that all of our engagements within the economic and trade systems in Sri Lanka are considerate of the impacts of those engagements on those traditionally excluded from access to economic and social benefit. We will make the evidence-based business case for inclusive practices as a means to increased productivity, prosperity and political stability.
3. Place Inclusion at the core of our **development cooperation investments**. We will ensure everything we do within our development program is inclusive, of men and women, people of diverse genders, ethnicities, religions, ages, disabilities, castes and/or social class and will Do No Harm. Our development program will not only focus on the advancement of skills,

Gunawardana, S.J. 2018. Rural Women's Livelihoods in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka. Connections Between Participation in Agriculture and Care Work Across the Life Course. Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre Research Papers 1/2018, Monash University, Melbourne.

<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/SriLanka.pdf>

Padmani Mendis & Binendri Perera. 2019. "Disability Policy Brief for Law Makers, Administrators and Other Decision Makers". International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Colombo.

Ministry of Social Welfare (2003) Sri Lanka National Policy on Disability. Retrieved from <http://67.199.83.28/doc/NatPolicyDisabilitySep2003srilanka1.pdf>

Snowdon, F. 2020. Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present. Yale Open Course Series

Gordon, E & Gunawardana, S.J. 2020. 'Like a Tidal Wave: Coronavirus in Countries Already Facing Development Challenges'. International Affairs. Australian Institute of International Affairs

knowledge, but will also focus on the context-specific transformative change required within their families and communities.

4. Place Inclusion at the core of all Australian High Commission **corporate policies and practices**. We will role-model inclusive practices by ensuring that our own corporate policies and practices across all areas of Post business, have inclusion at their core.

## APPROACH

This Inclusion Strategy seeks to unite the myriad of separate DFAT policies and strategies seeking social inclusion under one umbrella document. The concept of 'inclusion' affirms the belief that all human beings have an equal right to voice and agency regardless, for example, of their gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, caste and/or social class<sup>18</sup>. The processes through which this equality is achieved is the same regardless of the social variable causing marginalisation: analysis to identify the barriers and to enablers of change in the context; the creation of strategies and activities to deconstruct the barriers, promote the enablers and to reduce marginalisation from voice and agency. This is the same regardless of the social variable and the context.

## Twin Track

As with GESI Strategy, a twin-track approach is used in the Inclusion Strategy to address specific areas of inequality and to remove barriers preventing marginalised groups from participating in all levels of society. This means a commitment to both **mainstreaming inclusion activities** across AHC activities and investments both internally and externally, by identifying entry points where inclusion can be integrated, and delivering **targeted inclusion activities** focused on removing barriers which hinder the equal participation of all people based on their gender, disability, age, ethnicity, language religion, caste and/or social class.

With the Inclusion Strategy, all activities of the AHC will be asked to consider whether gender along with, age, disability, ethnicity, religion and /or social class is significant and can be addressed within that activity, perhaps informally, as they are formally targeting a sectoral issue.

## Intersectional

Moving towards human rights-informed inclusive practices and processes, both internally and externally, allows AHC to gather data and better analyse the 'intersectionality' of these social variables as they are experienced by groups and individuals. Analysis on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, language, religion and/or social class (and other forms of difference) and how these variables interact to modify a person's or group's experience of privilege or marginalisation<sup>19</sup> from social, economic and political voice and agency.

## Transformative

Empowerment of marginalised peoples to have greater access to social, economic and political voice and agency is a core focus of an Inclusion Strategy. However, women 'empowerment' require

UN Secretariat 2016. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 'Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016. ST/ESA 362. New York.  
[https://iwda.org.au/what-does-intersectional-feminism-actually-mean/?gclid=EAlalQobChMxZ-Zwami7gIV8oJLBR29ug-WEAAYASAAEgLiMfD\\_BwE](https://iwda.org.au/what-does-intersectional-feminism-actually-mean/?gclid=EAlalQobChMxZ-Zwami7gIV8oJLBR29ug-WEAAYASAAEgLiMfD_BwE)

two things. The first is advancement: income and employment but also other resources such as human capital (education, skills, training); financial capital (loans, savings); social capital (networks, relationships, mentors); and physical capital (land, machinery, tools, inventory).

The second element of empowerment is transformation. For example, to increase women's power and ability, those seeking change must integrate strategies to transform underlying structural gender and social roles that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality<sup>20</sup>. Put more simply:

**Empowerment = Advancement + Transformation**

The AHC has limited capacity, but can plant the seeds of transformation in its work<sup>21</sup> by devising culturally appropriate strategies.

## Do No Harm

The 'Do No Harm'<sup>22</sup> concept acknowledges that providing **advancement** activities to those whose immediate social context has not been **transformed** may result in violence. Through this Inclusion Strategy, we commit to 'Do No Harm', by ensuring that any work we do on advancement will be accompanied by contextually relevant transformative activities both internally and externally, to ensure that the people whose empowerment we seek to facilitate are physically, emotionally and culturally safe to take advantage of their new found advancement without reproach. In this way we ensure all our engagements Do No Harm.

## ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNANCE

Overall responsibility for this Strategy rests with the High Commissioner. The value of strong leadership on Inclusion, from leaders of all genders, but particularly senior men, is crucial. Overt and consistent leadership from men is highly effective in dislodging implicit or 'unconscious' biases of all kinds. To support these efforts:

- All leaders will be supported to have the knowledge and skills to lead effectively and confidently on all aspects of inclusion.
- Implementation will be managed by the Deputy High Commissioner with support of the Inclusion Working Group and Gender Focal Points.
- All staff will be held accountable for implementing commitments within their own work areas.
- To ensure staff are capable of implementing inclusion in their work areas, all A-based and LE staff, from all sections and agencies represented at Post, will receive regular training, mentoring and support on existing forms of exclusion, and how to rectify them, to ensure they have the confidence and skills to implement, monitor and problem-solve challenges to implementation in their own work areas.

## ASSESSING PERFORMANCE

Cornwall, A & Rivas, A 2015, 'From 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: Reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development' Third World Quarterly, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 396-415

UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment 2017. Leave No One Behind: Taking Action for Transformational Change on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Eves, R & Crawford, J. 2018. Do No Harm Research Project Report: Women in Formal Employment Survey. DPA & IWDA

Modes of assessing performance will be derived from the annual Social Analysis as part of the regular reflection cycle to facilitate adaptive management. Following from this:

- Annual Social Analysis will monitor progress while identifying gaps in the Action Plan and its implementation.
- Action Plans, Workplans, resourcing, budgeting and MEL will all be derived from this analysis in collaboration with the work areas to create engagement. This will also assist teams to identify where they require further capacity development to ensure full implementation of the Strategy;
- Investment quality reporting through the Performance Assessment Framework, for example, will incorporate Inclusion. At a minimum, more than 80 per cent of our aid investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues in their implementation. All mandatory reporting on gender and disability in AQC's will continue to be supported. This will be supplemented by data gather in other areas of exclusion this will align with reporting on the WIL Refresh Indicators<sup>23</sup>;
- Disaggregated data will be collected in all work areas, including sex, gender, age, ethnicity, languages, religion, disability and/or social class;
- MEL for Inclusion will comprise of outcome and impact indicators and descriptors both qualitative and quantitative. This will be developed to capture the high order impacts rather than solely relying simple outputs and numbers. We will not only know WHAT is happening but WHY it is happening to inform good adaptive decision making across all Post work areas and programs.


Mechanisms to support the implementation of the Strategy will be established and used to monitor and evaluate our performance on an ongoing basis. Post will report by cable on progress on an annual basis (close to International Women's Day). The Strategy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis.

## SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Implementation will be supported through some existing, and potentially a number of new structures.

- The existing Gender Working Group (GWG), currently Chaired by the HOM and attended by all Heads of Sections and Agencies at Post will transition to an Inclusion Working Group, again led by HOM, supported by DHOM and attended by both Heads of Agency and a nominated LES officer who is concurrently a member of the LE Consultative Committee.
- The Inclusion Working Group is comprised of key staff responsible for the implementation of this Strategy. It supports work areas across Post: to implement the Strategy; demonstrate accountability through nominated indicators; problem solve implementation issues, and plan support for capacity development of staff and partners.
- Inclusion Technical Sessions hosted by the HOM and DHOM to provide ongoing inclusion

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/women-in-leadership-refresh>



training and support. Speakers will include the SLSU Inclusion Specialist, visiting DFAT and other Agency experts and local experts in all areas of inclusive practice. The focus will be on application of technical knowledge in context to support practical capacity development in all Post staff.

- DFAT’s global network will be drawn upon to share ideas and examples of practice for learning and quality improvement informally via social media.
- The Annual Action Plan outlines key tasks to implement the commitments of this Strategy.

Technical advice in specific areas of inclusion will be drawn from collaboration with national and international non-government bodies, such as women’s groups and disabled persons organisations to tailor targeted inclusion activities to the context. This will be supported by Inclusion Focal Points.