

# Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Policy

2020–2023



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# 1 Background

In May 2015, the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) entered into an agreement with eWater Ltd (eWL) to establish the Australian Water Partnership (AWP) in response to growing demand for Australia's water expertise to tackle escalating water issues in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. AWP is now well advanced in delivering its Phase 2 Core Grant to 2023.

The vision and mission for the AWP is *enhanced sustainable management of water in the Indo-Pacific region, and, through trusted partnerships, mobilise Australian water sector expertise to address demand from the region*. A strategic direction of AWP is to build awareness of, commitment to, and implement principles of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) throughout its work. After the establishment of the AWP Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy in 2017, and its implementation through to 2019, it was timely to review the progress towards the policy's commitments. The initial efforts were to embed GESI into existing AWP processes and policies, and to support staff and Partners to be able to carry out the implementation of the policy. Following the review, AWP, amongst other things, is emphasising a greater commitment to disability inclusion, which extends across all priorities in this updated and renamed GEDSI Policy.

# 2 Context

In 2010 the United Nations explicitly recognised that the human right to water and sanitation is essential to the realisation of all human rights, and in 2015 193 countries adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals including Goal Six, to "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all". Some people – such as the poorest of the poor, people with disabilities, First Nations' people and women – are most often excluded from decision making and from benefiting equally from development. The human right to water and the Sustainable Development Goals will only be fully achieved when all people are able to benefit equally. Therefore, it is necessary to address gender equality, disability, and social inclusion within the AWP's work to improve water governance, policies, strategies, and service delivery.

The Australian Government's development policy *Partnership for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*<sup>1</sup> outlines Australia's approach to pivoting the development program's focus to tackling COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific region. The policy builds on the previous development policy and the Foreign Policy White Paper<sup>2</sup> and reaffirms the commitment that disability inclusion, alongside gender equality, remains a cross-cutting priority for Australia's international engagement in development, humanitarian action, and human rights. The policy has three areas of focus in health security, stability, and economic recovery, which are all underpinned with strong emphasis on the most vulnerable, including women and girls and people with disabilities and those living in poverty.

DFAT has a specific disability inclusive development strategy<sup>3</sup> to promote improved quality of life of people with disabilities in developing countries through enhancing participation, empowerment, reducing poverty and improving equality of access to services, education and employment. The 2016 DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy<sup>4</sup> also recognises that investments with a principal or significant gender equality objective are more likely to be effective overall, that gender equality is central to economic and human development, and that it is a fundamental right.

<sup>1</sup> DFAT 2020. Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/australias-development-program>

<sup>2</sup> DFAT 2017. Foreign Policy White Paper. <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/foreign-policy-white-paper>

<sup>3</sup> DFAT 2015. Commonwealth of Australia. Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development in Australia's Aid Program. Canberra ACT.

<sup>4</sup> DFAT 2016. Commonwealth of Australia. Australian Aid: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy. Canberra ACT.

### 3 Policy Goal and Commitments

The AWP recognises that the integration of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion leads to more equitable and sustainable outcomes. The goal of this AWP GEDSI Policy is that the AWP actively supports, and makes a positive difference to, gender equality, disability, and social inclusion. Therefore, this policy makes the following commitments:

- The AWP will build awareness of, and commitment to, principles of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion throughout its work.
- The AWP will be proactive and deliberate in ensuring participation and decision making reflects its commitments to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion.
- The AWP's approaches to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion will be tailored to the contexts in which they work.
- The AWP will track, analyse, measure and report on progress towards its gender equality, disability, and socially inclusion commitments.

### 4 Policy Priorities

The AWP has identified four priority areas of effort, through which it will make a positive difference to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion and in doing so meet its strategic and policy goals and commitments.

#### 4.1 Systems, processes, and people

The AWP will integrate gender equality, disability, and social inclusion throughout its operations, as overseen by the AWP Advisory Committee, eWater Ltd Board, and the AWP Expert Review Panel. The AWP will also collaborate with DFAT and its Posts to access specialist expertise and resources, particularly on disability inclusion. An informed team is essential for the AWP to implement this policy, and gender, disability and social inclusion also needs to be firmly embedded in the AWP business systems and processes. To this end there are four key areas of work to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the AWP staff and governance bodies to be able to consider gender equality, disability, and social inclusion in their work;
- Ensure specialist expertise is available to support AWP staff and governance bodies;
- Integrate gender, disability and social inclusion within the AWP Annual Reports, Annual Operating Plans, budgets, proposals and decision-making processes; and
- Track and report progress through the AWP's monitoring and evaluation system.

#### 4.2 AWP supported activities

The core work of the AWP is to facilitate between its International, In-country, and Australian Partners to conduct projects and other activities that contribute to AWP's vision and mission. Increasing the gender equality, disability, and social inclusion aspects of these activities is critical to realising this ambition and working towards GEDSI outcomes. The key areas of work are to:

- Integrate gender equality, disability, and social inclusion within the AWP processes for deciding on, briefing for, implementation of and reporting on activities;
- Undertake gender, disability, and social inclusion analyses to feed into activity identification, designs, budgets, and implementation plans;
- Include specific and appropriate strategies and actions within all activities to enable inclusive participation and decision making;

- Develop gender equality, disability, and social inclusion guidance for activity development and management;
- Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure the activity delivers on the gender equality, disability, and social inclusion objectives; and
- Ensure there is appropriate gender and disability and social inclusion expertise within activity implementation teams or is made available through established relations with external expertise.

### 4.3 Partner capacity

To strengthen the awareness and commitment of AWP partners to design and implement activities that will effectively consider and support gender equality, disability, and social inclusion outcomes the AWP will:

- Encourage and support AWP partners to engage with relevant representative organisations of women, disabled people’s organisations (DPO), and other potentially marginalised groups in the local context of activity implementation;
- Facilitate a network (online and in person) of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion champions in the AWP partners and other agencies; and
- Ensure GEDSI experts are included in the AWP’s partner capability listing, including publication of profiles on AWP’s website.

### 4.4 Communication, learning and knowledge sharing

The AWP will communicate its work and seek to learn and share its experiences by:

- Communicating to all AWP partners the expectations of the AWP to address gender equality, disability, and social inclusion, as set out in this policy;
- Facilitating regular gender equality, disability, and social inclusion learning events, for staff, governance bodies and partners to learn from practice and to reflect on the evidence generated through the monitoring and evaluation system;
- Preparing appropriate communication materials to build awareness of the AWP achievements in gender equality, disability, and social inclusion and to facilitate knowledge sharing;
- Ensuring that all AWP communications products emerging from the AWP and its activities actively reflect the AWP’s commitment to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (including through use of accessible communications formats); and
- Empowering partners to share their gender, disability and social inclusion efforts and insights by developing a resource hub under the GEDSI offering webpage.

## 5 Policy Implementation

This policy will be progressively implemented over the period of 2020–2023. The policy commitments will inform the AWP Annual Operating Plan and its associated budget. Progress will be featured in AWP’s Annual Reports and through its monitoring and evaluation systems.

A policy implementation plan will include a framework by which the AWP will monitor its performance against the commitments set out in this policy.