



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

**Submission to  
AusAid  
on  
the review of the  
International Refugee Fund**

August, 2006

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

Private Bag 3 Deakin ACT 2600  
Telephone: 02 6285 1816 Facsimile: 02 6285 1720  
Email: [main@acfid.asn.au](mailto:main@acfid.asn.au)  
[www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)  
ARBN: 091 918 704

ACFID is an independent association of Australian non government organisations working in the field of international aid and development.

# **ACFID SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE FUND**

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the review of the International Refugee Fund (IRF). ACFID represents 81 Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working on international aid and development issues. For more information on the work of ACFID and its members, please visit [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au).

## **ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY TO THE FUND**

While ACFID recognises that AusAID is not seeking to extend the eligibility of access to the fund, we strongly urge AusAID to consider expanding those eligible to the IRF to include NGOs. There are a number of protracted situations around the world, where ACFID members and/or their local partners have been working with refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) for some time. The importance of long standing relationships, which NGOs have with their local partners cannot be underestimated as an effective way for AusAID to implement programming.

We note that in recent years, AusAID has reduced funding to UNHCR, the largest agency mandated to work with refugees and IDPs. The Australian Government's Department of Immigration relies heavily on UNHCR to carry out a number of programs for refugees in the region, and UNHCR has a strategically important role to play in Australia's refugee and humanitarian program. The stronger and better equipped UNHCR is, the more effective the cooperation will be between the Australian Government and this key player. Hence we recommend AusAID give priority to funding UNHCR.

ACFID also recommends that AusAID consider narrowing the eligibility of those agencies able to access the fund to those, which include protection in their mandate/mission. Protection is a major issue for refugees and IDPs and this should be reflected in the IRF guidance.

## **TYPES OF PROJECTS FUNDED**

AusAID could consider a more strategic approach in the way the funding is disbursed, and the types of projects/programs, which are funded. The minimum funding should be lowered from \$500,000 to encourage smaller projects. The current funding arrangements encourage large sums for large programs. There should be some consideration given to how a combination of small and large programs could make the IRF more effective. Smaller pilot programs, or research projects (for example, investigating how to provide greater rights to work for refugees in Thailand) could be commissioned under the IRF.

ACFID is concerned by the sustainability of projects which have to be completed in a 12 month period. While there is a place for short-term projects, which may well have good impacts, consideration should be given to the sustainability of these impacts.

AusAID could consider funding projects that have already begun, or projects that may require more funding to continue, instead of only funding projects to which no monies have been disbursed or that will be completed within 12 months.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS**

ACFID commends AusAID on including South West Asia and Iran in the eligible regions of the IRF, as these areas contain many people of concern. ACFID suggests that AusAID consider expanding the IRF to include the Middle East given the needs of the region and its security implications. Following the very recent conflict in Lebanon, the already high number of Palestinian refugees and IDPs along with new Lebanese refugees has dramatically increased. These people will need a high level of assistance over a long period of time.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

In criterion 1.1 applicants should not only state what the needs of the refugee communities are and how they will be addressed, they should also advise how they have identified the needs, including with whom they have consulted concerning the community's needs. This would include ensuring consultation with women and people with disabilities and camp visits instead of simply liaising with the people in the capital city.

Criterion 1.2 should be strengthened. The relationship between refugee and host communities is a very sensitive and important one. How applicants address this relationship should be weighted more heavily.

Finally, in criterion 2.2 the acronym “NGOs” should not include an apostrophe.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

ACFID again thanks AusAID for the opportunity to comment on the IRF, as we believe the continued funding for this scheme is a very important part of AusAID’s humanitarian work. There are several NGOs which would be interested in participating in this scheme, and we urge AusAID to consider their inclusion.