



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

**Submission to  
the Department of  
Immigration and Citizenship  
(DIAC)  
on  
AUSTRALIA'S  
2007-08 HUMANITARIAN  
PROGRAM**

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## **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

# **ACFID SUBMISSION ON AUSTRALIA'S 2007-08 HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM**

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2007-08 Humanitarian Program and hopes that our recommendations will be given due consideration. ACFID represents 72 Australian not-for-profit organisations (NGOs). For more information on the work of ACFID and its members, please visit [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au).

ACFID and its member organisations have a common objective of providing assistance, including protection, to those most in need, and building human security in the world's most vulnerable communities. ACFID members work with refugees in approximately 15 countries. A small number of ACFID members work with refugees in Australia.

DIAC's Humanitarian Program, together with Australia's aid program, has a vital role to play in addressing underlying causes of conflict and in building human security and global stability. As we see it, the humanitarian program must complement the Australian aid program, which aims in part to address the needs of communities at risk and support for good governance initiatives.

It is vital for governments and non government actors to ensure protection at every stage of the three solutions available to refugees: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. ACFID endorses the UNHCR mission that the ultimate aim in protecting refugees is to find solutions for them<sup>1</sup>.

## **I. Issues of Concern to ACFID members**

### **a. Size of the 2007-08 Humanitarian Program**

The frequency of humanitarian emergencies occurring around the globe is increasing. In 2006, there were food security problems in Africa, conflict in Lebanon and Timor Leste and natural disasters in the Philippines and Indonesia, as well as ongoing situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Iraq etc. Such crises produce refugees who, unable to return or be reintegrated locally, must be resettled in foreign and distant countries.

The refugee program is the prime component of Australia's humanitarian response, as it protects extremely vulnerable refugees. It also assists UNHCR to fulfill its important mandate. Therefore, ACFID believes that at least 50% of the program should be devoted to refugees. ACFID also urges the government to include more provisions for internally displaced people to be included in the humanitarian program.

ACFID recommends that the size of the Refugee and Humanitarian program should increase as a proportion of the overall migration program, to a total of 14,000

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Mission [online] <http://www.unhcr.org/basics/BASICS/3b0249c71.html>

places, to better reflect the demand for resettlement places and in recognition of Australia's capacity to assist. ACFID recommends to DIAC that a contingency reserve, of at least 3,000 places be set aside to accommodate resettlement in any humanitarian emergency, on top of the existing allocations to other entrant groups.

**ACFID recommends:**

- **The offshore program be increased from 13,000 to 14,000 places in 2007-08.**
- **A standing provision of an additional 3,000 places in the humanitarian program for a contingency reserve available in emergency situations and at the request of UNHCR.**

## **b. Whole of Government approach to Refugees**

ACFID appreciates the leadership role taken by DIAC on refugee issues, and appreciates the Department's approach to consultation with NGOs. As an NGO member of the annual Australian Government delegation to UNHCR ExCom, ACFID also recognises the important role of DFAT and AusAID in the delegation. Active involvement by these agencies is needed to achieve a balanced Australian position. ACFID also recommends that the dialogue leading up to, and following UNHCR ExCom is broadened to include refugee, displacement and protection issues more generally.

Integrated planning between the Immigration department, DFAT, PM&C and AusAID on such issues as emergency response, aid delivery, protection and resettlement, would provide a holistic approach to addressing the causes and alleviating some of the consequences of displacement.

ACFID recommends greater AusAID involvement in refugee, displacement and protection issues. Given comments made by UNHCR at the 2006 ExCom regarding the importance of aid in supporting state stability and sustainable return, AusAID is encouraged to further develop linkages between conflict, peace, displacement and development. Specifically, we urge AusAID to appoint a specialist advisor on refugee and displacement, which examines the issues in both emergency response and development paradigms.

**ACFID recommends:**

- **Improving the quality of intra-departmental coordination, particularly drawing on a more active role in UNHCR ExCom by DFAT and AusAID.**
- **A strengthened DIAC-NGO dialogue leading up to, and following UNHCR ExCom, including broader discussions on refugee, internal displacement and protection issues.**

- **The creation within AusAID of a specialist advisor on refugee, displacement and protection issues, that goes beyond emergency response.**