



QSA NEWSLETTER

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QSA's office and mailing address Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore NSW 2048
ABN 35 989 797 918 ACN 618 346 839 phone 02 8054 0400 website www.qsa.org.au
administration@qsa.org.au

*Welcome to the new QSA Newsletter where you will meet new people, learn about our projects and join us in helping to change lives. We encourage you to let us know your thoughts and get involved. In this newsletter, we will look at the various **networks** of which QSA is a part, and how we support, and are supported by other development agencies.*

Quaker Service Australia is one of a number of development agencies operating here in Australia. It is one of a few organisations that existed in 1965 at the initiation of the peak body of development agencies – **Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)** or ACFOA (Australian Council for Overseas Aid) as it was originally called. As of 2019, there are 123 member agencies of varying sizes, budgets and sector focus with some operating in very niche areas. The majority of the member organisations are small, with staffing numbers equivalent to, or less than, QSA, and of these small-sized organisations most are not accredited with Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). QSA is accredited with DFAT as a Full agency (the other category being Base level), and is due for a re-accreditation review in mid 2020. In addition to the non-government organisations (NGOs), ACFID also has 22 affiliate members – universities and other bodies whose work is in related areas.

What does QSA gain from its membership with ACFID?

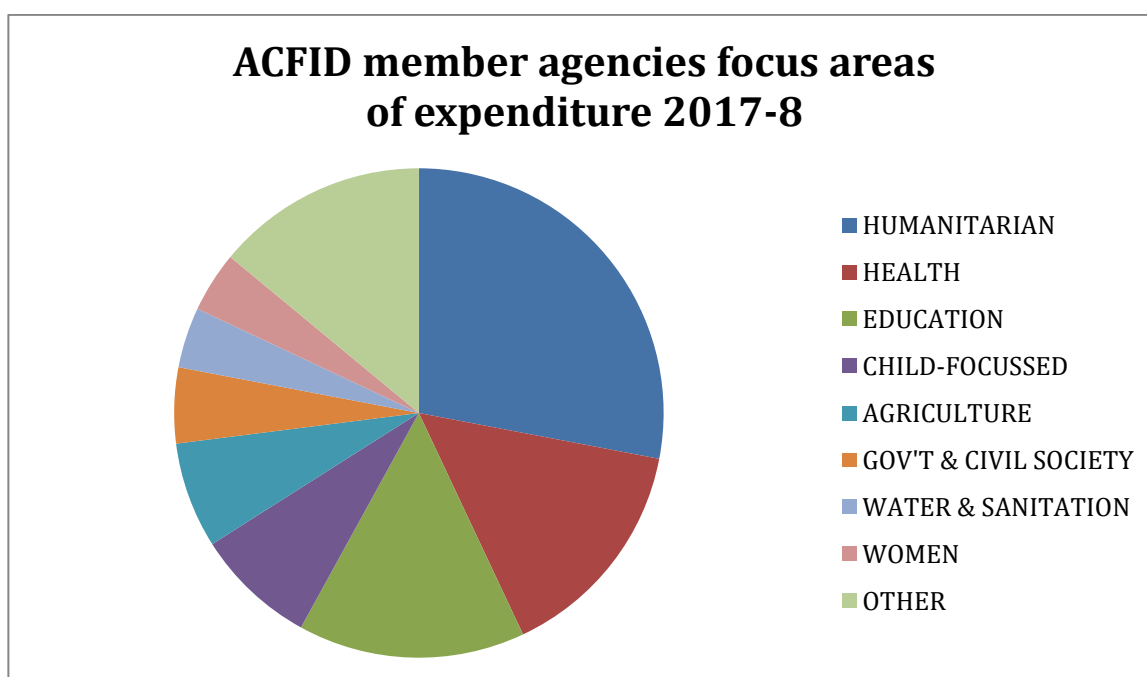
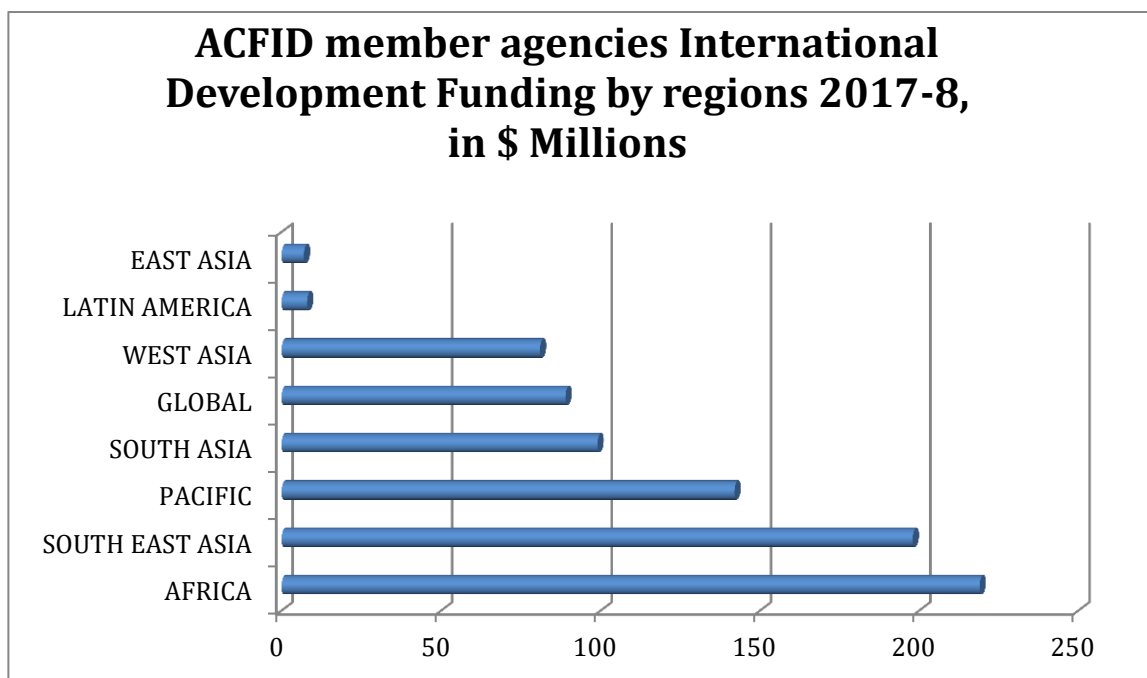
ACFID is an authoritative body that plays a critical role in uniting members and generating common positions to strengthen the international development sector's collective voice. This is carried out via submissions to parliamentary enquiries (over ten during 2018-9) and government-issued consultations such as the Joint Standing Committee Enquiry into the effectiveness of Australia's aid program in the Indo-Pacific region, to which 23 recommendations were made. 13 recommendations were also made to a Senate Committee on the Sustainable Development Goals. All of these activities help to expand the reach of each of the member agencies, especially in the case of the smaller agencies, such as QSA, and although we try to take part in the discussions, we have insufficient time available or the necessary expertise to make submissions on our own.

ACFID's Code of Conduct is recognised as a professional standard, and consists of a code of nine principles relating to a development agency's role, with 33 commitments together reflecting the behaviour to which agencies are expected to adhere. For each commitment, there are a number of compliance indicators, all 91 of which collectively establish and help agencies to maintain professionalism and effectiveness in their work. It means that, for any member agency, irrespective of their size, membership of ACFID means fulfilling all of the indicators and it is therefore an important consideration, requiring a significant outlay in terms of finance and effort. Every three years, each agency responds in a written report as to how it demonstrates its compliance against each of the indicators, giving examples of its policies and procedures. During the intervening years, the agency completes an exception report – what parts are they not compliant in, and what are they doing about it to improve? The ACFID Code Secretariat reviews the assessment, and makes recommendations for improvements. This opinion, and resources made available by other agencies to assist, creates a form of peer review of an agency's work, standards, and quality, which is particularly helpful for all agencies.

ACFID also collates data such as where the member agencies have their projects, how much is spent on them, and the number of people being supported and how. During 2017-8, ACFID members ran 3,485 projects in 86 countries – an amazing total. During this period, QSA ran projects in Cambodia supporting 2,290 people with improved and sustainable livelihoods; in Tamil Nadu, India supporting 11,110 adults and children strengthening their livelihood security with sustainable connections to their environment;

Malaysia supporting 35 refugee children to receive pre-school and kindergarten education; Uganda supporting 1,028 small-scale farmers and school children with improved agricultural skills; Zimbabwe supporting 8 staff with training and mentoring to manage a centre for children with disabilities; and in Australia supporting 12 community projects engaging Indigenous Australian and refugee communities.

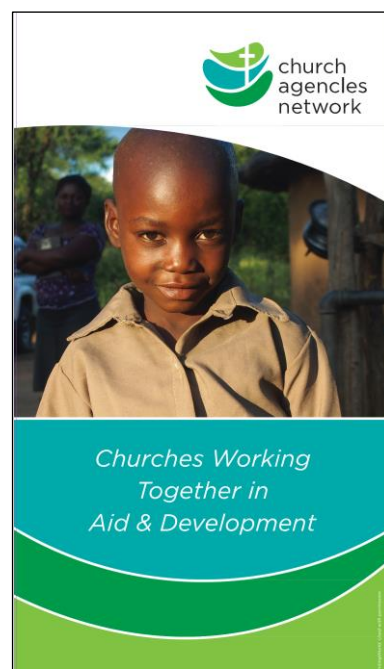
It is interesting to note where the majority of members' funding goes – Africa, and then South East Asia. For funding by the Australian Government via DFAT by far the greatest funding is centred in the Pacific as this is where, politically speaking, Australian interests lie. The income for all of the ACFID member agencies combined was \$1.615 billion, comprising 52% from community support, 17% from DFAT, 12% from other overseas grants, 7% other Australian grants and 6% from other income. For QSA, 30% of its income came from DFAT, and 30% from Meetings, Quaker Shop and individuals representing our community support.



The distribution of the combined \$1.597 billion spent by ACFID member agencies during 2017-8, 60% went to overseas projects, 12% to domestic projects, 7% to accountability and administration and 7% to international projects non-monetary expenditure such as international affiliate organisations, and 11% fund raising costs, which like all of the percentages, would vary from agency to agency. For QSA, 75% of expenditure during 2017-8 went to overseas projects, 7% to administration, 2% to Indigenous Community projects, and 3% to community education and fundraising expenses. The details of QSA's 2018-9 year will be available via the Annual Report after the Annual General Meeting scheduled for February 2020, either from Linkages Committee members or on QSA's website.

Another key component of ACFID's membership activities is hosting member information forums – an opportunity for networking, learning about international government policy developments which relate to our work, and information about key project management focuses. Also it hosts 32 communities of practice, which are open to key staff in an agency to join across specific country / region or sector. QSA is a member of a number of these, including topics on finance; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters; Cambodia; the African region; child protection; agriculture; food security; small agency challenges; climate change; gender equity. These all relate to QSA's current projects so that we can contribute from our experiences and learn from the experiences of others. Requests by ACFID and DFAT are sometimes made for QSA to support smaller, and often less experienced organisations among the ACFID membership by providing a mentoring role and support regarding policies and procedures.

QSA is a member of another network - the **Church Agencies Network (CAN)** which provides other opportunities for close collaboration at many levels, including advocacy, staff training and mentoring. CAN comprises Australian church-based aid and development agencies who are members of ACFID and the National Council of Churches in Australia. Members include Act for Peace; the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA); Anglican Board of Mission – Australia Ltd; Anglican Overseas Aid; Australian Lutheran World Service; Caritas Australia; Global Mission Partners; Salvation Army; Transform Aid, formerly Australian Baptist World Aid; and Uniting World.



Through this network, QSA has been able to participate in shared training workshops and some local advocacy campaigns. Several member agencies of CAN are working collaboratively in Papua New Guinea in a large program funded by DFAT, however QSA is not, as it does not have current and relevant experience of working in PNG. There is great benefit to all agencies of sharing ideas, resources and approaches. It is a network where questions are asked and answers shared. Within CAN are separate meetings held two or

three times per year of representative groups of project managers, CEOs, finance officers and program effectiveness managers. CAN has also been instrumental in ACFID's annual conference holding an interfaith prayer breakfast on one of the mornings, which has been well attended.

QSA is also part of a few other, infrequent, and less formal networks. Links have continued over the years with Quaker Service agencies around the world. QSA has attended a number of representative gatherings, though these have now been replaced by on-line video meetings to reduce our collective carbon footprints. A relationship with Aotearoa New Zealand's Quaker Peace and Service has been maintained rather more closely, with several visits to and from QSA and phone and email contact.

Why does QSA put so much time and effort into maintaining these networks? It is a chance to reap but also to repay the support and sharing it has received over the years from other agencies, who came along with shared resources at a time when we were in need of assistance. It enables QSA staff to share and extend their capacity by working alongside representatives doing similar work and perhaps experiencing similar difficulties or issues. There is also a strong sense that we are all working to improve the wellbeing and self-sustainability of people and communities, who, by circumstances, happen to be less fortunate than ourselves, and ultimately, to try and end the need for QSA and other donor agencies' existence at all.



2019 ACFID Conference delegates, University of NSW. Photo credit ACFID

If you would like to know more about the work of QSA, please contact Jackie in the QSA office on administration@qsa.org.au. Your contact details are not disclosed to third parties unless required to do so by law. If however you have received this emailed newsletter from the QSA office and you no longer wish to receive it, please send an email to Jackie with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line, and your name in the body of the email.

Thank you
Jackie Perkins



QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. See www.acfid.asn.au for details and should you wish to provide feedback about QSA and its work.