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Peter Zwart
Unit Manager, Development Policy
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Wellington

Dear Peter

Reviewing New Zealand's policy on aid and sustainable development

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on New Zealand's policy on aid and sustainable development.

Family Planning New Zealand operates nationwide providing sexual and reproductive health services, clinical training and health promotion services. In addition to being the largest provider of sexual and reproductive health and education services in the country, we draw on this expertise to contribute internationally. We deliver projects with NGOs in the Pacific based on our strengths in our domestic work – providing evidence-based clinical and health promotion services, research and advocacy. We are also the Secretariat for the New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD).

Our international work currently focuses on the Pacific region and the comments in this submission are therefore focussed on Pacific Island countries.

Critical sustainable development challenges New Zealand should respond to

Realising sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and achieving gender equality for all is widely acknowledged as essential to sustainable development. This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals which recognise the need for gender equality (goal five), universal access to sexual and reproductive health services (target 3.7) and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (target 5.6). When individuals can decide if and when they want to have children, they are better able to plan their futures. SRHR and gender equality are fundamental for health, education, economic and environmental gains and to address broader challenges, such as those in the Pacific, including from increased pressure on

the environment and resources, large youth populations and high rates of urbanisation and population growth.

Pacific Island countries face considerable SRHR challenges which impact the health and wellbeing of women and girls, families and communities. The unmet need for contraception in the Pacific is high. For example, over one quarter (27%) of partnered women in Kiribati report having unmet need, meaning that they are not using modern contraception but want to avoid or delay having another child in the next two years. In Samoa, the level of unmet need among partnered women is even higher at 43%. In comparison, unmet need is estimated to be 12% globally and 21% for the least developed regions.¹ Teen pregnancy is another pressing issue in the Pacific region. According to the Guttmacher Institute, approximately half of pregnancies among adolescent women aged 15–19 in developing regions are unintended. More than half of these end in abortion, often under unsafe conditions.²

The benefits of investing in a range of sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptive services and maternal and new-born care are well-established.

- **Health benefits:** Approximately 214 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for modern contraception. If their need were met, unintended pregnancies, unplanned births, induced abortions, and maternal deaths related to unintended pregnancies would all decline by approximately 75%.³
- **Social, economic and environmental benefits:** Investment in sexual and reproductive health leads to increased participation of women and girls in education and the workforce, and to increases in earnings, social status and gender equity. Societal benefits include better living conditions, reduced poverty and reduced environmental impact.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** For every extra dollar invested in contraception, the cost of pregnancy-related care reduces by \$1.47.⁴ In a cost-benefit analysis, the Copenhagen Consensus Centre rated investment in sexual and reproductive health as “phenomenal” and in the top 13 of 169 targets in the draft post-2015 development framework.⁵ Consistent with other work, our cost-benefit analysis found that every dollar spent on family planning in Kiribati would save \$23 in health and education costs.⁶

Gender inequality in the Pacific is illustrated by some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world. An estimated 60-80% of women and girls in Pacific Island countries will

¹ State of World Population 2017. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/swop>

² Darroch, J. E., Woog, V., Bankole, A., & Ashford, L. (2016, May). Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Meeting the Contraceptive Needs of Adolescents. Retrieved from <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-meeting-contraceptive-needs-of-adolescents>

³ Darroch, J. E. (2017, December). Adding It Up: Investing in Contraception and Maternal and Newborn Health, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/adding-it-up-contraception-mnh-2017>

⁴ Singh, S., Darroch, J. E., & Ashford, L. (2014). Adding it up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014.

⁵ Copenhagen Consensus Center (2014), cited in Barot, S. (2015). Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Are Key to Global Development: The Case for Ramping Up Investment. Guttmacher Policy Review, 18(1), 1–7.

⁶ Family Planning New Zealand. (2014). Investment in Family Planning in Kiribati: A cost-benefit analysis. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

experience physical and/or sexual violence over the course of their lives⁷ and a recent report found that nine out of ten people in Samoa experience violence in the home.⁸ At a political level, the Pacific has the lowest levels of participation of women in Parliament at just 5.6% compared to 23% globally.⁹

For development to be inclusive and sustainable and achieve fairer and beneficial outcomes for all, it is essential that the fundamental needs and interests of women and girls are reflected in policy and programmes. Moreover, research repeatedly confirms the value of investing in women and girls, as it produces a “ripple effect” of positive outcomes for families, communities and economies. On average, women spend 90% of their earned income on their families, compared to 30-40% for men.¹⁰

Gender and SRHR are intrinsically linked. Gender equality enables individuals to exercise their full rights and make decisions about their reproductive lives and sexuality free from violence, coercion and discrimination.¹¹ When women can decide whether and when to have children they have more options, such as completing their education. Their autonomy in the household increases, their ability to earn an income improves and they can more readily participate in political life. Considering the significant challenges in SRHR and gender equality in the Pacific, and the clear impact on the health and wellbeing of women, girls, families and communities, these issues should be a priority for New Zealand’s aid and sustainable development policy.

Contribution New Zealand can make to address these challenges

New Zealand has a history of leadership in SRHR and gender issues at the Human Rights Council and other United Nation forums including the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Pacific reset, with an increased focus on human rights and women’s political and economic empowerment, provides an opportunity to become SRHR and gender leaders in our aid policy also. This would put us alongside countries like the Netherlands, who recognise SRHR as one of four main themes of their development cooperation policy;¹² Sweden, with 17% of their aid interventions focussing on gender equality and 70% giving consideration to gender equality;¹³ and Canada, with gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls central to their international assistance policy.¹⁴

⁷ UN Women. (2011). *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Evidence, Data and Knowledge in Pacific Island Countries* (Rep.). Suva, Fiji.

⁸ 'Veil of silence' on Samoa's domestic violence. (2018, September 12). Retrieved from <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/366275/veil-of-silence-on-samoa-s-domestic-violence>

⁹ United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2018). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Report of the Secretary-General* (Rep. No. E/2018/64). Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18541SG_SDG_Progress_Report_2018_ECOSOC.pdf

¹⁰ Women Deliver. (2014). *Invest in Girls and Women: The Path to Sustainable Development*. July 2014.

¹¹ IPPF. (2015, February). *Sexual and reproductive health and rights – the key to gender equality and women’s empowerment* (Rep.). Retrieved from https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2020_gender_equality_report_web.pdf

¹² Government of the Netherlands. (n.d.). *Dutch development cooperation policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.government.nl/topics/development-cooperation/the-development-policy-of-the-netherlands>

¹³ Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. (2014, December 15). *Gender equality*. Retrieved from <https://www.sida.se/English/how-we-work/our-fields-of-work/gender-equality/>

¹⁴ Government of Canada. (2018, July 05). *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*. Retrieved from http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng#5.4

New Zealand's cultural and historic relationship with Pacific countries puts us in a unique position to lead in this area. By harnessing our technical expertise, including through non-government providers like Family Planning, and our cross-cultural competency, we are well placed to be champions for SRHR and gender equality in New Zealand's aid and sustainable development policy.

Priorities for New Zealand's aid to developing countries

Our specific recommendations with regard to New Zealand's aid priorities are:

1. Include SRHR as a stand-alone priority sector for New Zealand's aid to the Pacific region.
2. Provide long-term funding for sexual and reproductive health services. Gains in SRHR take time and therefore require sustainable funding. Strong civil society organisations are well-placed to work collaboratively with governments to support ongoing service delivery.
3. Integrate gender across all development strategies and activities as well as targeted funding for activities with gender equality as the main objective.
4. Adopt the International Parliamentarians' Conference (IPCI) commitment to allocate 10 per cent of official development assistance to population assistance. This supports the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the collective ambition of Pacific leaders under the Moana Declaration, Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Commission on the Status of Women and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Tools beyond aid for sustainable development

We recommend New Zealand:

5. Continue its leadership role at UN and regional level to support Pacific governments to meet their international commitments to SRHR and gender equality, for example under the Moana Declaration, Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population, Commission on the Status of Women, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and Sustainable Development Goals.
6. Support Pacific governments with their national strategies and policies that advance SRHR and gender equality.
7. Assess the impact on gender equality and look for opportunities for women and girls in policies and activities related to trade, diplomacy, public policy and international business.

Sustainable Development Goals and New Zealand's international contribution

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for the shared ambition of New Zealand and the Pacific for improved SRHR and gender equality. We now have a unique opportunity to harness our leadership and expertise in these areas for profound impact through our aid and sustainable development policy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me if you wish to discuss our comments further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Edmond', written in a cursive style.

Jackie Edmond

Chief Executive