

NZ, Pacific and Australia call for united action on COVID in our region

28 October 2020

Aid agencies and community organisations from New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific have called on their governments to increase aid to deal with the devastating impact of COVID lockdowns in the region.

The joint statement was delivered at Day 1 of the first pan-Oceania conference between the region's international aid and development civil society platforms, and read live by the Chairs of Council for International Development in New Zealand (CID), Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO).

'This is a unique and special moment. Never in the history of our organisations have we come together like we are today, and under one virtual roof because of COVID. As a continent of over 41 million people across Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, we come from deep, rich, and diverse cultures and communities.'

'COVID has caused the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.'

Unemployment and poverty across the Pacific are increasing. The World Bank estimates that as many as 150 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2021, and some of those will be in our region if we do not respond with increased support.

'For Governments and citizens, our work has never been more relevant. With that, the responsibility on us is even greater. Our governments must work with us to ensure that the people and nations most impacted by COVID do not fall further behind.'

'Whilst the pivoted response to COVID-19 is welcome, Australia and New Zealand commit under one-third of 1% of their national incomes on international development assistance. In a continent with some of the least developed nations of the world, amidst the worst health and economic crisis in over a century, this level of assistance is totally inadequate.'

'Without sufficient increases to international development expenditure, the progress and the key indicators of life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, and income across the region will be lost.'

The three-day [Oceania Connect 2020](#) conference is virtual, and jointly hosted by New Zealand's Council for International Development (CID), the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government-Organisations (PIANGO).

Jeffrey Sachs will give a keynote address on COVID's impact on aid, and rebuilding globalisation.

Date: Thursday 29 October

Time: 12pm (midday) NZ time

Venue: Via Zoom (for access and link to hear the speech, please contact CID below)

The Council for International Development (CID) is the peak body for New Zealand's aid agencies

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