



MEDIA RELEASE: Aid increase welcome, but must go further to address growing global health challenges

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The Australian Global Health Alliance welcomes increased investment in overseas aid to address the immediate COVID-19 crisis and other global health battles, and calls for a focus on health equity with a longer term vision to meet the growing challenges our region faces now and in the future.

The 2022-23 Official Development Assistance budget will support a new package of \$300 million over five years to address gender equality and violence against women in Southeast Asia.

The budget flags an additional \$85 million pledged to COVAX, the international mechanism to deliver vaccines to the world's poorest countries, a \$77 million increase in spending to global health programs, a five-year extension of the Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security and the extension of the temporary and targeted packages aimed at supporting the economic and social recovery from COVID-19 in our Pacific and South East Asian neighbours.

However, Alliance Chair Professor Brendan Crabb AC said without further long-term commitments we risk losing ground in global health.

"Pleased as we are with this commitment, the funding increase announced by the Commonwealth is temporary and cuts are still built into the forward estimates. This ignores the medium to long-term nature of responding to COVID-19, including the profound effects of the pandemic on health more generally," Professor Crabb said.

"We must invest strongly to address immediate global health needs, protect our hard-fought progress, and prepare us to tackle new health threats in the future."

Alliance Executive Director Dr Selina Lo said the budget needed to better confront the devastating health impacts of climate change here and in our region with a determined vision and plan.

"Global health is about addressing health equity everywhere. Climate change is the single greatest threat to global health in the 21st century and cuts across communicable and non-communicable disease burden. Australia and our Pacific neighbours are particularly vulnerable." Dr Lo said.

"Today, for example, our friends in NSW find themselves battling the devastating reality of an increased frequency of dangerous and extreme weather events, for the second time in a month."

Dr Lo also identified an opportunity and requirement to strengthen Australia's own global health workforce capacity to respond to current and future health challenges.



“Our networks of health providers, researchers, educators and organisations are world class leaders in many fields and have underpinned our pre-eminence in health and medical care and innovation for decades,” Dr Lo said.

“Yet even pre-pandemic there was rarely new money contributed to specific global health higher education. Australia can only contribute meaningfully to the health and prosperity of the region by investing in global health workforce capacity.

“It is critical that the Australian Government invests in global health through education pathways and research and development opportunities now to improve the capacity and robustness of the current and future Australian global health workforce and our partners.”

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