

Cufa's Statement of Commitment to Locally-Led Action (LLA)

December 2024

Leaders of civil society organisations in developing countries have been calling on Australian NGOs and elsewhere to support local-led development through progressive principles of "localisation" which include transference of: power, priority setting, decision-making and ownership including leading engagement of local civil society in donor, and funding arrangements as outlined through the Charter for Change: <https://charter4change.org/>. Moreover, locally led development and the process of localisation are a powerful means of achieving improved development impact and build capability in partner countries. It empowers local leadership to implement priorities, deliver essential services, and functions, which in turn improves sovereign state capability, legitimacy, economic growth and resilience.

Cufa is a relatively small international NGO with the majority of staff based overseas (currently 9 in Cambodia and 5 in PNG/Bougainville - that is, 14 in total relative to 4 staff based in Australia). Further, we directly deliver all program activities and do not outsource or subcontract activities, which provides greater scope and flexibility to implement our locally-led action (LLA) principles and values.

Notably, Cufa has readily implemented ACFID's recent AGM Resolution (*Resolution 1-2022: Decolonisation, Anti-Racism and Locally Led Action*) to address the general absence of peoples from developing countries sitting on the governance bodies of Australian INGOs. Robert Aisi, who is based in PNG, joined Cufa's Board in June 2023 as our inaugural overseas-based Director. This reflects Cufa's deep commitment to localisation at all levels and approaches in both our operations and program delivery. This is underpinned by our MoUs/EoLs in place with national government partners, including the respective Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and PNG Department of Education, along with PNG's Small and Medium Enterprise Cooperation (SMEC) and Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion (CEFI). We work closely within national architecture to align our policy priorities and ensure accountability.

Key dimensions of our current LLA focus include:

- (1) Cufa local leadership: our teams in Port Moresby and Phnom Penh are local-led and managed, with a commensurate investment in skills development and governance capacity over time. Our head office provides support and engagement to empower our exclusively local teams to deliver programs on budget and on time according to the highest required standards.
- (2) Children's Financial Literacy (CFL) program: a core element of CFL is our significant investment in teacher training and capacity development to build long-term ownership and sustainability. As local teachers gain the skills and confidence to deliver our CFL project directly, we share our curriculum and tools to enable delivery without the need for our ongoing presence while offering support where appropriate.

(3) Micro-enterprise development: the approach to our cooperative social enterprise (CSE) support in Cambodia focuses on extensive investment in governance and management training for identified community leaders, with a focus on women and people with disabilities. This is the best pathway to drive long-term endogenous business growth and avoid any risk of dependency on long-term Cufa involvement to sustain CSE operations.

Cufa’s Self-Assessment

The following continuum serves as a tool for organisation self-assessment and to help monitor progression towards more locally-led development. The Continuum focuses on who and how decisions are being made. This is closely linked to the concept of power, which can be thought of as ‘the ability to influence the outcomes of decision-making’.



Most of Cufa’s activity currently falls within **Category B**, which reflects our investment of time and effort in systematic consultation with local actors to inform our approaches, priorities and decision-making. At the same time, we are actively developing pathways to shift over time into **Category C** and this will emerge as a stronger characteristic of our program design, planning and implementation practices from mid-2025 as we continue to lay this groundwork. In the context of the FY25-26 ANCP ADPlan development process, Cufa commits to harness the respective ACFID templates on Action Identification and Action Prioritisation. This will be reinforced through our robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) culture which actively embraces six-month ‘reflect and refocus’ workshops with team members and stakeholders.