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The Origins and Establishment of the Australian Council for International Development

In Canberra, where the Australian Council for International Development is located, whole suburbs are devoted to industry associations and peak bodies there to capture the ear of government. It is often assumed that these industry peak bodies' own members drove the process of coming together to advocate for their cause. The case of ACFID is quite different: it was a determined individual, Sir John 'Jack' Crawford, a former public servant with no NGO connections, who brought a disparate group of Australian development NGOs together into a single council in the mid-1960s. Without him there may not have been a single peak body for NGOs with the near universal representation of Australian development NGOs it has today; or at the very least it may have formed much later. In 1965 there was scepticism among NGOs about the need for a peak body, and it was not until the early 1970s that ACFID was able to establish a clear identity and become a very active council. This chapter describes how ACFID came about.

Part of the rationale for establishing ACFID lies in the post-war aid scene in which newly independent countries and their international supporters, including NGOs, were struggling to meet the post-war and postcolonial challenges. While there were aid programs before World War II, and some of the common NGOs today such as the Red Cross, Save the Children, and others have their origins in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, these were largely concerned with disaster relief, health, education, and welfare. Lissner (1977) dates the first international NGO to 1653, when a missionary society from Quebec started work in Latin America, followed by other missionary and educational institutions that worked in all European colonies over the next 300 years. Since those early missionary NGOs, the growth in NGO numbers has been slow, with their focus remaining narrow and welfare based. Notions of

development did not get much currency until US President Roosevelt's 1941 call for 'four freedoms' – of speech and worship, and from want and fear; the creation of the United Nations in 1945; and US President Truman's Point Four Program¹ for development in 1949 (Chant and McIlwaine 2009; James 1993). The post-war reconstruction efforts in war-ravaged Europe and Japan through the 1950s spilled over to meeting the needs of the newly independent developing countries and sought to transplant rapid industrial development models from the West (Gubser 2012; Thorbecke and Tarp 2000; Tarp 2010; Dwivedi and Nef 1982). The 1950s also saw NGOs responding to the needs of local populations in the emerging developing countries and starting their own programs there, most often with volunteers. This nascent development work by Australia started in Asia in the 1950s and in Africa in the 1960s (Australian Aid Abroad 1967).

In the 1950s developing countries were either fighting for independence or developing the political formations and administrative machinery necessary for government, and so it was not until the 1960s that economic development and aid programs began to expand and assume much greater importance (Abdel-Rahman 1970; Pearson 1969; Fukuda-Parr 2004; Kanbur 2006). A notable exception was the 1950s' Colombo Plan,² which was very much part of a Cold War strategy to keep the emerging Asian nations in the Western sphere of influence, and to help them fight communism at home with economic development (Hasluck 1966; Taylor 1965; Tarp 2010; Oakman 2001; Howell 2014).

The first Development Decade

The first Development Decade (1961–70) was an attempt to have a more focused and directed approach to development (Thorbecke and Tarp 2000). The key elements were an agreement that developed countries would provide 1 per cent of their GDP as aid and foreign direct investment, and developing countries would achieve a 5 per cent real rate of growth (Quataert 2013; Hulme 2013). The decade was launched by the UN General Assembly in 1961 and was characterised by a shift in focus to include agricultural development and the Green Revolution, as well as the large-scale industrial development so favoured in the 1950s. This was a response to the problem that economic growth in general, and agricultural output in particular, were not able to keep up with rapid population growth. It would simply take too long for industrial development to produce enough jobs in the context of a looming food crisis. The problem with these approaches,

1 It was called the Point Four Program because it was the fourth objective (point) of Truman's foreign policy.

2 Its full title at the time was the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia.

which still persists, is that they depend on imported technocratic solutions rather than adapting local approaches and addressing global structural issues of inequality and access to resources (Meier 1971; Quataert 2013; Gubser 2012).

US President John F. Kennedy was a champion of the Development Decade and picked up the Truman idea of the Point Four Program. He sought to expand it with what he referred to as a Marshall Plan for development.

To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich (from John F. Kennedy's Inauguration speech quoted in Birdsall and Sowa, 2013, p. 3).

Kennedy enacted the US Act for International Development in 1961, from which the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress, and Food for Peace emerged as the US response to the first Development Decade (Black 1992; OECD 1988; Council of Europe 1963; Labouisse 1961). Under the leadership of the prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, 1965 was declared the Year of International Cooperation (Kowalski 2011; Cumming 2013). Most importantly for ACFID's story, 1963 saw NGOs first recognised by the UN as being important players in developing a constituency of support for aid programs in Western donor countries (UNGA 1963a).

Despite the optimism of the first half of the Development Decade, development practice did not measure up to the rhetoric, and the decade ended in failure. As Lester Pearson (1969), the former prime minister of Canada who reviewed the first Development Decade, noted: 'the climate surrounding foreign aid programs is [now] heavy with disillusion and distrust' (p. vii). Neither the targeted aid and investment flows nor the growth targets were reached, and developing countries felt they had been short-changed (Odén 2010; Gubser 2012). The decade also marked the start of some fundamental questioning of the nature of development, with writers such as André Gunner Frank and the radical social movements of the time having a strong influence on development discourse (Legum 1970; Schmidt and Pharo 2003; Frank 1969). This all set the scene for a greater focus on direct poverty alleviation programs by addressing basic human needs, and a role for NGOs emerged as a way to ensure a greater and improved focus on development (Ziai 2011; Gubser 2012; Harries Committee 1979).

Australia's aid program

While Australia's overseas aid program began in earnest in 1950, it did not develop a strong and coherent development focus until the 1970s. In 1950 the Australian foreign minister Percy Spender, who was concerned at Australia's lack of engagement with Asia, put the idea to a Commonwealth Conference in Colombo of a plan of development for the three newly independent countries of South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Sullivan 1976; Taylor 1965; Oakman 2010).³ This program was established partially to counter the communist inclinations of many of the newly independent countries of the time through the use of soft power, as part of a broader Cold War strategy (Waters 1999; Taylor 1965; Jones and Benvenuti 2012) to project an 'image of Australia as a purposeful and strong Pacific power which, assuming appropriate and resolute action, could assert a stabilising presence in Asia' (Oakman 2010, p. 44).

The other important aspect of the Colombo Plan was to strengthen the cultural ties between Australia and Asia, which would build the enduring bilateral relationships that exist today (Lowe 2013). An important aspect of building these cultural ties was the sending of volunteers to provide technical assistance to Colombo Plan projects, which led to the burgeoning NGO volunteer programs of the 1960s (Oakman 2010). The placement of these enthusiastic young volunteers in the 1950s was fairly ad hoc, an example of which was a volunteer program to Indonesia proposed by Herb Feith and Jim Webb to be run by the Australian Committee of the World University Service in 1953 (Webb 1971). This was probably the first instance of an Australian government funding an NGO: 'the Australian Government provided the airfare, £50 and a bicycle' (Smillie 1995, p. 41). The ad hoc volunteer programs of the 1950s were part of a trend that led to the American Peace Corps, British VSO, and Australian Volunteers Abroad, which were all set up in the early 1960s and largely funded by their respective governments. They were seen as a way to foster cultural exchanges and build a positive image of the West at the height of the Cold War (Webb 1971; Georgeou and Engel 2011).

The 1950s was also a period when Australia, the UK and the US were involved in a number of postcolonial and Cold War conflicts. The main ones were the Korean War, 1950–52; the Malayan Emergency, 1955–60; the Indonesian Confrontation (*Confrontasi*) with Malaysia over Borneo, mid-1960s; and the war in Vietnam, 1962–75. Development aid was often linked to these conflicts as part of 'winning hearts and minds' or, as Oakman (2001) described it, 'fighting the Cold War in Asia through propaganda and development projects' (p. 260). In the United

3 The idea may have had its origins in an idea of the Indian Ambassador to China, Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, who in 1949 proposed to the Australian and the UK ambassadors a multilateral fund largely funded by the US (Fisher 1971).

States, NGOs were often part of the Cold War mix, with the Asia Foundation for example being set up in 1954 by the US government and funded by the CIA for this purpose (Department of State 1966; Wu 2012; Kilcullen 2005; Keck 2011; Oakman 2001). For Australia, its development programs went to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation countries to complement military aid – mainly to Malaysia but later to Vietnam as well (Wolf 1957; Hasluck 1964; Oakman 2001; Howell 2014).

Aid programs to Southeast Asia at the time were not without their problems, with emerging countries suffering the twin problems of too little investment and too much tied aid (Government of Malaysia 1969). Overall, the growth in aid in the 1960s was found to be ill-directed, not sufficient to kick-start the emerging economies of the region, and tied more to the donor's strategic self-interest rather than the development needs of recipients (Pearson 1969; Easterly and Williamson 2011).

NGO aid

Before World War II there were 655 international NGOs around the world, which quickly doubled in the postwar years to over 1,300 when ACFID had its first meetings in 1965 (Lissner 1977). This rapid growth in NGOs had its origins in community responses to war and the voluntary rebuilding efforts that follow conflict (TR Davies 2012; Kane 2013). As Fowler (2000) put it,

in this early stage, the inspiration and moral grounding for civic action arose principally from religiously informed and culturally conditioned values of compassion and from conventions of mutual obligation within groups both at home and abroad (p. 639).

The Catholic Relief Services and CARE,⁴ originally a US 23-agency network, had their origins in rebuilding Europe after World War II. Oxfam was originally founded in Oxford by a group of Quakers, social activists and Oxford academics in response to the famine created by the British blockade of Greece in 1942. Save the Children Fund had its origins in the 1919 blockade of Germany following World War I; World Vision had its origins in the Korean War in 1950; and, of course, the Red Cross with the Battle of Solferino in 1859 nearly a century before. With the exception of World Vision, which came later, these NGOs were very involved in the huge refugee flows from 1947–50, and the relief efforts in the mainly European war-ravaged countries (OECD 1988; Hilton 2012).

⁴ CARE was initially the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe. Later it became the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere and, as it globalised, the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.

NGO aid did not have a development focus until the 1950s, when the refugee and rehabilitation work of the postwar period was completed. At the same time there was limited government support for NGO work, with only Sweden providing public funds for NGOs in 1952 and the US government supporting some NGO work from 1954, mainly through food aid (Lindin 1976; Sommer 1977; Cullather 2010; OECD 1988). While the strong growth in support and interest in NGOs after the war was in the areas of post-conflict reconstruction, they soon became involved in responding to the devastating famines in India in the early 1950s, and in China later that decade. This work, while growing rapidly, was still ad hoc and privately funded, involving what Wright (2012) refers to as 'importing Northern ways to the South' (p. 124), much in the same way that bilateral programs were run at the time.

The 1960s saw NGOs shift more clearly to development aid, spurred on in part by the UN and the first Development Decade with its call for stronger public involvement in aid programs globally, and fostering a public voice for aid and development (Lockwood 1963; Hilton 2012). One example of this was the World Council of Churches (WCC) advocacy work from 1958, which adopted the position that Western donors provide 1 per cent of their GDP for both aid and foreign direct investment. This position was adopted by the UN in 1961. In 1972 this was revised to a 0.7 per cent target for official aid only (Clemens and Moss 2007; Tomasevski 1993). This nascent advocacy work took on an official guise with the formation of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC), which started in 1961 as a five-year global campaign movement sponsored by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to raise funds and awareness of the issues of global injustice among mainly the general public of Western donor countries (Lissner 1977; FAO 1961; Jachertz 2012).

The aim was to build a political constituency for development to enable the very large amounts of aid required. This and other calls for voluntary action came from a perceived moral obligation at the time to act on the very large levels of poverty, hunger and injustice around the world not being addressed in the postcolonial context (Opeskin 1996; Lockwood 1963; Tarp 2010; Huntington 1970). The aim was to not only go beyond governments in the FFHC but also to ask governments to be part of the campaign together with the community.

FFHC became, therefore, about people rather than politics. While British campaign patrons talked up national characteristics, FAO publicity material promoted Freedom from Hunger as a global campaign, encouraging its participants to identify as international actors (Bocking-Welch 2012, p. 890).

In the UK, Oxfam was a major player in the FFHC and had set up 1,000 FFHC committees, so that by 1965 they had raised £7 million while at the same time driving a new way of thinking about development. For example, Oxfam/FFHC produced their first teachers' guide on development in 1962 (Bocking-Welch 2012; Black 1992).

The impetus provided by FFHC resulted in 1963 being a pivotal year in NGO coordination globally. The FFHC had a global week of action against hunger in March (FFH Editorial 1962; Sen 1962); and in July of that year the Council of Europe held a seminar in Strasbourg which sought increased cooperation among NGOs, given the fast-growing public interest in aid (Council of Europe 1963). In December 1963 there was a conference in Berlin to bring together agencies across the world to report on how they were working together (Kidd 1963). To cap it off a UN General Assembly resolution, also in December, called on:

all non-governmental organisations to put their increased enthusiasm, energy and other resources into a world campaign in the basis fields of food, health and education to start in 1965 and continue for the remainder of the development decade (UNGA 1963a, p. 32).

In the UK, Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) started in 1962. At the same time a coordination process, the Lockwood Committee, was put in place to coordinate the various UK volunteer-sending agencies. Following its establishment, the UK Ministry for Overseas Development had discussions with the eight major agencies on the need for more cooperation and coordination of their activities, and for improving the climate for aid. This led to the establishment of VCOAD in 1965, which brought together the development and volunteer-sending agencies, with the ministry covering half the cost of the secretariat and having observer status (Ministry of Overseas Development 1965; Anderson 1964a). There were similar committees in New Zealand and the US dating back to the 1940s (Anderson 1964b).

The churches also played a role. For example, there were three Papal Encyclicals in the 1960s which moved the Catholic Church to a much stronger social justice stance,⁵ and which had a profound impact on Catholic development agencies. They rapidly expanded their reach and the type of work they became involved in, moving from welfare to social justice and development, and to undertaking social justice advocacy in their home countries (Clark 2012; Donaldson and Belanger 2012; see Chapter 3). For its part, the WCC adopted a policy in 1968 that 2 per cent of churches' income would go towards overseas aid (OECD 1988; Clemens and Moss 2007). It was these events of the 1960s that set the scene for

⁵ *Mater et Magistra*, (on Christianity and social progress) 1961; *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) 1963; and *Populorum progressio* (Progress of Peoples) 1967.

the rapid growth of NGO work through the 1960s and 1970s; their increasing involvement in government aid programs; and their advocacy work for social justice. With the increase in both the number and activities of NGOs, there was a need for NGO peak bodies to present a strong united voice.

The origins of ACFID

In Australia, international NGOs had seen a rapid expansion from the early 1950s. Initially there was a strong volunteer component with a focus on building cultural connections to challenge the xenophobia of the time (Webb 1971). Jim Webb was a passionate advocate of Australian community involvement in aid programs through the 1950s; he was involved with the UN, and from the early 1950s with the Volunteer Graduate Association for Indonesia, which expanded its focus in 1962 to become what is now Australian Volunteers International (Arndt 1970; Manning and Maxwell 2011). Funding for NGO work from the public also climbed quickly in the 1950s so that by 1963, for example, the National Missionary Council received \$2,114,000; Australian Catholic Relief \$1,120,000; and the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) \$600,000 (Anderson 1964a; Black 1992).⁶

The Freedom from Hunger Campaign provided an important impetus to Australian NGOs. The Australian government supported the campaign by providing seed funding, arranging a committee to manage it and, importantly, agreeing to provide tax relief for those who donated to the campaign for its first five years. The campaign was an outstanding success and in 1963, its first year of fundraising, it raised over \$2 million – around \$100 million in 2010 figures,⁷ and boosted NGO income by 50 per cent. The campaign became the major fundraising arm for development NGOs, with the funds raised being distributed through them to their partners in developing countries (Anderson 1964a; AFFHC 1963; Kilby 2014). This funding provided a major shot in the arm to the NGOs so that by the mid-1960s these NGOs were well-established development agencies.⁸

6 Converted from British pounds at the prevailing rate of 2:1; a multiplier of 12 would convert it to 2010 Australian dollars based on CPI changes.

7 This estimate takes into account not only the value of the dollar in constant price terms, but also the relative size of the economy at the time.

8 The main NGOs at the time were World Christian Action, World University Service, Community Aid Abroad, Austcare, Australian Catholic Relief and Freedom from Hunger (Sullivan 1976).

The growth of NGO support was such that there was even a perceived proliferation of Australian NGOs involved in aid, for example, in a letter from Lord Casey, former foreign minister, to John Crawford, complaining: 'I would expect it would be almost beyond the wit of man to get them to come together into an organisation of size and consequence that would ring a bell with a wide range of people' (Casey 1965, p. 1). This assertion of a proliferation of NGOs persists to this day. Even though their numbers were small by today's standards (around 30), and some were quite new on the scene, the larger Australian NGOs were beginning to engage with government on matters of aid policy, including increasing aid and foreign direct investment to 1 per cent of GDP in line with UN resolutions (Clunies-Ross 1963). This increased visibility of NGOs, especially the increased public support for NGOs, would not have gone unnoticed by the Australian government with its increasing aid program. In addition, there was not only the UNGA call for a greater role for the NGOs in 'alleviating hunger disease and ignorance', but also that member governments report to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on progress in 'stimulating a campaign by NGOs ... on food, health, and education' (UNGA 1963a, p. 32).

It was the coming together of this unique set of global and local changes for NGOs in the early 1960s that set the scene for the establishment of a coordinating body for NGOs in Australia. However, despite these international factors, the push for coordination did not come from the Australian NGOs, but rather from the persistent drive of a former leading public servant with strong links to government.

Enter Sir John Crawford

Sir John Crawford, who had been involved in some of the global issues around development in the 1950s and 1960s, picked up on the UN call in the early 1960s for a greater commitment to development and aid, both public and private, and for closer cooperation among NGOs. Crawford was an eminent scholar and leading public servant. He was responsible for many of the enduring public institutions in Australia of the postwar era: he was the founding Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in 1945 (now ABARE); Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Agriculture in 1950; and then Secretary of the new Department of Trade. He was responsible for the Australia–Japan Agreement on Commerce of 1957, for which there was strong opposition with the war then being a recent memory, but his pioneering work broke Australia's isolation of Japan, thus setting up an enduring trade relationship (Miller 2009; Ingram 2010).

In 1960 Crawford left the government service to become director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, now the College of Asia and the Pacific at The Australian National University. He stipulated that he must be free to undertake government inquiries and international commitments. The most important of these was the World Bank's economic mission to India in 1964–65; from there he played an important role in the implementation of its strategy for Indian agricultural development and the Green Revolution.⁹

Crawford's concern about development (and in particular agricultural development) was undoubtedly an important driver in his interest in NGOs, and why it was important for them to have a consultative mechanism with government as well as achieving greater synergies among themselves. The process of bringing the Australian NGOs together started in 1963 at the height of the growing global interest in NGOs (Perkins 1965). The first step was a lunch with Jim Webb from the Overseas Service Bureau in late 1963 in Canberra, hosted by Crawford. Included were David Scott from Community Aid Abroad, who was leading the 1 per cent campaign in Australia at the time, and Alan Manning, a journalist and friend of Crawford (Webb 2006; Blackburn 1993; Crawford 1964c).¹⁰ Jim Webb later recalled he had the feeling that Garfield Barwick, the then External Affairs Minister, was probably behind the move, and certainly others at the time felt the strong hand of government (Webb 2006; Sullivan 1976).

There was a belief some years later that the Department of External Territories' motive was to engage Australian NGOs in aid to South Vietnam as part of the war effort (Cullen 1986; O'Dwyer 2011). This Crawford initiative, however, predated Australia's major involvement in the war in Vietnam by a couple of years, and its major ally, the United States, did not seek to actively engage with NGOs in Vietnam until 1965 (Flipse 2002; Howell 2014). While there was a substantial Colombo Plan program to South Vietnam in the early 1960s, the Australian government had little, if any, understanding of NGO work, and there was very little NGO aid to South Vietnam at the time. So the idea of using NGOs to provide aid to South Vietnam was an unlikely motive for bringing the NGOs together (Oakman 2001). While the Department of External Territories did provide support in the ACFID planning processes, particularly for the second planning conference in July 1964, the evidence points to Crawford being the major driver, given his very active and continuing interest in ACFID, where he was to remain president until 1974. The government, however, did have an interest by virtue of the increased profile of NGOs with the public face

⁹ It was this initiative he was most proud of, contributing as it did to the making of a world where people would have enough to eat, and setting the stage for India's subsequent success (Miller 2009).

¹⁰ According to Sue Blackburn (1993), Harvey Perkins from ACC was at the lunch, but Jim Webb is adamant it was Manning not Perkins.

of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, and the UN's call for governments to 'stimulate' the role of NGOs (UNGA 1963a). It is easy to speculate that having a council of NGOs would be one way the government could meet its obligations under this UN resolution.

The interest from the NGOs in having a coordinating body at the time was lukewarm at best. They had just had their fingers burnt with the perceived duplicity by government on the issue of tax deductibility for the FFHC, which had been prematurely withdrawn just as these negotiations about forming a peak body were beginning. This was a sore point, as the NGOs felt the government had reneged on its five-year commitment to provide tax relief to the FFHC, and in the end only provided it for two years (Hobbin 1964; Webb 1964a).¹¹

What emerged from the lunch in 1963 was a two-day workshop funded by the Myer Foundation and convened by Crawford at ANU's University House in April 1964. Sixteen agencies attended and reported on their activities.¹² This was where, as Jim Webb (2006) put it, Crawford 'charmed them into cooperation', or from Nancy Anderson (2011), '[Crawford] would not stand for any nonsense'. Jim Ingram (2010) also noted Crawford's consummate skill in getting people to agree to things they may not have thought possible. However, the NGO aid activities over the previous 10–15 years, and in particular the growth in support NGOs had received since 1960, while being substantial and rapid, did not provide a strong argument for many NGOs for coming together. The arguments in favour of forming a peak body were to overcome public apathy; foster greater understanding of the issues of development; stir government to greater efforts; and, most interestingly, be able to present a more disinterested image of Australia in the minds of the recipient country. The effectiveness of small- and large-scale aid, tax deductibility and government funding were also touched on (Anderson 1964b; Webb 1964b).

In the end there was some general agreement for a Standing Conference of Private Organisations Engaged in Voluntary Overseas Aid which, among other things, would have led to a very clumsy acronym. It was shortened to ACFOA in later meetings, and the basic governance structure moved to it being a council rather than a conference. The key purposes agreed to were cooperation and consultation; exchange of ideas among members; suggesting projects for joint

11 The decision to withdraw the tax concession was based on the rather spurious argument that the five-year timeline was from the international agreement to set up the campaign made in 1959. The more likely explanation might be that the success of the campaign resulted in a significant amount of tax revenue foregone.

12 These were the Apex Club; the Australian–Asian Association of Victoria; the Australian Council of Churches; the Australian Red Cross; the Catholic Bishops Coordinating Committee; Community Aid Abroad; the Freedom from Hunger Campaign; the Friends of Vellore; the Junior Chamber of Commerce; Lions International the National Missionary Council; the National Union of Students; the Overseas Service Bureau; Save the Children Fund; the Volunteer Graduate Program in Indonesia; and the World University Service.

funding being an organisation for channelling government funds; advising on training; acting cooperatively on publicity; and providing hospitality to visitors. Given the breadth of the wish list of functions, it was agreed that a permanent staff and secretariat would seem necessary, and that the council of member agencies would meet twice a year, with an executive committee to coordinate the work of the council (Anderson 1964b).

The meeting agreed that Jim Webb and OSB would convene a further meeting two months later and the minister would be invited. While the records at the time do not indicate what was expected from the minister, the issues of funding and tax deductibility were probably at the front of people's minds. It was after the first meeting that FFHC had its tax deductibility removed (Hobbin 1964) and, as Webb (1964a) pointed out in correspondence, this had the effect of 'muddying the waters' and leading to some resistance to the very idea of coming together for a second meeting. Another suggestion at the time was that just the larger agencies (FFHC, ACC, and Australian Catholic Relief (ACR)) come together on an ad hoc basis only, rather than have a council open to all agencies (Webb 1964a, 1964b). This idea was to emerge again 30 years later in the mid-1990s (Hobbs 2013; Smillie 1995).

Clearly Crawford prevailed upon these large agencies, and the second meeting was held on 27 July 1964 with 15 agencies attending. Paul Hasluck, the new minister for External Affairs, was also supportive and attended the meeting briefly, and there were observers from the department. Jim Webb opened the meeting, pointing out the very favourable climate for aid at the time and, while Crawford acknowledged the tensions within the group, he urged that the awareness-raising work that ACFID could do still had to go on (Anderson 1964c). The feedback from agencies to this second meeting was also cautious. The Lions Club was nervous at the thought of a coordinating body, but felt that regular meetings were desirable; the Missionary Council felt the idea was premature and that more work was required on the issues, and broader policies, of foreign aid before a council could be set up; Apex was cautiously supportive of a coordinated group, but noted that it was important that agencies not lose their identity; and the Australian Asian Association, who supported it, suggested that the Department of External Affairs might have a liaison officer as part of the organisation.

It was here, however, with the urging of Crawford that the larger key agencies began to come on board. Crennin (Catholic Overseas Relief) was supportive provided there was no fundraising role; he also suggested the membership could extend to trade unions and industrialists and be on a semi-government basis. Jim Webb (OSB) indicated the need for such a body, but he was not sure of the form it should take, arguing that the Australian community was not yet

mobilised behind the government aid program, and more awareness work was still needed. David Scott (Community Aid Abroad (CAA)) noted that the UN resolution of December 1963 asked governments to support NGOs, and that the Australian government, at the very least, should have a funding role in the proposed organisation. Noreen Minogue from the Red Cross liked the idea of a coordinating body, but was not sure the Red Cross could be a member, given their constitution prevented them from being members of other organisations. Minogue preferred an Overseas Development Institute (UK)-type structure, which was less a membership organisation and more a think tank. An interesting suggestion, possibly reflecting a generation gap, was that it should have a youth focus to get the 18–35 age group ‘off the sand’. But a subsequent youth focus in the 1970s with their ‘radical’ ideas proved a step too far for some (see Chapter 3). The minister, Paul Hasluck, spoke off the record: ‘There is a strong streak of idealism in the Australian character, and it behoves us to see that it can find an outlet in the best possible way’ (Anderson 1964c).

Crawford noted, somewhat delicately, that the government ‘would not look askance’ at the idea of a council of some sort, and it was on that basis he put forward a motion for further consideration of the idea. He picked up on David Scott’s suggestion that a committee be set up to look in more detail into establishing a body. Crawford agreed to have three papers prepared: one on what happens in other countries, in particular the United Kingdom and Canada; a second on possible aims and structure; and, finally, a paper on implications for members. The plan was that these papers would be prepared by Crawford in consultation with DFAT, so it did not seem to be a ‘government thing’ (Webb 1964a p. 1), but in the end DFAT did much of the drafting work for him. Crawford also wrote directly to Australian embassies and high commissions in the major donor countries seeking information on NGO coordinating bodies in those countries.

Initially the thought was to link ACFID with the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (AFFHC) (which only became an organisation in its own right in 1964), which would do the fundraising for the other NGOs, while ACFID focused on advocacy through two semi-autonomous commissions: relief and development, and refugees and migration. The idea was that ACFID would do research, consultation, education and government relations through each of these commissions (Webb 1964c).

Crawford suggested a two-stage process for the formation of ACFID. The first was the establishment of a six-person group to discuss the proposal, and the three discussion papers, with other agencies.¹³ The second step was a full meeting of proposed founding members in 1965 to take a formal decision. This agreement was seen to be quite a breakthrough and a press release went out at the time saying:

there was a strong feeling evident amongst those attending the meeting that much more must be done by Australians to help underdeveloped countries, and the general task of creating public interest in the support for foreign voluntary aid activities might well be one of the tasks of any co-operating organisation (Crawford 1964a).

The discussion papers were circulated in November 1964, with meetings convened by the planning group held in Sydney and Melbourne at the end of 1964 and early 1965 to finalise the draft constitution and structure (Webb 1964b, 1965; Crawford 1964b). The key sticking point was whether to include refugees and migration in the mandate as a separate commission or not. In the end it was included but the structure of having commissions was in any case to be relatively short lived.

The formation of ACFID

ACFID held its first official meetings on 5 and 6 April 1965, and had its first executive meeting a few days later on 12 April (ACFOA 1965a, 1965d). Twenty NGO representatives met at University House at ANU in Canberra. Crawford, in opening the meeting, referred to a letter from Lord Casey expressing concern on the lack of cohesion among aid organisations. Crawford went on to urge that as aid had to be as concrete as possible there was a role in having rational aid policies and ACFID could support that (ACFOA 1965a, Casey 1965). After some discussion at the planning group meetings it was agreed to establish ACFOA with a 'formula ... of collaboration not integration' and a structure not be too elaborate (ACFOA 1965d). ACFID stated:

The common objective of all members is to work for social and economic justice, to respond to human needs and to help produce conditions through which people can realise their full potential as human beings (ACFOA 1965e).

¹³ The six-person group included Crennan (ACR), Hobbin (FFHC), Scott (CAA), Tuckey (Apex), Perkins (ACC), Herbert (SCF), and Webb (OSB). This grouping represented the major agencies as well as a smaller service agency in the form of Apex. The group became seven with Bill Hobbin included later as he was absent from the July meeting.

The seven founding agencies were Australian Council of Aid to Refugees; Australian Council of Churches; Catholic Overseas Relief; Community Aid Abroad; Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies; Overseas Service Bureau; and World University Service (Perkins 1965). A further 14 NGOs were to be admitted by the first council in August 1965. They included the major agencies with the exception of the Red Cross and Save the Children Fund, which could not join due to constitutional constraints preventing them from joining other organisations.

The key areas for ACFID's early work were identified as aid effectiveness, the relationship with government, and education of the public. It is worth noting that these three priorities have not substantially changed 50 years on. At the outset, ACFID was seen as a mechanism for collaboration among agencies rather than integration of the agencies (ACFOA 1965a). The role of government in this whole process was seen as important, and one of the first acts of the ACFID executive was to seek a grant of £1,750, or 50 per cent of ACFID's running costs, from the Department of External Affairs (ACFOA 1965d). While this request was not immediately agreed to, the department did cover the cost of the first council meeting in August 1965 and has continued to cover, with some variation depending on government priorities, around half of ACFID's running costs since 1967.

At the first council meeting in August 1965 the ACFID executive committee was formally confirmed, with Sir John Crawford as foundation president and Syd Einfeld as chairman. Syd Einfeld was a good choice as chairman as Crawford's other commitments would keep him away from the day-to-day running of the council. Einfeld was not only a tireless advocate for refugee rights but also the Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party in the New South Wales Parliament, which gave him the stature and authority to provide ACFID leadership through those difficult early years. For the first council meeting there were 14 members, with invitations sent out to another 11 agencies. Initial membership fees were set at £1,750 (ACFOA 1965c).



Figure 3 The founding office bearers of ACFID.

Clockwise from top left: Sir John Crawford, Syd Einfeld, Monsignor George Crennin and David Scott.

Source: Australian News and Information Bureau. National Archives of Australia A1200 L68147; A1200 L54364; A1200 L54365; A1200 L54366.

While there was an organisation there was not an effective structure to make ACFID work. Agencies had agreed to be on the executive and the two main commissions, but the resources for the work were limited, with no staff or

premises. The first year was spent not only on developing an identity and clear policies, but also on holding a flagship event. A conference by the Relief and Development Commission on the respective roles of government, the UN and NGOs was held in November of that year as a first step in building an identity (ACFOA 1965b). In 1966 further policy was agreed, the first being a Standing Policy on Development that recognised:

That the huge and widening gap between the poorer and wealthier nations of the world and between rich and poor people within nations which result in deprivation of basic human rights for more than half the world's population constitutes a denial of natural justice and is a continuing threat to world peace (ACFOA 1966c, p. 1).

The policy statement on NGO relations with government was a carefully crafted document to ensure that it did not adversely affect ACFID, given the financial support that was being hoped for in those early years. The policy stated that relations with government were to 'represent the interests of members, and to enter into formal arrangements with Government to further the interest and activities of the Council'. The government, however, saw ACFID's role as being a 'filter, or a point of reference for consultation' (ACFOA 1966b, p. 1).

Building a secretariat

Once the structure was in place ACFID had to find a way to fund a secretariat when members were reluctant to pay the higher fees necessary to provide the services being asked for. They probably took the view that given the hand of government in this venture then government should pay for it. The government was ready to exploit this conundrum facing ACFID, and in the latter half of 1966 made ACFID an offer that it would fund a position and a secretariat if ACFID would take on the role of coordinating aid to what was then South Vietnam. This followed the lead of the US government the previous year, which had supported a NGO fact-finding mission so they could undertake work in South Vietnam (Flipse 2002; Howell 2014). There were informal meetings among agencies in September 1966 followed by a special meeting of the council, which agreed to accept the offer, and so ACFID was able to appoint an executive director and establish an office. Interestingly, ACFID was to consult with DFAT on 'matters relating to the appointment', and the minister of External Affairs would make an announcement, giving an indication of the hand government had those days in these early organisational processes (ACFOA 1966d). The relationship with government thus became closer, and in some ways fraught as early as 1966 as there was increasing concern about Australia's growing involvement in the Vietnam conflict. In 1967 students were starting to organise aid to the South Vietnamese communist National Liberation Front through North Vietnam,

which some of the church agencies would later follow, with warnings from government that this might amount to treason (Saunders 1982). This was an era when social justice issues were reaching the mainstream, folk protest songs were on the popular music play lists, and the war in Vietnam was becoming a focus of protests everywhere.

In September 1966, John Crawford, David Scott and Syd Einfeld met with the Department of External Affairs about the Vietnam project, with a follow-up meeting in Melbourne. It was agreed that key criteria for the project were that there were to be no links with military and that ACFID would only appeal for members to be involved. They also noted the inherent difficulties of operating in South Vietnam (ACFOA 1966e; 1966f). The first step was a high-level ACFID executive visit by Einfeld, Scott and Harvey Perkins to South Vietnam in late 1966 to look at the scale of NGO aid to Vietnam (*Canberra Times* 1966). Their report was noncommittal on how ACFID would proceed, and they recommended that no further work be done until after the secretariat was established. There had been experiences elsewhere where NGOs had been engaged in partisan activities around the war in Vietnam. For example, Catholic Relief Services of the US was providing 80 per cent of the USAID food aid it sent to the families of the armed forces of South Vietnam (Casey 1973; Lissner 1977; Flipse 2002). There was a real risk that there could be similar 'mission creep' in the ACFID program; it could also be seen to be partisan and part of a 'hearts and minds' war strategy.

In early 1967, ACFID appointed Brian Hayes as the first executive director, with a salary of \$6,000. He had been with the World Youth Assembly in Brussels and returned to Australia in 1965 without a job. His background was as a moulder from Brisbane who had got involved in trade union work and from there the Young Catholic Worker (YCW) movement, of which he was elected its first full-time president in 1959 (Hinton 1971; Armstrong 2011). YCW at the time was a large Catholic youth organisation based on a philosophy of experiential learning, which was to be the source of global education in later years, and would play an important part in ACFID's life in the 1970s. Hayes was elected Secretary of the World Council of Youth in 1963 and went to Brussels as a full-time officer. When he came back to Australia without a job he was an obvious candidate and was appointed to ACFID in early 1967.

Brian Hayes' first task was to set up an office in Melbourne and then finalise the Vietnam project. He visited a heavily militarised South Vietnam in July 1967 and quickly found that NGOs could not operate safely there, so he suggested to the department, as an alternative, that ACFID could produce a bulletin on members' work in Vietnam (Hayes 1967a, 1967b). Further meetings were held with the department in which Crawford played a key role, emphasising the nervousness about the Vietnam project among members, particularly in maintaining independence from government and its involvement in the war (Hinton 1968).

The government agreed that the secretariat's work on Vietnam be reduced to a quarter of its time (ACFOA 1967a); in return ACFID held a Vietnam Appeal in early 1968, which raised a relatively modest \$70,000 that was distributed to the larger agencies' programs in Vietnam and effectively ended the Vietnam project for ACFID (*The Age* 1968; Hayes 1968; ACFOA 1968a; 1968b; 1968c).

ACFID in the late 1960s

While the Vietnam project took up a lot of ACFID's time in the early years, given that its resourcing was tied to it, ACFID was also struggling with the issue of coordination among members and seeking out a clearer role for itself as a nascent organisation. This was a period in which Brian Hayes was thinking about the internationalisation of NGOs and development issues, and the direction ACFID should go (Develtere and De Bruyn 2009; Lindenberg 1999). The idea of a development education focus came out of this thinking, as Hayes tried to bring the agencies into a more cooperative framework.

Membership

The day-to-day work was spent on building a constituency and ensuring a growing and broad membership. While the Red Cross did not join immediately, in 1967 they saw their way clear to join the Relief and Development Commission, and World Vision was approached to join after it noticed it was not included in the ACFID report on aid to Vietnam (Irvine 1969). Hayes was trying to get as broad a membership as possible, representing a diverse set of views across the political spectrum to build ACFID's legitimacy. A broad membership, however, did pose a risk in the day-to-day operations of ACFID if a consensus on particular issues was unable to be reached. Tensions were inevitable between older, more established conservative organisations and the younger, more radical NGOs riding the wave of liberation theology and the social activism of the time. In a letter to Vaughan Hinton, Crawford (1969b) refers to conflict among the diverse set of NGOs and was pleased that a couple of agency representatives 'for whom particular difficulties have been evident, are now members of the Executive'. Crawford took a close interest in ACFID when he was vice-chancellor of ANU (1968–73). Throughout this period he kept a guiding eye on its work, with his door always open to the ACFID staff and executive committee, playing an important role in diffusing issues as they arose (O'Dwyer 2011).

Issues of the time

One of the early challenges for ACFID was how to coordinate activities among agencies, and in particular fundraising. ACFOA (1967a) reported that ‘a state of bewilderment exists due to the fragmentation of effort by organisations, particularly in the field of fundraising’. This was to be an ongoing issue with the resolution being an agreement among some of the larger agencies to talk among themselves about the issue. A starting point was the publication of a member directory, *Not by Government Alone*, funded by the Myer Foundation. It not only listed the agencies but also outlined what they did, and so introduced the reader to ACFID and its members (ACFOA 1967d). The other main ACFID activity at the time was holding regular seminars and conferences by each of the commissions. The purpose of the conferences at the time was to build the credibility of ACFID and the NGO sector more broadly by facilitating public debate. From 1968 there was a conference as part of the council, and this set a trend for subsequent councils, enabling ACFID members to engage in the debates of the time as a group.¹⁴

Constitutional change

By 1969 problems with the original structure of ACFID began to emerge as the idea of having an executive plus two commissions was found to be unworkable. The Relief and Development Commission tended to have the same membership as the executive and so had trouble finding a role separate to that of the executive, and ‘lapsed as an effective entity’ (Scott 1968). The Refugee and Migration Commission, on the other hand, undertook important work but generally outside of ACFID’s membership, tending to operate independently (Hinton 1969). It went its own way, becoming a forerunner of the Refugee Council of Australia. David Scott suggested the idea of subcommittees of the executive committee rather than commissions with their own funding base as a better way forward. In 1969 the structure of commissions was abolished and replaced with committees that could look at a broader range of activities (ACFOA 1969b; Hayes 1969a). The first new committee to be established was on education and publicity; other committees to be considered by the executive were on trade and tariffs; the second Development Decade, which the government was keen on (ACFOA 1970b); and Australian official aid.

14 The conference themes included a Refugee and Migrant Service conference in February 1966; the Respective Roles of Government, UN and NGOs at the end of 1965; Aid and Development in 1965 and 1967 (ACFOA 1965b, 1967c); the Human Factor in Development (ACFOA 1968a); and in 1969 Australia’s Role in Joint Ventures and Investment in Developing Countries of Asia and the Pacific (Hinton 1971; ACFOA 1969a).

By the late 1960s concerns were also emerging about membership. As originally envisaged, there was to be one category of membership but with different fees based on size. There was, however, a strong desire to expand membership to those agencies that while having an interest in aid and development may not have it as their primary interest. The category of Associate Member was created, which was to remain until the 2010s when ACFID reverted back to a single category of membership for NGOs, with a new affiliate membership being restricted to universities. The other major issue at the council in 1969 was the future role of the secretariat. Hayes (1969b) had put to the council that the secretariat had to expand from being a one-person operation, with the addition of a research and information officer, that there was a need for a comprehensive information centre and last, but not least, to move to Canberra in order to engage with government more closely.

In 1970 these changes were implemented but not without some controversy. There was some debate on the role of the education committee, whether it should be linked with fundraising and whether it should go beyond aid in its mandate to a more social justice focus, a topic that was to come back in the mid-1970s as a continuing source of division. The council agreed that the office transfer to Canberra would occur by January 1971 (Hayes 1970a). As an interim measure they approached Crawford in his role as vice-chancellor at ANU and asked if there was temporary space available. They were offered accommodation in an old army hut where other NGOs were located at ANU for ACFID's first six months in Canberra in late 1971, while it found alternate accommodation (Hayes 1970b).

The end of an era

On 16 March 1971 Brian Hayes died suddenly, and his loss was felt deeply among the NGO community. As Vaughan Hinton (1971) reported to the 1971 ACFID Council in 1967, the council was struggling to establish its identity and purpose, but:

[Brian's] determination to break down parochialism and build a true internationalism of outlook and action ... [and the] cooperation and sharing that exists among us as organisations and as individuals results also from the strong personal friendships so many of us shared with Brian.

Operating from a one-person office in Melbourne, Hayes built ACFID to become what Crawford (1972b) called 'an authoritative body for making statements about aid policy generally ... ACFOA does have a public standing and a public audience'. Brian Hayes set up the changes that were to endure: a structure that

remains largely unchanged to this day; an education program that was to identify ACFID through the 1970s; and the move to Canberra, the seat of government, which represented a subtle shift from building a network of NGOs to being an advocate for their cause.

The loss of Hayes at this time of rapid expansion and moving proved to be a challenge. Interim measures were put in place to make the move before employing a new executive director. Brendan O'Dwyer, who was on the executive committee at the time representing the World University Service, was asked to act as an executive officer. The office moved to a room in an ACC house in the inner suburb of Glebe, Sydney, pending the move to Canberra in September 1971 and its permanent base (ACFOA 1971b; O'Dwyer 2011).

Conclusion

The achievements of ACFID in the first five years were considerable given the level of suspicion about the venture and what its functions would be. It drew on the ground-breaking work of Australian NGOs in the 1950s and the global movement for social justice. It was a voice for NGOs in the big development debates of the 1960s, and benefitted greatly from the vision of Sir John Crawford. While it was finding its feet, ACFID managed to stimulate the development and migration debate in Australia with regular programs of conferences through the early years. NGOs started working together, sharing information and undertaking joint programs. The leadership of Crawford, who saw himself as a 'sleeping partner' (1972b), was evident throughout. He was available for key meetings with politicians, was aware of the internal tensions, and his door was open to the executive director and executive committee at all times.

The relationship with government was tenuous through this early period with the arguments for tax deductibility falling on deaf ears. Government funding was, for a period, tied to coordinating aid to Vietnam, which was not seen by members as a task for ACFID. Hayes and Crawford navigated ACFID through this in a way that both preserved their funding and their independence – no small feat. It was Crawford's leadership as the 'founder' and first president, his links with government and NGOs and the substantial authority he exerted on them that made ACFID happen. Later, when tensions were high between ACFID and government, he was instrumental in easing them. It would seem that the government, rather than leading the process, was led within the process by an extraordinary individual (Webb 2006; Anderson 2011).

This text is taken from *NGOS and Political Change: A History of the Australian Council for International Development*, by Patrick Kilby, published 2015 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.