



Centre for Human
Security and Social Change

SUMMARY
ANNUAL
REPORT
2023

*A Research Centre of the School of Humanities
and Social Sciences at La Trobe University*



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

Centre for
Human Security
and Social Change

ABOUT CHSSC

The Centre for Human Security and Social Change (CHSSC) is a research centre based at La Trobe University in Melbourne which conducts world-class research, monitoring, evaluation and learning, education, and outreach on locally led and inclusive social change.

The Centre works collaboratively with other researchers, evaluators, practitioners, local organisations and international development agencies to better understand, support and enable the practice of social change.

This brief is a summary of the full CHSSC Annual Report 2023 [available online](#).

Our goals are to:

- better understand the front-line practice of social change agents and the organisational structures, policies and practices which help or hinder their practice at individual, organisational and system levels.
- directly support social change agents – individuals, organisations and alliances – that work for positive social change.
- help create knowledge, skills and institutional arrangements for the practice of social change.

OUR WORK IN 2023

In 2023, our work across Indigenous Australia, the Pacific, and Southeast Asia has demonstrated how incorporating local ways of seeing the world – and centering local experiences – can lead to improved development outcomes.

Our work with ASEAN ACT, for example, has helped bring the perspectives of victim-survivors of human trafficking with disabilities to regional and international policy and practitioner fora. Our research with UNDP Pacific examining citizens' understandings of accountability is being used to improve the relevance and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. In Indonesia, we are working with the INKLUSI program to understand what empowerment means for marginalised groups themselves and measure changes in empowerment over time. In the Northern Territory of Australia, our work exploring what well-being means for Warlpiri communities is supporting members of these communities to track change on their own terms.

We have also explored how successful policy reform happens through the eyes and words of key reformers themselves in our collaboration with The Asia Foundation's Coalitions for Change program.

And as part of our collaboration with the Australia Awards Women Leading and Influencing program, we have looked at how practitioners in the Pacific are engaging men in discussions around gender equality and women's leadership.

These projects highlight that privileging local, culturally specific understandings of change – and the experiences of those who are living this change – can make a demonstrable difference to development practice and impact.

In 2023, we undertook 31 research consultancies and projects with 14 partners, resulting in 35 peer-reviewed publications and commissioned research reports, 29 industry presentations, and generating \$1.4 million in external revenue. Feedback from our partners indicates that our work is highly valued and influential in shaping their ideas, policies and practices.

We are proud of our accomplishments this year and the positive impact we've had in advancing social change.



OUR PROJECTS

EMPOWERING THE LAJAMANU COMMUNITY

This project gives voice to the Lajamanu community to describe changes in their communities, aiming to establish a contextually appropriate measure of wellbeing. Starting in 2021, seven domains critical for a good life were identified, including Yapa decision-making, culture, support for youth, unity, health, housing, and employment. Using participatory methods, the Centre tracked changes over time in these domains.



DISABILITY AND TRAFFICKING IN ASEAN

Commissioned by the ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program, this study explored the intersection between disability and trafficking in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Local disability researchers undertook interviews with 24 victim-survivors and led workshops with counter-trafficking actors.

ENGAGING MEN IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE PACIFIC

As the research and learning partner for the Australia Awards Women Leading and Influencing (WLI) program, the Centre supports learning, conducts research, and disseminates knowledge. In 2023, this included research on effective ways to engage men in support of women's leadership. Consulting with WLI alumni and practitioners, recommendations from this research have been integrated into the WLI program.

POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNTABILITY ECOSYSTEMS IN THE PACIFIC

Part of UNDP's EU-funded 'Vaka Pasifika' project, this research documents Pacific understandings of accountability to explore contextually appropriate ways of improving responsive governance. Through case studies in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu, the Centre identified how accountability is perceived, shaped by context, and influenced by power dynamics. Findings are informing UNDP efforts to establish 'Fellowship Schemes' in these countries, uniting influential actors to pilot new accountability approaches.

TRACKING AND LEARNING FOR WETT'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) is a community development project funded by Indigenous people in the

Tanami Desert, Central Australia, using gold mining royalties to enhance education and training in Warlpiri communities. The Centre supports WETT to develop and implement an Aboriginal-led approach to tracking progress and capturing learning from their education programs. In 2023, a workshop led by Senior Yapa researcher Marlkindi Rose brought together key stakeholders, developing a culturally appropriate research approach.

NAVIGATING POLICY REFORM

Funded by The Asia Foundation's Coalition for Change Program, this project examined successful policy reforms in environmental protection in Kenya, women's political participation in Vanuatu, and disability rights in Indonesia. The research engaged with reform leaders, documenting their stories to reveal how local leaders and coalitions worked strategically to achieve change within their political constraints.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Partner	Work undertaken with this partner in 2023.
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Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Undertaking research on youth leadership and civic engagement in the Pacific.



Undertaking a political economy analysis of large ocean states; conducting research on policy reform processes in challenging political contexts; and delivering political economy analysis training to DFAT staff.



Supporting research and learning on women's leadership in the Pacific; the nexus between disability and trafficking in ASEAN; and law and justice in Vietnam.



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Contributing to the leadership, delivery, and evaluation of the Developmental Leadership Program and delivering developmental leadership training to DFAT staff.



Conducting research on the accountability ecosystem in six Pacific countries.



Supporting tracking and learning for Aboriginal-funded education and training initiatives in Central Australia.



Conducting an evaluation of the impact of the INKLUSI program on empowerment of marginalised groups in Indonesia.

Partner	Work undertaken with this partner in 2023.
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Supporting health system responses to violence against women in Timor-Leste and PNG.



Supporting monitoring, evaluation and learning for the CLC's community development program.



Supporting a longitudinal evaluation of DFAT's COVID-19 Pacific and Timor-Leste Preparedness Recovery NGO partnership.



Supporting adaptive management in three DFAT funded programs in PNG.

THE VOICE INC.



Supporting learning and adaptation of a leadership and collective action program in Papua New Guinea.



Conducting a political economy analysis of the Australian aid sector with the AFCID Board.



Undertaking an evaluation of the Aboriginal Governance and Management Program in the Northern Territory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University acknowledges that our campuses are located on the lands of many traditional custodians in Australia and pays our respect to Indigenous elders, past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and local organisations who have generously gifted us their knowledge during the course of our ongoing research in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

General Enquiries

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