

Strategic Plan 2017-2020



Institute for Human Security and Social Change

A Research Centre of the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce (ASSC)
La Trobe University

Much of a growing interest in innovation and disruptive change in the development sector seems focused on the potential of new technology, social media and developing countries “leapfrogging” the generations of change that developing countries have been through. Technological innovation is clearly important, but so too is social and institutional innovation which produces systemic change and is often the means by which technology can be harnessed to shift power relations.

Roche, C. & Madvig, A. (2016) ‘Working towards Transformational Development and the Sustainable Development Goals’. Institute for Human Security and Social Change Research report, La Trobe University, Bundoora.

From the Director

Dear Institute supporters, colleagues, collaborators and friends,

I'm very pleased and excited to share this strategic plan with you. The Institute for Human Security and Social Change is young but we have accomplished some important things and built on the strengths that we inherited from our former incarnation, the Institute for Human Security. This strategic plan is designed to consolidate our work to date and to set a clear path for our Research, Teaching, Professional Development and Outreach.

The Institute is uniquely placed within a University that has a strong community based activist history; in Melbourne that is a locus for change organisations and activists; and in the Asia Pacific region where so many social change processes are playing out.

In our Research we seek to understand the practice of development. We aim to do this in partnership with development agencies in order to improve their ability to make change happen.

In our Teaching and the Professional Development we will continue to contribute to the Master of International Development and to focus on building the skill set of professionals working towards social change.

We will continue to undertake Outreach in innovative ways that encourage new thinking about development and social change.

Our plan is an exciting but also challenging. We need to consolidate to build on our strengths and we need to build a sustainable income stream so that we can grow the number of strong researchers in, or linked to the Institute.

Thank you for reading this strategic plan and for being part of the Institute's next phase.

Associate Professor Chris Roche
Director
Institute for Human Security and Social Change

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Section 1 – Context

1.1 The nature of development and social change globally

Activists, practitioners and citizens on the ‘front-line’ provide us with important knowledge and wisdom about how complexity, uncertainty and political reality are navigated, and how social change practice plays out in different contexts.

We seek to play a role in exploring the complexity of these processes and supporting the work of social change agents, individuals and collectives, including through research that can provoke disruption and identify positive deviance, as well as new forms and narratives of inclusion.

We recognise that social change requires: transforming structures of power and institutions; multidisciplinary thinking and multiple perspectives; as well as local and transnational collective action.

1.2 The external environment

This plan recognises that the global environment is characterised by fundamental and continuing change. The plan reflects the trends that have been identified in recent years including that:

- by 2025 the locus of global poverty will be overwhelmingly in ‘fragile’ states (i.e. low income countries with weak state capacity) however, over 75% of the world’s poor are currently located in Middle Income Countries, many in the Asia-Pacific region
- the long-established ‘aid industry’ actors (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) aid donors and International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)) are being challenged by a range of new institutions, business models and practices, especially South–South development cooperation and non-governmental funding and alliances
- complexity, uncertainty and tipping points are realities that need to be considered
- de-globalisation, nationalism, closing space for civil society and a return to authoritarianism is a trend
- declining trust in governments, institutions, elites and experts is an emerging reality
- the notion of ‘Leaving No One Behind’ and addressing inequality as well as tackling poverty, inequality and climate change by bringing the social and environmental together, are all central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda

- the importance of seeing the challenge of self-determination and ‘closing the gap’ in Indigenous Australia is a critical part of the narrative and practice of International Development.

1.3 What we do

We are a not-for-profit, collaborative and university-wide initiative that carries out

- Research
- Teaching, and
- Professional Development and Outreach.

We seek to strengthen the quality of our Research, Teaching and Outreach.

Through the Institute, La Trobe seeks to position itself as one of the key universities in Australia undertaking applied research in partnership with others on issues of equity and social justice.

This applied research has a particular emphasis on the effective participation of civil society, citizens and the disadvantaged, and the role of non-state actors.

An important element is understanding the place and role of Australia and its citizens in the international arena, and in domestic debates on indigenous rights, poverty, inequality and injustice.

We currently work in or have partners or collaborators in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Kiribati, Samoa and In Australian Indigenous communities.

La Trobe - a community-focused university

Melbourne - a Hub of NGOs, activists and progressive thinkers

Australia – acting within a regional context

Asia-Pacific – vibrant region becoming the world’s centre of economic gravity.

Section 2 – Our vision, mission and goals

2.1 Vision and mission

In a time of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the Institute for Human Security and Social Change seeks to actively contribute to progressive social change. We aim to do this through becoming increasingly recognised as a resource in re-imagining how social change happens, including the translation of research findings into practice, education and policy.

2.2 Goals

We aim to do this through understanding effective practice, building strong collaborations, and knowledge sharing.

- To better **understand the practice** of social change agents, networks and organisations and what is effective in contributing to inclusive, equitable and ultimately transformational development.
- To **work in partnership** with NGOs, alliances, coalitions and social movements who promote progressive social change, with a particular focus on the Pacific, Indigenous Australia and women’s collective leadership.
- To test, curate and share different forms of **knowledge and evidence** that enable and support transformational development, particularly appropriate methods and tools for design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning of change initiatives.
- To explore and promote the **institutional forms**, arrangements and leadership that can underpin and support collective action at multiple levels.

2.3 Our challenges

Achieving our vision is not without challenge.

Our ability to deliver on this plan requires that we:

- be informed by the expectations of our stakeholders, staff and students in an environment of rapid change
- attract and retain staff and develop links with researchers in other institutes;
- effectively quality manage our research and its implementation;

- effectively integrate the different elements of our plan so that our different activities are mutually reinforcing; ;
- drive and adopt innovative models of research, outreach and teaching in a complex funding environment.
- find means of effectively functioning in the university in ways that enable us to be responsive and adaptive.

2.4 Stakeholders

The major influences that guide the Institute's work are our different stakeholders.

We seek to place them at the centre of all that we do. They include:

- Civil Society Organisations, Networks and Coalitions
- International and local NGOs
- Multilateral and bi-lateral aid agencies
- Organisations promoting Indigenous development in Australia
- The next generation of change agents.

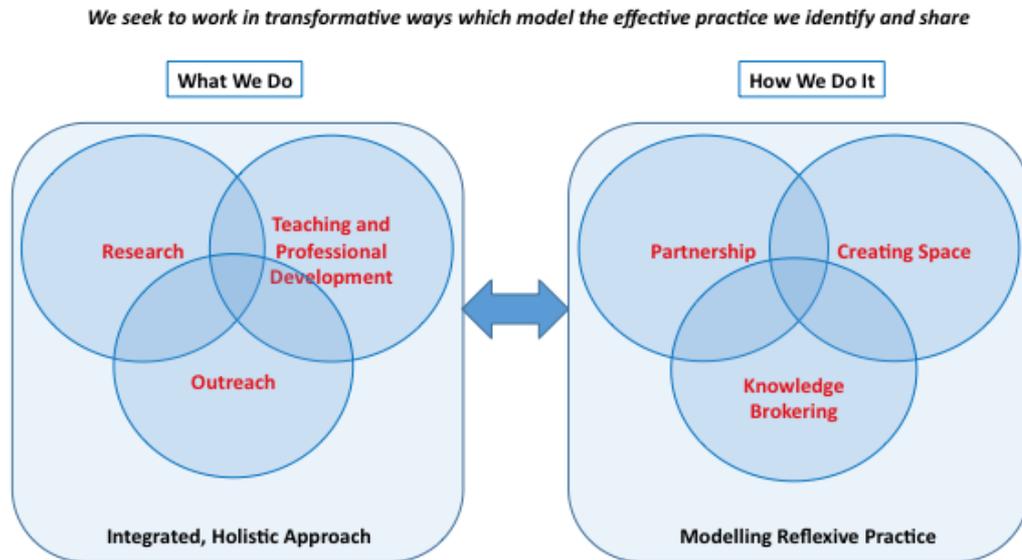
Three examples:

Our work with **DFAT and the Developmental Leadership Program** is recognised as having contributed to changing discourse on how bilateral and multilateral development agencies are now discussing development approaches and in particular how they need to 'Think and Work Politically'.

Our **research and outreach activities** have allowed us to build a diverse range of connections and partnerships with: Government (DFAT, Department of Community Health); International NGOs (Oxfam, Action Aid, Caritas Australia, Australian Red Cross, Australian Volunteers International, IWDA) and their Peak Body (ACFID); Local NGOs and CSOs in the Pacific (Civil Society Forum of Tonga, the Green Growth Coalition in the Pacific, FemLINK Pacific in Fiji), Organisations working in Indigenous Australia (the Central Land Council, the Healing Foundation); and Universities in Australia and Internationally (University of Birmingham, University College London, University of Sussex, University of Goroka, University of South Pacific, QUT, RMIT and ANU).

In partnership with ACFID we have developed and conducted a **professional development program** for NGO executives and senior managers. This partnership has the potential to reshape how International NGOs conceive of the process of social change, and how they effectively run programs and organisations that are consistent with this understanding.

Section 3 – Our approach to our work



The Institute acts as a vehicle for positive social change, as illustrated in Diagram 1.

3.1 What we do

We allow activists, practitioners and citizens to provide us with important practical knowledge about development and social change and we share this understanding with other practitioners, including to challenge their assumptions, through our research, teaching and professional development.

3.2 How we do it

Our key ways of working are:

- creating space
- knowledge brokering
- partnerships.

The Institute's distinctive difference is the extent of our **collaboration around research and outreach**, including our direct engagement in social change and development practice. We take a critical eye to collaboration to assist partners in accessing knowledge and building on their experience.

At the same time, we recognise that we are part of the system we are observing. As such what we do, and how we act, also contributes to maintaining or changing the

system. We therefore see ourselves as change agents trying to work in ways that are consistent with our research findings. In particular this means:

- we seek to **create the space** for those we interact with to develop their own understandings and perspectives of social change
- we seek to **broker knowledge** by creating the relationships and networks necessary for knowledge to be effectively shared, and
- we seek to develop genuine and respectful **partnerships**.

Through these processes, and in the knowledge that the understanding of how change happens is not well understood and constantly changing, we seek to add to how traditional Participatory Action Research and academic scholarship can create more **transformational outcomes**.

The Institute seeks to make a contribution to the way in which wicked problems of development and social change are addressed by undertaking and encouraging **research** that engenders progressive social change and that focuses on successes and on new and innovative collaborations between organisations, institutions and people in diverse sectors and geographies.

An important aspect of the Institute's work is our **teaching and professional development** for the next generation of development practitioners and leaders. We seek to make an important contribution in Australia for postgraduate studies in International Development through innovative and evidence based curriculum and training. In order to remain relevant future global development practitioners and leaders will need to continually adapt to a changing world and lead and manage organizations and coalitions capable of doing so.

The Institute is committed as part of its research programs, to conducting community **outreach** in many different ways. Institute staff participate in, design and lead events with partners and associates of the Institute. Staff also undertake consultancies or technical support roles with partners and other organisations, as part of their substantive roles, which contribute new knowledge and networks to the Institute. Staff attend conferences, and contribute to learning and knowledge sharing events.

3.3 Our Research Principles

Our principles for research are grounded in our understanding of research as a social and political process, central to which must be building ethical relationships with the people, communities and organisations with which we seek to collaborate. This is particularly important in a region where extractive research and the colonial experience were intimately linked, and has contributed to a continued legacy.

Our principles for research are informed by the 2003 Guidelines for Ethical Research

in Australian Indigenous Studies, and the NHMRC 2003 Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, and Guidelines on Ethical Conduct of Evaluation and Code of Ethics produced by the Australian Evaluation Society. ACFID principles and guidelines for ethical research and evaluation in development can be found on their [website](#).

We will seek to meet the following principles:

- **Reciprocity, Benefits and Giving Back** - inclusion and recognising partners' contributions, ensuring that research outcomes should benefit, and not disadvantage communities.
- **Rights, Respect and Recognition of Diversity** - acknowledge and affirm the right of people to have different values, norms and aspirations and to recognise their rights to 'maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions and intellectual property.
- **Negotiation, Participation and Mutual Understanding** - consultation, negotiation and free, prior and informed consent are the foundations for research'.
- **Competence, Quality and Integrity** - researchers should be current, competent and rigorous in their research practice and undertake their research in accordance with appropriate standards of research practice
- **Responsibility and Accountability** – ensure harmony between the sets of responsibilities, participants are protected, trust is maintained and accountability is clear and transparent - to the multiple stakeholders involved.

In addition, our work is based on:

- **A recognition of the political nature of development and of our work:** We position ourselves as active participants, in researcher and practitioner roles, in social change processes. Given that social change is inherently political and disruptive, we acknowledge that our research is also political in nature.
- **A partnership approach:** drawing on the principles of equity, openness, mutual benefit, valuing diversity, and courage.
- **A commitment to participatory, strengths-based methods that embrace the complexity of practice:** Valuing the input of those involved in change processes, appreciating what works and why, even when this is counterintuitive or not obvious.
- **An understanding of research as a developmental process in itself:** Our involvement does not extract knowledge or sit outside of change processes, but rather contributes to and is constitutive of those processes.

Section 4 – Objectives for our work

4.1 Research

Our research seeks to:

- Understand and promote the **inclusive and participatory practice** of development practitioners and organisations
- Facilitate the role of **alliances, coalitions and social movements** in promoting progressive social change, [particularly engaging in the Pacific, and with a focus on women’s collective leadership]
- Value different forms of **knowledge and evidence** that enable and support transformational development, particularly developing methods and tools for monitoring, evaluation, and learning that organisations can use
- Progress **institutional forms and arrangements** that can underpin and support the emergence of collective action at multiple levels.

We will do this in a manner that integrates and supports our broader teaching, professional development and outreach. The Institute exists to undertake applied research in partnership with others on issues of equity and social justice in International Development, with a particular emphasis on the effective participation of civil society, citizens and the disadvantaged, and the role of non-state actors. We use a partnership model, which focuses on building equity, transparency, mutual benefit and mutual accountability in to all collaborations.

In accordance with our Research Guidance Note (2018), our research questions are focused on:

- What processes and practices of social change in the Asia/Pacific have been more or less effective in addressing inequality and social injustice? How and why have these processes been effective and who has — or has not - been involved?
- How can these processes and practices be best supported, nurtured and shared in ways that encourage a more enabling organisational and policy environment for their development and emergence?

4.2 Teaching and Professional Development

The aim of our teaching and professional development work is to contribute to a curriculum and develop content that reflects recent advances in our understanding of development theory and development practice, with a particular focus on progressive social change in development. We seek to work with learners and practitioners in an engaging way and have a strong commitment to looking after our

learners and in helping them to get the most out of their studies and professional development. We also seek to ensure that our professional development aligns with our broader outreach and advocacy.

4.3 Outreach

The Institute seeks to undertake community outreach in innovative and disruptive ways that encourage new ways of thinking about development and social change. We seek to act as a knowledge broker, a clearing house and a contact point within the university, and across Australia, the region and internationally for information on progressive social change practice. Our approach is underpinned by our values and research principles and is aligned with our research, teaching and professional development. We actively disseminate our research findings through conferences, forums, sector media and other avenues likely to maximise influence on practice, including taking up opportunities to strategically influence the broader social change and development agenda. We also seek to create opportunities for all the stakeholders and participants it works with to be able to reflect critically and with safety on their experience and learning.

4.4 Planning and Governance

The quality of the research produced by the Institute is dependent on:

- research conducted by academic staff
- research facilitation conducted by professional staff
- research conducted by practitioners affiliated with the Institute, and
- enabling environment provided by the University.

The Institute is committed to professional and academic staff working together as a cohesive team, building strengths together, and respecting equally the contributions made by every team member. Institute staff will also work closely with the broader university to take advantage of Institutional support, contribute to the research community at La Trobe, and work towards changing systems, which do not support flexible, responsive, applied research. We seek to develop ways of working that are consistent with our understanding of social change and developmental leadership. We also need to effectively balance our existing commitments with developing new areas of work.

4.5 Key Performance Indicators

1. Contribution to a narrative that provides for alternative research, practice and understating of how to bring about positive social change.
2. Development of people (including institute staff) more able to work within that narrative and to promote its practical application in practice and research.
3. An expanding network and set of partnerships which contribute to and implement that narrative.

Strategic Plan 2017-2020	
KPI	TARGET
Research and Partnerships	
Successfully deliver on our existing portfolio of research contracts.	Services delivered in accordance with the scope of services in our contracts with research partners.
Identify new opportunities for research partnerships.	Partnerships developed with NGOs to facilitate the submission of an ARC Linkage Project for the project: International Development: Sustainable Development Goals, Transformation and Innovative Practice. Relationships developed with PNG universities and other research institutions through the PGF Knowledge Platform. Research activities explored with at least three new partners over the next three years, with an emphasis on those based in the global south. Research promoted to potential research partners. A balanced portfolio of research partnerships, including governments, NGO, Indigenous organisations, local movements/alliances and NGOs.
Pursue opportunities to pursue category 1-4 funding.	At least three ARC funding applications submitted over the next three years. Funding applications submitted to DFAT and other bodies over the next three years where resources are available to effectively deliver on projects should applications be successful.
Pursue internal research funding options.	Internal research funding to support the submission of category 1,2 or 3 research applications obtained.
Undertake effective partnership brokering in the establishment of new research partnerships.	Effective partnership brokering undertaken with research partners in the Pacific Enterprise group, APTC contract, including with the APTC and Queensland TAFE, and PGF program. Effective partnership brokering undertaken for any future research partnerships.
Increase multidisciplinary research partnerships.	Collaborations and partnerships developed with other research centres at the university and internationally, and with key Pacific researchers through the establishment of a Pacific enterprise.
Maintain sustainable income growth.	Increased income growth where the Institute has the staffing resources to do so.
Develop and implement an Institute Research Approach.	An Institute Research Approach developed, embedded in policies and processes and communicated to key stakeholders.
Outreach	

Produce academic publications	<p>An average of one scholarly book every two years.</p> <p>Ten journal articles, chapters in edited volumes per year, refereed journal articles, research reports, working papers or submissions per year</p>
Produce online content to disseminate research	<p>Ten blogs and social media content pieces per year.</p> <p>Dynamic and interactive web page produced and maintained.</p>
Disseminate research findings through conferences, forums, and other avenues likely to maximise influence on practice, including taking up opportunities to strategically influence the broader social change and development agenda	<p>One seminar or conference per year conducted.</p> <p>Panels in international development related conferences in Australia and internationally (ACFID, Australian Aid Conference, RDI network conference) convened each year.</p> <p>Parliamentary Committee submissions made as appropriate.</p> <p>Contribute to the La Trobe University Pacific Research Community (PaRC) events.</p>
Create platforms, courses or other safe spaces with allow for honest exchanges of experience between stakeholders.	<p>Lessons from the Institute's experience of developing the Knowledge Platform in PNG generated and disseminated through academic outputs, events and industry engagement.</p> <p>Regular lessons learnt and outputs from PNG and other experiences produced and used in other programs.</p> <p>Effective stakeholder engagement throughout the action-research cycle.</p> <p>Means of fast translation and broader sharing using online technology and social media developed and implemented.</p>
Maintain trusted and interactive communications with ACFID, DFAT and other sectoral stakeholders	<p>Regular meetings/communication with ACFID, DFAT and other sectoral stakeholders as relevant.</p> <p>ACFID, DFAT and other sectoral stakeholders invited and attend Institute events.</p> <p>Regular sharing of research outputs with ACFID, DFAT and other sectoral stakeholders.</p>
Teaching and Professional Development	
Provide high quality supervision to higher degree research students.	<p>Provide appropriate support and research environment for HDR students.</p> <p>HDR students engaged in the Institute's activities.</p> <p>HDR Student growth supported.</p>
Undertake teaching and professional development	<p>Work with the convener of the Master of International Development (MID) to enhance the profile of La Trobe.</p> <p>Contribute to MID as required</p> <p>High quality Professional Development provided with selected partners in areas of strength.</p> <p>Articulation with MID and other forms of certification improved.</p>

Facilitate academic staff participation in seminars, forums and workshops.	Relevant seminars, forums and workshops attended by Institute researchers and staff.
Planning and Governance	
Maintain management and staffing support to enable implementation of Institute's research portfolio	A core group of professional staff to provide the Institute's base for overall management, and financial and administrative support maintained. Quality research active staff recruited in identified areas of strength.
Ensure that staff understand the broader mission of the Institute, and are involved in strategic planning and direction setting.	Strategic plan developed in consultation with staff. Staff annual planning session conducted. Weekly team meetings for all staff conducted.
Provide training and development opportunities for professional staff.	Training and development opportunities for professional and academic staff identified in accordance with Career Success strategies. Academic staff research facilitated through provision of a mentorship or coaching program that defines career development plans with a clear strategic approach to research, potentially in conjunction with existing La Trobe programs.
Ensure research findings are effectively disseminated via academic, professional and public media.	Data collected to inform the development of communications and engagement strategies. Communications and Engagement strategy developed and implemented. Comprehensive social media strategy developed. Publish and disseminate the Institute newsletter.
Build strong relationships with key internal stakeholders.	Strong relationships with Research Centres, Human Resources, Finance, Research Office and Communications teams. All corporate areas have an ongoing understanding of the Institute and its business model. Strong relationships with relevant School, College and University leadership (noting that the Institute works across Faculties and Schools). Advisory and Management Committee meetings conducted in accordance with the Centres and Institute's Policy.
Identify opportunities for process improvements.	Contribute to internal and external process improvements. Key issues and process developed for the employment and sub-contracting of researchers outside of Australia and develop processes.
Participate in La Trobe initiatives such as seminars, forums, surveys, and professional staff engagement programs.	Staff participated in a wide variety of University initiatives.

