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Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Learning from Australian aid operational evaluations

Office of Development Effectiveness

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For further information, contact:

Office of Development Effectiveness
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601
Phone (02) 6178 4000
Facsimile (02) 6178 6076
Internet www.ode.dfat.gov.au

Office of Development Effectiveness

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade builds stronger evidence for more effective aid. ODE monitors the performance of the Australian aid program, evaluates its impact and contributes to international evidence and debate about aid and development effectiveness.

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Independent Evaluation Committee

The Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) was established in mid-2012 to strengthen the independence and credibility of the work of the ODE. It provides independent expert evaluation advice to improve ODE's work in planning, commissioning, managing and delivering a high-quality evaluation program.

Foreword

After a long career in development, I am a firm believer in the importance of continuously learning from experience and improving our development efforts. As current Chair of the Independent Evaluation Committee for DFAT's Office of Development Effectiveness, I have a direct interest in promoting good quality evaluation.

The challenge with all evaluations is to ensure that they are used to inform learning and decision-making. Evaluations also promote accountability, particularly over public spending. Too many evaluations end up as little-read documents, even though they may offer the opportunity of rich learning. This report tries to remedy that risk by gathering together the lessons from 64 good-quality operational evaluations of Australian aid that were completed in 2012.

These 64 evaluations cover many different approaches to delivering aid in different sectors and in different countries. There will be lessons here of relevance to aid administrators, partners and all who are involved in designing and delivering aid programs. This report is a first for the Australian aid program and I hope it will not be the last.

I commend to you not just this synthesis report but also the 64 evaluations that fed into it. These evaluations deserve to be revisited and their lessons remembered. This report makes a contribution to all of our efforts to become increasingly adept at learning and thereby continuously improving our international development assistance.



Jim Adams

Chair, Independent Evaluation Committee

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ANCP | Australia NGO Cooperation Program |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| AusAID | the former Australian Agency for International Development ¹ |
| BESIK | Timor-Leste Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (local acronym) |
| CSO | civil society organisation |
| DFAT | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| IEC | Independent Evaluation Committee |
| M&E | monitoring and evaluation |
| NGO | non-government organisation |
| ODE | Office of Development Effectiveness |
| PALJP | PNG–Australia Law & Justice Partnership |
| PEPD | the former Program Effectiveness and Performance Division of DFAT |
| PKPR | Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (Indonesia) |
| PLP | Pacific Leadership Program |
| PNG | Papua New Guinea |
| PSCDP | Public Sector Capability Development Program (Timor-Leste) |
| RRRT | Regional Rights Resource Team |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| VAPP | Vanuatu Australia Police Project |
| WB | World Bank |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

¹ At the time the reviewed evaluations were completed, and during the first part of this review, most of the Australian aid program was administered by AusAID, an executive agency. AusAID was integrated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in November 2013.

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The review team consisted of Nick Chapman (team leader), Hugh Goyder and Rob Lloyd from ITAD Ltd. The core DFAT management team for the review was led by Sam Vallance and Jo Hall from ODE, with Penny Davis and Simon Ernst from the former Program Effectiveness and Performance Division (PEPD). The ITAD review team collected and analysed the data from the evaluations, while a collaborative approach was taken to the design of the review, the interpretation of the findings and framing of lessons, and the drafting of this report. ODE's Independent Evaluation Committee provided technical oversight.

The review team would like to thank the peer reviewers who provided feedback on the draft report.

Executive summary

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) builds stronger evidence for more effective aid. ODE monitors the performance of the Australian aid program, evaluates its results and contributes to international evidence and debate about aid and development effectiveness.

Evaluation of the Australian aid program is undertaken at several levels and managed by different areas within DFAT. ODE evaluations typically focus on strategic issues or cross-cutting themes and often entail cross-country comparison and analysis. ODE publishes (under the guidance of the Independent Evaluation Committee) only five or six evaluations each year.

The vast bulk of DFAT's independent evaluations are commissioned by the managers of discrete aid initiatives. These are termed 'operational' evaluations to distinguish them from ODE evaluations and performance audits undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office.

This ODE review synthesises the findings of 64 independent operational evaluations commissioned by program areas and completed in 2012. Each of these evaluations is assessed as credible and offering lessons of potential value to a wider audience.

This report synthesises these lessons. Its purpose is to inform and improve program design and management and to provide learning to the broader development community. This synthesis addresses an identified gap in the dissemination of the findings of Australian aid evaluations, the original reports of which can sometimes be hard to locate or to readily digest.

In undertaking this synthesis, we systematically reviewed all 64 evaluation reports to collect evidence on two questions: what worked well and why; and what didn't work well and why. Taking context into account, the evidence was then analysed to identify the higher-level lessons emerging most strongly.

We identified nine lessons, which are summarised below and grouped under three broad themes. While the lessons are not always new, the 64 evaluations tell us that they are certainly worth our collective attention. Specific examples from the evaluations are provided throughout the report. A list of the evaluations providing evidence for each lesson is at Annex 4, together with a link to DFAT's aid publications webpage.

The quality of the evaluations and lessons about improving the way we commission and conduct evaluations is reported separately in *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations*.

Lessons on program design and management

Improving monitoring and evaluation requires attention to outcomes, better intervention logic and more accessible information

High-quality monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are important because they provide access to information that can be used to make programming decisions as well as reporting on the effectiveness of the Australian aid program. From the evidence in the evaluations, we identified three key lessons for improving the quality of initiative monitoring and evaluation:

- › M&E systems need to assess the extent to which an initiative's end-of-program outcomes are being achieved rather than only measuring outputs.
- › invest in developing a realistic and logical program design that includes a clear 'theory of change'—a model that explains how changes are expected to occur as a result of the intervention and what the expected impacts are—and then ensure that the M&E system captures the extent to which the anticipated changes are actually taking place.
- › Keep M&E data simple, relevant and accessible so that it can be used as the basis for decision-making.

Poor coordination adversely affects effectiveness

Coordination between actors within a sector can be a powerful means of enhancing development effectiveness and sustainability. A coordinated and collaborative approach can help build synergies between aid initiatives and help integrate aid initiatives within the sectors in which they are being implemented. A number of evaluations highlighted instances where this was not done very well, with an adverse impact on effectiveness. The key lessons to emerge are:

- › Learning and coordination between Australian aid initiatives needs to be better planned and more actively pursued by initiative managers.
- › Failure to embed initiatives within the wider network of activities and institutions involved in a sector can undermine effectiveness and sustainability.

Implementation is stronger where there is close engagement by DFAT staff and the role of managing contractors is clear

The Australian Government often engages managing contractors (as well as other partners) to implement aid initiatives on the ground. This can be an effective means to deliver aid, especially in situations where DFAT's staff resources are limited. Under such a model, the role and degree of engagement by DFAT aid program managers can vary significantly. The findings of the evaluations suggested that close engagement by DFAT staff and clarity around the role of managing contractors can help promote effective aid delivery, specifically:

- › Involvement of DFAT aid managers in the day-to-day delivery of an aid initiative, especially in complex and challenging environments, can improve the Australian Government's understanding of the context and strengthen relationships with partners.
- › The process for selecting managing contractors needs to consider their suitability for the complex task of local capacity development and this role needs to be clearly defined. While a few evaluations highlighted instances where managing contractors proved effective and efficient in these areas, two evaluations drew attention to cases where the managing contractors' presence was so strong that there was reduced scope for initiative and ownership by local partners.

Lessons on supporting capacity development and sustainable reforms

Capacity development is most effective when it is driven by partners, uses a range of methods and takes the local context into account

Capacity development is a core principle guiding the design and implementation of Australian aid initiatives. Developing the capacity of partners so that progress continues once Australian support ends is critical to effective and sustainable development but is also a complex process.

The evaluations highlighted the following lessons about developing the capacity of partners:

- › Ensuring local ‘ownership’ of capacity building is key. Allowing local development partners to shape the scope of a capacity development intervention bodes well for the overall effectiveness of the intervention.
- › Successful capacity development requires a range of complementary methods that provide support in different ways over a period of time. A number of evaluations highlighted cases of over-reliance on training, which on its own rarely proved to be a sustainable tool for capacity development.
- › Strengthening capacity requires interventions that are appropriate to the local context. This includes taking into account the broader systems within which individuals and organisations function and that influence behavioural change. Where possible, aid initiatives should work to create an enabling environment.
- › Ensure that technical advisers have strong relationship and capacity-building skills and bring (or quickly develop) a sound understanding of the local context.

Public sector reform requires better diagnosis and incremental approaches

Public sector reform has been a central part of Australian Government support for improving the institutional settings to encourage stronger social and economic development. The evaluations highlighted the following lessons about public sector reform:

- › Effective public sector reform needs to be underpinned by a robust political economy analysis that informs the development of a realistic program logic model and objectives. Helping our partners to deliver reforms is rarely a technical matter alone but requires a close understanding of the local context and the incentives of all stakeholders and the broader political economy.
- › Incremental approaches that build on existing good practices can be more effective than large-scale and/or top-down reforms. In some cases it may be beneficial to combine approaches.

Improving opportunities for women requires long-term support and targeted programs

Equal opportunity for women and men supports economic growth and helps reduce poverty. Promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment is an overarching policy objective of the Australian aid program. The Australian aid operational evaluations with gender findings were all ‘mainstream’ programs with a gender component. They highlighted the following lessons:

- › Support for gender equality through policy and institutional measures can prove effective but requires long-term support. Australian aid has achieved some success in promoting equal treatment of, and outcomes for, men and women by supporting improved legal and policy

frameworks and institutions. However, such support often involves complex behavioural or attitudinal change and generates mixed levels of political commitment.

- › Capacity-building programs can reach and empower women, but women need to be specifically targeted and barriers to their participation must be addressed. Generic programs for both men and women are unlikely to have an equal level of participation by women or to be as effective in addressing inequality.

Lessons on engaging with partners to make Australian aid more effective

Working through multilateral organisations can promote efficiency and expand reach and policy influence but requires active DFAT engagement

Australian aid is provided both directly to multilateral organisations in the form of core funding and indirectly through multilateral organisations in the form of non-core contributions for a specific purpose, region, country or sector. Non-core funding represented around 60 per cent of \$1.6 billion of Australia's total multilateral funding in 2010–11. A number of the evaluations covered Australia's non-core contributions to multilateral organisations and they highlighted the following lessons:

- › Single-donor trust funds can provide opportunities for participating in and influencing policy dialogue, but strong engagement is required from DFAT staff for this to be realised.
- › Multidonor trust funds can provide a flexible and efficient means of delivery at scale, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected settings and where government capacity is very low.
- › Future funding to the United Nations in support of a more unified approach to development efforts should take account of the mixed results of previous Australian aid for this purpose.

Support for civil society is most effective when underpinned by longer-term partnerships and selective use of core funding

Support for civil society is an important component of the Australian aid program. In 2011–12, 360 civil society organisations (CSOs) received \$565 million (or 12 per cent) of direct funding managed by the former AusAID. Much of this funding is to assist them to undertake specific projects—for instance, in water and sanitation, education and humanitarian activities—while some is intended to strengthen the CSOs themselves. The evaluations highlighted the following lessons about working effectively with civil society:

- › Rather than engaging with CSOs primarily as contractors for service delivery, more sustainable outcomes will result from providing long-term core funding to CSOs to allow them greater flexibility to invest over time in strengthening their own organisational capacity to be long-term agents of change.
- › Local CSOs can be important partners (as well as larger international non-government organisations (NGOs)), and more attention should be given to partnering with and strengthening local CSOs.

Regional initiatives require flexible funding, a strategic agenda and effective engagement of partners

Support for regional organisations can be a complex and a highly political task. This is especially so in the Pacific, where the size of the region and the variation in development contexts make the challenge even greater. The evaluations highlighted the following lessons about engagement with partners at the regional level:

- › While regional initiatives require flexible funding, this should not be at the expense of strategic and coherent programming.
- › To engage most effectively with its regional partners, the Australian Government should invest in building trust and strong relationships over time and take account of the differing needs of different partners.

1 About this review

1.1 Operational evaluations

Independent evaluations are an important complement to annual self-assessment processes by aid managers where program areas assess the progress of their initiatives. Good evaluations can inform the direction, design and management of the aid program. Independent evaluations¹ also play an important accountability role in the aid program's performance management systems, providing an independent perspective on the quality and results achieved through the Australian aid program.

Most of the Australian aid program is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which in November 2013 took responsibility for overseas development assistance, previously administered by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Evaluation is undertaken at several levels and managed by different areas within the department.

Program areas in DFAT (such as geographic divisions, or diplomatic missions in countries with a significant aid program) commission and manage independent evaluations of individual aid initiatives. It is the findings of these initiative-level 'operational' evaluations managed by program areas that are synthesised in this report. DFAT requires an independent evaluation be undertaken for every monitored initiative (those valued over \$3 million or that have strategic or political importance) at least once over its life.

Other types of independent aid evaluations include:

- › evaluations of broad strategic relevance undertaken by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) in line with its evaluation policy and three year rolling work program, under the oversight of an Independent Evaluation Committee established in 2012
- › sector-wide evaluations occasionally undertaken by thematic areas.

1.2 Objectives

This report synthesises the findings of the 64 operational evaluations completed in 2012 that were found to contain credible evidence and analysis. This review seeks to answer the following key evaluation question:

- › What are the main lessons for the aid program emerging from the findings of independent operational evaluations?

¹ DFAT defines independent evaluations as evaluations that are led by a person or team external to the program area where there is no undue influence exercised over the evaluation process or findings.

The objective of this review is to identify lessons emerging from the findings of operational evaluations in order to inform and improve program design and management, and to provide learning to the broader community of development and aid actors. In doing this, the review also seeks to demonstrate the value and utility of these evaluations.

The terms of reference covering both reviews are at Annex 1.

1.3 Approach

The review was undertaken from May 2013 to February 2014 by a team of consultants from ITAD Ltd and managed by ODE in partnership with DFAT's aid program enabling and operational areas.² The review was undertaken at the request of the Independent Evaluation Committee, which also provided technical oversight.

This review builds on the *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* review. Of the 87 operational evaluations completed in 2012, the quality review assessed 64 evaluation reports (74 per cent of the total) as adequate quality or better for 'credibility of evidence and analysis'. The lessons in this report are based on a synthesis of the findings from this pool of 64 credible operational evaluations.

This review was based primarily on a desk review of the evaluation reports. The team collected evidence from this pool of evaluation reports on 'What worked well and why?' and 'What didn't work well and why?' An initial set of hypotheses was used to structure the gathering of evidence. As evidence collection progressed, these initial hypotheses were reviewed and refined in an iterative process that helped to define and categorise the evidence. Taking context into account, the evidence was then analysed to identify higher level lessons. Full details of the methodology are provided at Annex 2.

Our approach has been to look across all the evaluations to identify those lessons emerging most strongly about what works and doesn't work rather than to unpack and analyse specific issues in great depth. Indeed, the depth of our analysis is limited by the depth of the analysis contained in the evaluation reports.

While most of the lessons presented here are not new, based on the evidence in the evaluations there is clearly a need for them to be restated, as they are not yet being universally applied. Those seeking more detailed analysis should go to Annex 4, which references the most relevant evaluation reports for each lesson. Many of the original evaluation reports are available to the public via the DFAT website.³ For certain intractable problems, there may be a need for specialist policy areas within the department to conduct further in-depth analysis of the evidence from evaluations and other sources to determine root causes and appropriate approaches to addressing them.

We have identified nine lessons, which we have grouped under three broad themes. For each lesson we have provided information on the number of evaluations that provide evidence to support the lesson as well as specific examples from particular evaluations. A cautious approach should be taken to generalising beyond the evidence base to other contexts.

² The initiative-level independent evaluation support function sat with the Program Effectiveness and Performance Division (PEPD) until February 2014, when it moved to ODE. At the same time, PEPD was renamed Contracting and Aid Management Division (ACD). By this time, the preparation of this report was in its final stages.

³ The DFAT aid publications webpage is currently located at:
<http://aid.dfat.gov.au/Publications/Pages/List.aspx?publicationcategory=Evaluation%20Reports>.

2 Program design and management

Our synthesis of evaluation findings brings together a set of lessons concerned with program design and management, which are important to ensuring development effectiveness. These relate to three areas: improving monitoring and evaluation (M&E) so that there is greater understanding of the logic of an intervention, a focus on outcomes and the use of M&E by management; working in a more coordinated way with other initiatives to build synergies across initiatives, country programs and sectors; and achieving an appropriate delineation of roles between Australian aid program staff and managing contractors.

2.1 Improving monitoring and evaluation requires attention to outcomes, better intervention logic and more accessible information

High-quality M&E systems are important to the Australian Government and other stakeholders. This is because these systems ensure that credible information is generated which the Australian Government can use to make important programming decisions and contribute to wider learning. Credible information produced by high-quality M&E systems also ensures that the Australian Government, partner governments and the public are assured that aid activities are effective.

As highlighted in Chapter 4 of *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations*, the assessment of the quality and use of M&E systems was one of the strengths of evaluations. However, these assessments found many problems with the M&E systems. The most common problems identified by evaluators were:

- › Lack of outcome and performance data and focus on inputs, activities and outputs
- › M&E systems are not used or not regularly used
- › M&E data is not used for management purposes and learning
- › No or inappropriate intervention logic model or theory of change
- › Weak or inappropriate indicators
- › No or inappropriate baseline data
- › M&E systems are too complex
- › No M&E system and data exist
- › M&E systems are no longer valid / did not adapt to program changes
- › No or inappropriate control group.

Some criticisms of M&E systems are to be expected, as the authors of the original evaluations are likely to have expert M&E knowledge and in a few cases may have unrealistically high expectations of what an M&E system can deliver. In addition, where evaluations come to critical findings on M&E, as some of the strongest evaluations make clear, the problems are rarely purely technical but also relate to challenges in program management. In most cases, where program management is found to be

weak, M&E is also found to be weak. It also needs to be emphasised that the sample includes only those evaluations completed in 2012 and that many of the evaluated initiatives were designed before it became common practice among DFAT's aid activities to develop a theory of change that clearly articulates the program logic. Though many evaluations are critical, we also found examples of thoughtful design work and innovative M&E practice. Some of these are documented below.

Taking the common weaknesses in M&E systems identified in the pool of evaluations as a starting point, this synthesis identifies three key issues. Our strongest evidence for these lessons is drawn from nine evaluations. The weaknesses identified are consistent with the findings of other reviews, including the 2011 *Study of independent completion reports and other evaluation documents* (the Bazeley study). In 2014, ODE intends to conduct an in-depth study of a sample of initiative M&E systems to help provide a clearer understanding of the underlying reasons that managers continue to struggle with measuring the performance of initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation systems need to assess the extent to which intended outcomes are being achieved

One of the most common complaints that we found in our review of the quality and credibility of evaluations is that M&E systems tend to measure 'outputs' rather than monitoring the extent to which a program's outcomes are being achieved. This issue also emerged from our evaluation synthesis. Three evaluations identified this as particularly problematic.

An evaluation of two programs aiming to improve basic services in very remote rural areas of Papua New Guinea found that for the Kokoda Development Program:

Documentation that informed the program was activity and outputs focused. There was no M&E framework with indicators at any level to guide monitoring of the program's rollout (the 'HOW' factor) and inform measuring of results (the 'SO WHAT' factor) ... Both programs have focused heavily on reporting on inputs and outputs, but less so on progress towards achieving outcomes/objectives. (pp. 20–21)

The evaluation goes on to explain that the program designs and the M&E systems for both programs did not place sufficient importance on the sustainability of outcomes and, in particular, the need to ensure the flow of government funds to pay the long-term recurrent costs of activities.

Similarly, the evaluation of the Vanuatu Australia Police Project (VAPP) found that considerable work went into designing the M&E framework (p. 22), but it did not ask the right questions or provide relevant information about key outcomes:

The VAPP instituted a M&E regime, and consistently produced a wealth of information and data: the program's M&E methodologies mostly recorded various types of outputs—numbers of courses delivered and manuals produced. There is little indication in the VAPP's M&E system of what outcomes these activities have produced. (p. 6)

Similar weaknesses were found in the evaluation of an education program in Papua, Indonesia (see Box 1).

Box 1 Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat

The evaluation of the Australia–UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat found that:

Performance monitoring data are rarely collated, analysed or reported by UNICEF. The lack of systematic monitoring of trainee response to training, changes in their knowledge, or of changes in trainees' attitudes, skills or aspirations, suggests the theory of change underlying the training is not understood. Changes in the operating environment for supervisors, principals and teachers are not monitored and were not evaluated in the base line survey.

(p. vi)

Source: Australia–UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat Evaluation, 2012

Conversely, the evaluation of the Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain (CAVAC) provided an example of good practice, highlighting how a comprehensive monitoring plan can be developed that measures changes at all levels of the results chain (see Box 2).

Box 2 Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain

The Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain (CAVAC) aims to reduce rural poverty in three provinces by raising the productivity and incomes of male and female farmers. The evaluation found that a solid system is in place for monitoring progress, measuring results and using that information to steer implementation. Results chains for all active interventions have been developed, along with a comprehensive monitoring plan that includes assessments to measure changes up the levels of the results chains as they are expected to happen for each intervention. A system to catalogue assessments of results per support system is in place. Indicators for assessing behaviour change in relevant support systems have been developed. Testing of these indicators was ongoing at the time of the evaluation so that CAVAC would be prepared for farmer-level behaviour change assessments, which were to be conducted in 2012. As a result of these efforts, the evaluation found that:

CAVAC has a good understanding of the effects of its interventions on poor women and men (better than anticipated in its design). It has developed its own poverty strategy and monitoring system, conducted a study of poverty in rural areas and an assessment of poverty transmission mechanisms and initiated a longitudinal assessment of the socio-economic effects of irrigation interventions and is likely to achieve its purpose level objectives by some margin. (p. 4)

Source: The Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain Evaluation, 2012

Invest in developing a realistic and logical program design that includes a clear 'theory of change' and then ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system captures the extent to which the anticipated changes are actually taking place

It is now generally accepted that all aid programs need an explicit 'theory of change' which explains what changes are expected to occur as a result of an intervention, how they are likely to be achieved and what their anticipated impacts may be. This needs to be developed at the outset and then M&E systems must be designed that can 'capture' evidence on the extent to which these anticipated changes are taking place.

Our sample of evaluations included a few examples of well-designed interventions with robust theories of change. One was the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Timor-Leste (locally known as 'BESIK'). The evaluation commended the program design on the grounds that:

a central tenet of the BESIK design was that support for government ownership and leadership of the sector is a precondition for sustainable service delivery.

(p. 6)

A second example of imaginative program design was the Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund—a \$32 million fund for water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion distributed through 11 non-government organisations (NGOs) from 2009–11. This fund was designed with a strong emphasis on promoting learning between the implementing NGOs. It was also designed with a dedicated external monitoring panel which was run by the same group of consultants throughout the period of the initiative. This meant they were able to build a strong relationship with the implementing NGOs and undertake a number of field visits. They then undertook the final evaluation of this scheme.

To avoid any conflicts of interest, this independent monitoring mechanism was evaluated separately by the Australian Government. The review identified broad-ranging benefits from this approach for both the Australian Government and the civil society organisations (CSOs) involved. The review recommended continuing with this approach in any similar funds in the future.

However, in another evaluation the program designs appear to be over-optimistic about what can be achieved within a limited timeframe. In the case of the PNG–Australia Law & Justice Partnership, the evaluation report notes that the implicit theory of change of the initiative was that, if institutional capacity was built, this would trickle down and lead to improvements in service delivery. The evaluation indicates that this has not happened and concludes that some aspects of the implicit theory of change were flawed (p. 19). The initiative could have benefited from more regular monitoring and analysis to allow adjustments to the theory of change and the approach taken.

Keep monitoring and evaluation data simple, relevant and accessible

Monitoring data needs to be relevant and clear so that it can be used as the basis for decision-making by Australian aid administrators, partner governments and implementing partners. Three of the evaluations reviewed found that programs were designed with either an overly complex program logic that did not really assist the monitoring process or a system that failed to collect data relevant to the program.

For example, a small initiative—the Education in Emergencies Capacity Building project run by Save the Children—was found to have a logframe matrix⁴ with no fewer than 57 indicators, few of which could be measured (p. 5). Evaluations of two scholarship programs, like the Lao-Australian Scholarships Program and a similar program in Africa, found that conventional M&E systems were of little use in assessing the overall impact of scholarship schemes. New systems that make greater use of the perspectives of the alumni themselves and for better recording of the long-term impact of scholarships are proposed in both of these reports.

While well-designed M&E systems are essential, a key factor to emerge from four evaluations is the extent to which program managers themselves prioritise and use these systems, and whether they insist that accurate data is presented at the right time and in an appropriate form so that it can be used as the basis for key decisions. In the example of CAVAC presented above in Box 2, M&E was found to be successful because the program managers have given the function a clear priority and have been able to maintain that priority throughout the life-cycle of the initiative.

⁴ 'Logical Framework', or 'logframe', describes both a general approach to project or program planning, monitoring and evaluation and—in the form of a 'logframe matrix'—a discrete planning and monitoring tool for projects and programs. Source: BetterEvaluation website: <http://betterevaluation.org/>.

In other evaluations where M&E has been the sole domain of consultants, the M&E framework has been seen as bureaucratic requirement rather than a living management tool and viewed almost as a separate activity from day-to-day project management. This lack of prioritisation of M&E is not always the fault of initiative managers, but it may be the result of unrealistic program design. For example, the evaluation of the Papua New Guinea–Australia Sexual Health Improvement Program—an HIV/AIDS program in Papua New Guinea—found that a major weakness of the program was a lack of consistent M&E data. A major reason for this was that, from the outset, the program relied too much on the Papua New Guinea Institute for Medical Research for both key background research and M&E; in fact, very little of this assistance materialised. Two other evaluations reported that the M&E system was designed long after the initiative had started. A possible solution to this problem, proposed in the Kokoda Development Program evaluation quoted above, is for the Australian aid program to ensure that all aid initiative designs undergo rigorous peer review. However, as this suggested approach might cause delays and involve higher transaction costs, an alternative suggestion might be for DFAT to give priority in the first year of implementation of aid initiatives to developing a sound program logic and M&E framework.

2.2 Poor coordination adversely affects effectiveness

To achieve its country objectives, the Australian Government aims to coordinate with others and to build synergies between the programs it supports. Australia needs to seek out further opportunities to work with others, integrate initiatives within the wider sectors in which it operates and build on what has already been done. Better coordination and collaboration can be a powerful means of generating sustainability and effectiveness. However, our synthesis of evaluation findings found that this can be difficult to nurture. What emerged as important is that programs need a clear strategy and approach to how they will plan to connect and coordinate with others and leverage the effects of one program to support another. The evidence for this lesson comes from five evaluations.

Learning and coordination between Australian aid initiatives needs to be better planned and more actively pursued by initiative managers

Two evaluations illustrate the importance of having a planned approach to learning and coordination. The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP), for example, has generated an important body of evidence around how to build genuine partnerships and support leadership development in the Pacific. However, the evaluation indicates that these lessons are not being shared widely with other parts of the Australian aid program. For the PLP to achieve its objective of promoting learning on leadership to other actors in the Australian aid program, it needs to develop a specific communication and engagement strategy and invest resources in evaluative research to better articulate what the program has learnt (p. 25).

Similarly, the evaluation of the BESIK Rural Water Supply and Sanitation program in Timor-Leste noted that, without clear and planned coordination, there is a risk of the program working at cross-purposes with Australian aid initiatives in the health sector rather than building on these (p. 30).

Failure to embed initiatives within the wider network of activities and institutions in a sector can undermine effectiveness and sustainability

A key lesson to emerge from two evaluations is that a failure to embed programs within the wider network of initiatives and institutions involved in a sector can undermine effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation of VAPP and the two UNICEF Projects on Child Survival and Nutrition and Maternal Health in Nepal provide examples of this. The VAPP evaluation found that the effectiveness

of VAPP had been weakened by the program's failure to build connections with key ministries or other Australian aid initiatives operating in the law and justice sector in Vanuatu. The absence of connections with others meant the VAPP was isolated from the wider law and justice sector (p. 34). Likewise, the evaluation of the UNICEF program in Nepal argued that the project was a niche intervention that was not embedded in the wider health sector and that this was a challenge to its sustainability (p. 25).

However, it can be difficult to build relationships across a sector when there is the absence of a coherent sector-wide framework. The evaluation of the Nepal School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) found that the lack of a comprehensive government education policy meant that inconsistencies and contradictions between education programs such as SSRP were inevitable. It found that, in a context where there is no overarching government vision for the sector and where '*multiple visions, strategies, and implementation systems*' coexist (p. 28), it becomes difficult to facilitate coordination and build relationships between partners.

2.3 Implementation is stronger where there is close engagement by DFAT staff and the role of managing contractors is clear

The Australian aid program uses a range of approaches to delivering aid and types of delivery partners. Managing contractors are often used to implement aid initiatives. They can be an effective means to deliver aid using project management and technical specialists in situations where the Australian aid program's staff resources are limited. In more recent years, however, Australian Government staff have played increasing roles in aid delivery and policy dialogue. Nine evaluations provide insights into the roles of Australian aid program staff and managing contractors.

Involvement of DFAT staff in the delivery of an aid initiative can improve the Australian Government's understanding of the context and strengthen partnerships

The closeness of Australian Government aid managers to an aid initiative, especially in complex and challenging environments, can be a significant asset that can add value to the initiative in question and also to the wider Australian aid program. 'Closeness' in this context means the extent to which DFAT staff are involved in the day-to-day delivery of the program and understand the implementation challenges and context.

This lesson emerged from experiences in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Pacific and Zimbabwe. The Australian Community Rehabilitation Program (ACRP) in Sri Lanka works through community development schemes to build social cohesion in a post-conflict setting. The Australian Government is the principal funder and staff at post have been closely engaged in building partnerships with implementing NGOs and in monitoring. The Australian Government has shifted from a traditional donor-implementer approach to a partnering one under which the Australian aid staff in country work in a hands-on way to manage and monitor the initiative. This is partly because of the problems involved in contracting a long-term management team. But the Australian Government's direct role in the management of ACRP means that:

AusAID is brought closer to the field, hence providing it with a direct lens through which to view and analyse the very real development challenges in the North and East of the country. (p. 9)

According to the evaluation, the strategic value of this should not be underestimated (p. 9). The partnerships that Australian Government staff in Sri Lanka have built with ACRP3 partners are aspirational for other programs as they move towards partnership approaches.

The PLP serves as an innovative model of a co-located Australian aid team working with a management contractor from Cardno in the field. The evaluation found that this approach has built trust between the PLP and its partners. A cost-effectiveness study on the arrangement found that the cost of using Australian Government staff in a management capacity was comparable to using contractors in these roles and brought additional benefits to Australia.

The ACRP and PLP experiences contrast with other situations where staff numbers and frequent rotation limit opportunities for engagement. In Zimbabwe the evaluation of the Food and Water Initiative found that, because of lack of clarity over roles between DFAT's head office staff and at post, there was a lack of agreement over who was managing the program or had authority to take decisions. This led to a failure to capitalise on opportunities to harness NGO expertise and contributions to analysis and learning, and program and policy development (p. 26). In the evaluation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Australia Development Cooperation Program, it was observed that the Australian aid program's own learning suffered as a result of relying on professional managing contractors. The aid program staff were too distant from the work of the ASEAN Secretariat to be able to learn how they dealt with complex and fluid environments (p. 24).

The selection of managing contractors needs to consider their suitability for local capacity development, and this role needs to be clearly defined

A number of evaluations point to the important role that managing contractors may have in going beyond managing development interventions on behalf of the Australian Government to engaging in capacity development and partnership building.

Managing contractors can prove efficient and effective at building local capacity and ownership, as in the Lao–Australian Scholarships Program where a local college acted as the managing contractor. The evaluation noted that this arrangement resulted in an appropriate balance of local and international staff to manage the program and deliver the training components: locally-based native English language speakers delivered the higher-level English language training and locally qualified teachers delivered lower-level training (pp. 11, 19). In Public Sector Capability Development Program in Timor-Leste, the evaluation reported that the managing contractor took on a policy dialogue role because its long-term contracted staff had in-depth knowledge, experience and networks and because the Australian Government's own staff suffered from high staff turnover.

But DFAT can learn lessons from other cases where the managing contractors' presence was so strong that local ownership suffered such as in the case of the Indonesian Earthquake Hazard Project. Here, the evaluation noted that, while the technical quality of the advisers provided by the managing contractor was good, the strong presence of long-term contractors has made it difficult to build the capacity and ownership of the Indonesian partners. In the case of the Philippines Provincial Road Management Facility, the evaluation found that, because the managing contractor was given responsibility and bore all the risk for implementation, the scope for local initiative and ownership was reduced. The subsequent focus on externally-designed, high-cost construction reduced the learning potential for provincial offices.

These experiences point to the need to ensure that, where managing contractors are used, their roles are clearly defined and their performance is regularly assessed. Also, where the managing contractor does not interact effectively with local systems or authorities, a greater role for local partners and stakeholders may be required, involving national execution and local systems. This was the case in Vietnam in the Implementation Support Program to P135 Phase II in Quang Ngai Province. In this case, technical advisers were engaged at the provincial level to support the local authorities in planning and delivery of this national program. The advisers also assisted provincial authorities to capture lessons from the field and feed these into the planning and management decisions taken in Hanoi.

3 Supporting capacity development and sustainable reforms

Capacity development is a central issue in many aid initiatives. There are a number of evaluations that provide useful lessons on how DFAT can better support capacity development processes and address the issue of achieving sustainable reforms. If reform processes are to be successful and sustainable, capacity development needs to be linked to a wider understanding of the enabling environment. This is illustrated with examples from evaluations of public sector reform initiatives and evaluations that refer to the challenge of achieving gender equality. Within the 64 evaluations included in the synthesis, 10 evaluations included evidence on what worked well or did not work well in capacity development; six in public sector reform; and seven in improving gender outcomes.

3.1 Capacity development is most effective when it is driven by partners, uses a range of methods and takes the local context into account

Capacity development can be defined as a process where individuals are supported to develop and maintain their skills and competencies so that they can set and achieve their own objectives, and organisations are supported to develop and maintain their capabilities and their organisational capacity to perform within a broader operating environment. Capacity development is central to the Australian aid program and a guiding principle for how initiatives are designed and implemented. Developing the capacity of partners so that progress continues once Australian support is withdrawn is key to effective and sustainable development.

We found a lack of definitional clarity around capacity development in many of the evaluations reviewed. In many cases, capacity development is defined and measured around individual skills transfer; in others, it focuses on the development of organisational competencies; and sometimes capacity development efforts are measured against their ability to improve development outcomes on the ground. This lack of consistency makes it difficult to define capacity development 'success' and distil the capacity development lessons. But it is also a key lesson in and of itself. Lack of definitional clarity is not unique to the Australian aid program, nor is it a new finding. But the fact that it persists is telling.

Despite the lack of consistent understanding across the reviews, four key capacity development themes emerged from the findings of the evaluations. These have been drawn from 10 evaluations.

Ensuring local 'ownership' of capacity building is key

A key lesson to emerge from a number of evaluations is the importance of local ownership to the success of capacity development processes. Where the Australian aid program has allowed partners to shape the scope of a capacity development intervention and has provided them with the autonomy to lead the process, both the engagement and buy-in has been better, as has the overall effectiveness

of the intervention. This lesson came out most strongly in two evaluations. Of course, this is not a new lesson.

Ownership is a central principle to a number of policies that the Australian Government is party to: the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Cairns Compact and the Australia–Pacific bilateral Partnership for Development agreements. The following examples present insights into the different ways in which local ownership can be built. The evaluations point to the following factors that shape the extent of ownership: the flexibility of funding to partners and the quality of relationships with partners; and the arrangements for the management of an initiative.

The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) (mentioned in Box 13) supports leaders and leadership across the Pacific Islands by building the capacity of individuals, organisations and coalitions to promote development change. The evaluation of the PLP found that it has been instrumental in improving the capacity of its partner organisations (of the 11 partners examined in the evaluation, there was evidence of enhanced capacity in nine). The program's strong commitment to local ownership of the capacity development process has been key to this success.

Local ownership has been built through two means. Firstly, the program's funding modality allows it significant flexibility to respond to requests and pursue opportunities. This flexibility allows the program to select organisations that show the most potential and demonstrate a strong commitment to strengthening leadership. The PLP therefore encourages a demand-driven approach to identifying priorities for its work plan. Secondly, the program builds close partnerships with individual organisations based on mutual respect and trust. Partners feel able to adapt plans and evolve ideas in collaboration with the program while maintaining a clear sense of control and ownership of the process (p. 11).

However, it is important to recognise the challenges associated with this approach. The evaluation of PLP highlighted two issues. Firstly, such close levels of engagement with partners require significant investment of time and resources that may not be possible in programs that have a higher number of partnerships to manage. Secondly, there can be a tension between flexible funding and overall program coherence and strategy. These need to be reconciled for flexible funding to be more than simply ad hoc support to disparate initiatives.

The Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR) in Indonesia provides another illustration of the importance of generating local ownership, but this time highlighting the importance of forging a strong collaborative approach with a partner grounded in common goals, shared responsibility, and joint learning. It is described in detail in Box 3.

Box 3 Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction

The evaluation of the Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR)—an initiative to improve evidence-based policy making in Indonesia—provides evidence that the most positive capacity development activities delivered through the program occurred when ‘*partners had greater levels of autonomy over the interventions*’ (p. 31). The PKPR’s collaboration with the National Team for Accelerating Poverty Reduction and the Office of Statistics, or Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), around the development of a national targeting system was illustrative of this point. The National Targeting System (NTS) is a single registry of potential beneficiaries, which can be used to more accurately and cost-effectively target social assistance at the right households. The evaluation found that, because of PKPR’s collaborative approach to supporting the development of the NTS, there were high levels of satisfaction with the capacity development process and significant improvements in the skills, processes and systems necessary to run the NTS (p. vii). Key elements of this success were joint goals, shared responsibility for the capacity development process and outcomes, and an openness among all partners to learn from each other (pp. 10–11).

Source: Evaluation of the Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction, 2012.

Capacity building requires a range of complementary methods

Successful capacity development necessitates the use of a range of complementary approaches that provide support in different ways and over different periods of time. Such initiatives are more successful than those that rely on a single approach, such as technical assistance or training alone. Again, while this is not a new lesson for the Australian aid program, a number of evaluations highlighted this as a weakness in aid initiatives (notably the over-reliance of training) and this suggests that the issue still requires attention. This lesson is reinforced by the ODE report *Lessons from Australian aid*⁵, which found that stand-alone or isolated capacity development activities should be avoided.

The evaluation of the Civil Society Program in Fiji found that its combination of volunteer support and peer-to-peer support between organisations had been a successful approach to strengthening civil society organisation (CSO) capacity (pp. 43–44). Similarly, the evaluation of the BESIK Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Timor-Leste found that the use of a mixture of scholarships, training, mentoring and staff resourcing to build the capacity of key line ministries and NGOs has been a factor in some of the improvements that have been observed in the delivery of water and sanitation to communities (p. 23).

Two evaluations—the Australia–UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat and the Nepal School Reform Program—present examples of how a failure to use a mixture of methods can limit capacity development. In both cases an over-reliance on training was highlighted as problematic. In the Nepal School Reform Program, for example, it was noted that teacher training needed to be supplemented with other forms of capacity support such as secondments, peer learning and exchange, and on-the-job training in order for teaching skills to improve (p. xvi).

What emerges from the evaluations of these initiatives is that a combination of methods spread out over time provides people with a deeper level of support than would otherwise be achieved by simply engaging them through one method. For example, combining workshops with mentoring provides a channel for communicating new knowledge (workshop) but then also provides support in putting it

⁵ Office of Development Effectiveness, *Lessons from Australian aid: 2013 report on independent evaluation and quality assurance*, 2014.

into practice (mentoring). Similarly, combining support through training and peer learning provides a channel for new knowledge but also bolsters this by supporting the development of relationships between peers that can provide long-term and ongoing support and guidance. Communicating information through different mediums such as workshops, forums and training can also cater to individuals' different learning styles.

Strengthening capacity requires interventions that are appropriate to the local context

Another key lesson to emerge from this synthesis is that successful capacity development depends on the local context, including the broader system within which individuals and organisations function.

The synthesis of evaluation findings highlights that capacity development initiatives are less effective if the broader environment is not taken into account. Successful capacity development necessitates a comprehensive approach, encompassing an understanding of the broader institutional environment and its influence on the ability of organisations to carry out their functions in pursuit of formal, agreed goals. As the evaluations of the following initiatives illustrate, an enabling environment can take many forms: it can relate to creating a regulatory and legislative context that supports specific capacities; changing an organisation's culture and incentives to support capacity development; and efforts to influence wider issues of power and politics to support individuals and organisations to strengthen their capacities and enable organisations to carry out formal, agreed goals.

The PKPR initiative uses this approach well. In building capacity within the Indonesian Government to use evidence in policy making, the PKPR is training civil servants in the use of poverty forecasting tools. It works within key institutions such as the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) to strengthen their systems and procedures through the development of initiatives such as the National Targeting System (NTS). It is also working on creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy through, for example, providing assistance on drafting supporting legislation.

The PLP is another case in point. The evaluation of the program recognised that the complex environment in which individuals operate shapes and influences their ability to develop their leadership capacity (p. 9). Therefore, in order to build individual leaders, one also needs to strengthen the organisations in which they work. The program achieved this through coaching and mentoring the boards and senior management teams of the leaders' organisations, strengthening the organisations' governance and financial systems and improving their strategic planning processes.

Conversely, the evaluations of the UNICEF Education Assistance Project, the BESIK Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Timor-Leste and the Public Sector Capability Development Program (PSCDP) in Timor-Leste provide illustrations of how failing to acknowledge, understand and respond to the broader environment can limit effectiveness. The UNICEF project, for example, was criticised for focusing too much on building the skills and knowledge of individuals and not enough on the wider enabling environment—in particular, leadership among school principals for the reform of teaching and learning processes and regulatory change. The evaluation found that, despite a large number of stakeholders being trained, little progress had been made in delivering key program outcomes. This was because the program failed to engage financial decision makers who needed to provide the financial resources for trainees to put their new skills into practice and also struggled to address the challenges of delivering the program in remote, difficult to access locations where initial school and teacher capacity was very low.

In the case of BESIK, while the evaluation noted successes in the development of government and NGO capacity, it raised concerns around the capacity of the Water User Groups (GMFs). Notably, the

initiative invested significant resources in the establishment, training, and support of GMFs as the structure to carry forward community asset management. However, there is evidence that their ability to provide sustainable and reliable services remains constrained because resources are inadequate at district and subdistrict levels to undertake maintenance and repair of facilities where this is outside of the technical abilities of the GMFs (p. 26). The evaluation concluded that the program needed to focus more on securing greater levels of resources for GMFs and helping to create a more enabling environment for them to function in by advocating and building broad-based support for the government to invest more in the operations and maintenance of community assets (p. 27). This issue is now being addressed by the program: new approaches to the division of responsibilities between GMFs and district governments are being piloted.

Similarly, the evaluation of PSCDP highlighted the need for the program to take better account of the wider political environment. It found that the advisers provided through the program were given technical roles, but the challenges they were grappling with were inherently political. The evaluation concluded that, because of an absence of political leadership, the effectiveness of technical assistance was undermined (p. 16).

Ensure that technical advisers have strong relationship and capacity-building skills and understand the local context

While there is recognition in the evaluations that technical advisers can have an important role to play in supporting partner governments, a number of evaluations highlighted the need for technical advisers to be skilled in capacity building as well as specific technical areas so as to support longer-term sustainable change. Two considerations emerged as key: the need for technical advisers to have a more rounded skills set encompassing both technical and relational skills; and the length of time that technical advisers are in their role. On the latter, the evaluation findings suggested that capacity development is more likely under longer-term contracts. However, it is important to note that the wider evidence base is inconclusive on this issue, indicating that the relationships between length of contract and effectiveness depend on the context. Another lesson relates to the use of technical advisers to provide capacity addition rather than capacity development and the challenges around this. The evidence base for these lessons is drawn from five evaluations.

Two evaluations highlighted the issue of technical advisers' skills sets. In the case of the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM), technical advisers with previous training or mentoring skills in adult education were found to be better equipped to share skills and mentor others. Equally important is the technical advisers' knowledge of the context. For example, in Vanuatu the ability of Pacific Islander technical advisers (in particular, Melanesians) to develop rapport and share skills with counterparts and teams was particularly remarked upon by the Vanuatu Government representatives. Conversely, it was pointed out that, in other cases, a lack of ability to understand culture and relate well significantly hampered communication between technical advisers and local colleagues and hence the transfer of skills. The Timor-Leste Asian Development Bank Infrastructure Project raised similar issues. It noted that '*[technical advisers] should be selected as much for their ability to develop relationships and their local knowledge and cultural understanding as for their technical skills and knowledge when capacity building is their primary purpose*' (p. 26).

The evaluation of the PSCDP in Timor-Leste raises the issue of the length of time that advisers are posted. The evaluation found that the advisers were often at post for too short a time for any meaningful skills transfer to take place. It concluded that the use of short term advisers was '*a weak form of capacity development (effectiveness)*' that is costly and unsustainable (p. 29) and that '*the excessive use of short term advisers can result in capacity addition rather than capacity building*' (p.

ii). A similar point was also raised in the evaluation of PACTAM, where it was noted that the length of time an adviser was at post was a significant factor in their ability to support capacity development. The evaluation noted that both advisers and government partners felt that assignments were too short to engender sustainable skills change (pp. 11, 22).

While the objective of using technical advisers should be to transfer skills and build capacity, it is important to recognise that this is not always possible. Sometimes partner governments explicitly identify the need for specialist skills or experience that is not available in the local labour market. In such circumstances, aid may fund technical assistance that is, effectively, capacity substitution. This gap filling can be an effective strategy, provided it is recognised as such and that there is clear agreement on how the role (if it is ongoing) will be filled when aid funding ceases.

However, trying to combine capacity substitution with capacity building can be problematic. PACTAM provides an interesting example of an initiative that, while set up principally to provide capacity substitution, also sought to develop capacity. Box 4 details the challenges that the initiative faced in pursuing these dual objectives.

Box 4 Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism

The Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) is an Australian aid initiative established in 2006 to respond to urgent technical assistance needs in Pacific countries. While the program was devised as a capacity substitution mechanism, the managing contractor has tried to ensure that capacity building features in technical advisers' terms of reference. Capacity building awareness is also given in pre-departure briefings and capacity building goals are set for each assignment.

The evaluation of PACTAM identified two challenges with pursuing these two objectives in parallel. Firstly, because of the capacity constraints that existed among local partners, technical advisers in some instances simply did not have anyone to strengthen the capacity of. Secondly, when providing capacity substitution, technical advisers were often given very demanding technical roles and the transfer of skills was often difficult to prioritise alongside competing delivery pressures (p. 11).

Source: Evaluation of the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism, 2012.

3.2 Public sector reform requires better diagnosis and incremental approaches

Public sector reform has been a central part of donor support towards improved governance outcomes. Many developing countries are equipped with weak government bureaucracies plagued by corruption, poor transparency, poor conditions of service and weak performance management systems. An ineffective civil service reduces the quality of essential services and raises costs for users. The Australian Government has been a major donor in the field of effective governance, with 16 per cent of its total expenditure devoted to this sector in 2011–12.⁶ Of that figure, public sector reform accounts for 9 per cent. The top seven country recipients of Australian aid are generally ranked below average for all six of the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators. This ranking indicates poor public services, a lack of public confidence in the police and courts, low levels of citizen participation and a high likelihood of instability and insecurity.⁷

⁶ Australian Government, Australia's International Development Assistance Program, 2013–14, p13.

⁷ Ibid, p. 119.

The pool of six evaluations with relevant evidence supporting learning in this area covers public sector reform initiatives in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Aceh, Indonesia. Additional evidence comes from evaluations of sector-level reform initiatives in education in Indonesia, and law and justice in Cambodia and Papua New Guinea.

More robust political economy analysis will lead to a more realistic program logic model and objectives

The evidence from the evaluations strongly suggests that effective public sector reform needs to be underpinned by a robust political economy analysis that informs the development of a realistic program logic model and objectives. Helping our partners to deliver reforms is rarely a technical matter alone but requires a close understanding of the local context, the incentives of all stakeholders and the broader political economy. This lesson was also highlighted in ODE's *Lessons from Australian aid* report⁸, which found that capacity development assistance must be tailored to the local context. In Cambodia an evaluation of law and justice assistance found that effective reform needs to be underpinned by a robust political economy analysis (Box 5).

Box 5 Cambodia Criminal Justice Assistance

In the Cambodian context, many of the high-level objectives in the law and justice agenda run counter to the fundamental interests of the ruling party and this has undermined progress. However, progress has proved possible in areas like community security and prison reform, where there is willingness among counterparts and no strong political barriers.

The Cambodia Criminal Justice Assistance initiative assumed that a lack of institutional capacity was the binding constraint to improving justice system, when in fact the constraints were largely political:

It appears that more political analysis was needed during the design phase to produce a clearer set of objectives that were meaningful in the country context. There also needed to be a strong link between objectives and the activities that were chosen. (p. 50)

Source: ODE evaluation of law and justice assistance: Cambodia case study, 2012.

The same experience was noted in the evaluation of the Local Governance Innovations for Communities in Aceh initiative, which found that *'while the building blocks for government capacity building towards service delivery can be promoted through technical programs, it is important to give attention to other influences, in particular, political and power differences which may inhibit or distract from government focus on services'* (p. 34).

The PNG–Australia Law & Justice Partnership (PALJP) provides a good example of a program whose initial design explicitly recognised that a focus on a technical approach to reform—capacity development—would be insufficient and yet was unable to move away from this focus during implementation. In PALJP's case, the theory of change that making available development budget resources to the sector heads would result in a problem-solving or multiagency approach failed to materialise, and intended formalised policy engagement processes between Australian and Papua New Guinean government agencies did not meaningfully take hold. The program could have benefited from more regular political economy analysis, and judgment and changes in approach when this

⁸ Office of Development Effectiveness, *Lessons from Australian aid: 2013 report on independent evaluation and quality assurance*, 2014.

fundamental theory of change was not delivering as expected. Failure by the agencies to develop and prioritise activities with a focus on the experience of justice for end users, and to regularly monitor public perceptions and quantitative assessments of sector performance, meant that it was difficult to demonstrate that the tangible benefits of the institutional improvements noted in the evaluation were achieved at agency levels.

Incremental approaches that build on existing good practices can be more effective than large-scale and/or top-down reforms

A second useful lesson arising from evidence in Papua New Guinea, Cambodia and Timor-Leste is that supporting reforms that follow an incremental approach can be more effective than undertaking more ambitious, large-scale reforms. In some cases, combining both approaches may be necessary, as in the experience from Aceh, Indonesia.

In Cambodia, the evaluation noted that reform of the justice sector was more suited to incremental change rather than large top-down reform efforts.

The most successful part of the Cambodia Criminal Justice Assistance Project has been where the project has worked with counterparts to resolve practical issues around service delivery and access to justice. By resolving concrete problems that matter to national stakeholders, one can then look for ways to institutionalise the solutions. (p. 51)

For example, in the prisons service, new security fencing proved a successful, cost-effective intervention that allowed prisoners time outside with immediate health benefits. Also, innovative support for community-led crime prevention has reduced conflict and domestic violence as well as improved community–police relations.

In Papua New Guinea, the evaluation of the Economic and Public Sector Program (EPSP) found that support for reforms was too centralised and relied on a trickle-down approach (see Box 6).

The evaluation of the PSCDP in Timor-Leste noted that, in governance reform, it may be better to measure success ‘more positively in terms of the incremental small results achieved in addressing key issues rather than potentially negatively because an end point has not been reached.’ (p. 14) This evaluation also noted that building on what works rather than trying to fix what is not working is often a better approach to reform:

AusAID staff tend to engage more in deficit thinking—about what is wrong with the institution and what needs fixing—rather than strength-orientated thinking. Use of the word reform in relation to public sector activities also tends to orientate thinking in terms of what needs to change rather than simply what needs to be developed for the first time. (p. iii)

The evaluation of Support for Education Sector Development in Aceh (SEDIA) brings a more positive example of how a slower approach that builds on existing good practices can lead to successful reforms. The goal of SEDIA is to support the provincial government to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of basic education throughout the province in line with policies and strategies articulated in the Aceh Provincial Education Strategic Plan. The SEDIA initiative was evaluated as effective because it recognised the importance of a combined top-down/bottom-up approach, which successfully combined community development with district and provincial government support around schools and education management. SEDIA created the right environment, including support for both leadership and a systematic approach to legislative reform, as necessary conditions for change.

Creation of such an environment has been the outcome of both the current partnership and the long AusAID engagement with education in Aceh. This now yields results that could be scaled up in Aceh and other provinces of Indonesia. (p. 21)

Box 6 Economic and Public Sector Program

The Economic and Public Sector Program (EPSP) aims to strengthen the Papua New Guinea Government's central agencies to improve service delivery. The evaluation concludes that top-down initiatives aimed at building generic public sector skills and competencies in central agencies do not seem to improve service delivery.

Trickledown effects take too long, and become too diluted in the process, to have tangible and sustained impact. (p. 18)

The underlying assumption is that if we develop skills, improve the management of public financial resources, facilitate information flows and promote appropriate policy and regulatory settings then in the course of time services will improve. These capacity-strengthening activities will finally have impact on rural poverty.

The evaluation found that most of EPSP's assistance to central agencies was focused on 'corporate functions' such as corporate planning, human resources management, corporate financial systems, training and IT. This kind of corporate capacity development support has a dubious link and line of sight to service delivery. The review found some positive accomplishments within individual agencies (e.g. assisting the Department of Finance to strengthen its assistance to provincial and district treasuries in revenue monitoring and recovery; supporting the Department of Personnel Management to provide training modules to upgrade individual skills across agencies). However, there is little hard evidence that EPSP has had any discernible impact on improving services. On the contrary, despite the assistance, services keep deteriorating, not improving. The review recognises that there are key service delivery blockage areas where central agencies play a significant role. But it concludes that a broad capacity development approach targeting a range of central agencies and focused on corporate functions is, alone, ineffective in improving service delivery and that '*reform of public sector services will be ineffective if the focus is on central corporate functions, if there is a lack of incentives and sanctions, weak leadership, poor diagnosis and lack of a performance management system*' (p. 18).

The review suggests that support would be far more effective if it moves from an 'agency and corporate focus' to a 'service issue focus' to ensure it targets primarily those central agencies that have a direct contribution to service delivery, and assists them to focus on how they work together to resolve well-known service delivery blockages. Support would also be more effective where it works with the Papua New Guinea Government on tighter performance management for central agencies, strengthens engagement with the leadership of each client agency to discuss the agency's contributions and links to service delivery, and facilitates the institution of a performance management system.

Source: PNG–Australia Economic and Public Sector Program (EPSP) Independent Progress Review, 2012.

3.3 Improving opportunities for women requires long-term support and targeted programs

Improving gender equality is a development objective in its own right, as recognised in the Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5—to promote gender equality and empower women, and to improve maternal health, respectively—but it also supports broader development outcomes by promoting economic growth and helping to reduce poverty.⁹ Gender equality and women's empowerment is an

⁹ The World Bank World development report on gender equality and development (2012) highlights these linkages and the costs of not addressing gender inequality.

overarching policy objective of the Australian aid program. To make progress, there is a need to work with a range of partners including governments, civil society and others, and to invest in specific interventions that address barriers to women's empowerment, gender-based violence and women's rights in recipient countries.

Of the pool of 64 initiatives included in this synthesis, none had gender equality or empowerment as the leading objective. Many, however, addressed gender issues from a human rights, livelihoods, governance or conflict reduction perspective. Seven evaluations had gender findings supporting the lesson that improving opportunities for women requires long-term support and targeted programs. The low proportion of evaluations with significant gender findings may be related to the absence of specific gender questions in many evaluation terms of reference.

Support for gender equality through policy and institutional measures can prove effective but requires long-term support

Australian aid has achieved some success in promoting equal treatment of, and outcomes for, men and women by supporting improved legal and policy frameworks and institutions. However, such support often involves complex behaviour or attitudinal changes and generates mixed levels of political commitment. It has also required long-term commitment, as it has often occurred in difficult settings hindered by conservative views or weak political commitment. In the law and justice sector in Papua New Guinea, for example, there are serious challenges to improving the functioning of the legal system, especially with regard to women's rights. According to the evaluation of the PNG—Australia Law & Justice Partnership, while overall there has been limited reform in the sector, there are 'islands of achievement' including improvement in the rights of women and support for protection against violence (see Box 7). The evaluation notes that there is still a long way to go before outcomes in delivery of justice to women improve and that weak political commitment to the justice sector, and in turn declining budgetary support, remains a concern (p. 4).

Box 7 The PNG—Australia Law & Justice Partnership

The PNG—Australia Law & Justice Partnership (PALJP) builds on a decade-long, intensive period of support to Papua New Guinea by Australia. Progress in reducing crime and improving justice systems has been hampered by a lack of focus on service delivery to citizens, corruption and lack of leadership continuity. However, the Australian Government's long-term involvement and its success in creating the catalytic 'precursors' for an improved system, including infrastructure and capacity building, are important building blocks for future change.

The nascent achievements of women's rights may be among PALJP's most impressive achievements. Successes include supporting the establishment of Interim Protection Orders (IPO). The existence of the IPO system is not only a significant step forward, but a promissory note for future engagement, one that already provides dividends to women by increasing their confidence that their needs are being addressed. (p. 7)

The PALJP has also been instrumental in getting women into magistrate, court clerk and court peace officer positions (up to 700 women have been appointed as magistrates and 500 as court clerks and court peace officers).

The presence of these women as officials of the court, the lowest rung in the PNG judicial system, may reasonably be expected to be instrumental in increasing women's access to justice, not only in numbers but also by fostering greater confidence in women that the justice system is open to and capable of listening to women's concerns. (p. 8)

Source: The PNG—Australia Law & Justice Partnership Evaluation, 2012.

Other examples of how effective support for gender equality requires effective engagement with political processes, such as developing legislation and interaction with leaders, include the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) initiative (also referred to in Box 12 below). The evaluation noted that the Vanuatu Family Protection Bill was passed with some assistance from this initiative, while the governments of Kiribati and Tuvalu have been provided with technical advice about legislative drafting options (p. 18). The project's effectiveness was assisted by its ability to hold high-level meetings with leaders across the region. In Fiji, on the other hand, the RRRT's operations were limited by political constraints given the government's sensitivity to human rights issues (p. 16).

The Kastom Governance Program in Vanuatu was an interesting intervention that attempted to challenge the idea of a 'fragile state' with the alternative notion of a 'hybrid political order'. This hybrid order recognises both customary approaches to governance and the post-independence Westminster system of governance. The evaluation noted (pp. 25-26) that progress on changing traditional perceptions of the role of women, including among women themselves, has been slow. As in any society, this type of change requires long-term attitudinal and behaviour change.

Capacity-building programs can reach and empower women, but women need to be specifically targeted and barriers to their participation must be addressed

Capacity-building programs can reach and empower women, but the specific needs of women need to be considered and barriers to their participation must be addressed. Generic programs for both men and women are unlikely to have the same level of participation by women or to be as effective in addressing inequality. Four evaluations have pointed to success in building capacity of women and other marginalised groups in particular areas such as media, human rights, water and sanitation, and agriculture. It should be noted that the evaluations included in this review are of initiatives that focus on building capacity of women through training and participation, and do not also address capacity building of institutions to make them more sensitive to and more willing to tackle gender inequality.

In the Zimbabwe Food and Water Initiative, active targeting by the implementing non-government organisations (NGOs) of women (as well as other groups such as the disabled and those affected by HIV) led to high levels of participation. The deliberate inclusion of women and girls in decision-making in the various stages of the project cycle—for example, in the design of toilets and other facilities specifically for girls or disabled groups—enhanced the understanding of their role in the community (p. 17). Collaboration with specialist organisations with expertise in gender/women, disability or HIV and AIDS also assisted in this process. At the same time, the evaluation pointed to the need to go further in modifying some of the training approaches to suit women's needs and responsibilities better.

The BESIK evaluation found that proactive support for women field staff to undertake supervisory roles improved awareness that women could fulfil roles that had in the past only been undertaken by men. However, it also recognised that more could be done to meet women's particular needs (such as maternity leave and secure travel). The lesson was that, while improvements can occur through deliberate inclusion of women in non-traditional roles, further efforts may be needed to encourage institutions to recognise women's specific needs.

As beneficiaries, women have played a key role in the RRRT's human rights training activities. Despite the fact that there are few women activists in Pacific Island Countries, the evaluation found that the RRRT was able to target women effectively because of its origins in the women's rights movement in the region, its high level of recognised expertise and its positioning of gender at the core of its mission. Forty-four per cent of attendees at the RRRT's training activities targeted at senior leaders

(such as judges and parliamentarians) were women. At the community level, more than 60 per cent of trainees have been women.

The project has engaged in and implemented an extensive range of gender-related activities, particularly in ending violence against women and women's rights. Major achievements include assisting in the passing of Family Law legislation in the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu, drafting of legislation in the Solomon Islands and Kiribati and training of police in domestic violence procedural matters. (p. v)

The Africa–Australian Development Scholarships Management Program demonstrated how another approach to capacity building for women can prove effective. While overall the level of female participation in the Master's degree level program was 47 per cent, there were significant barriers for women from sub-Saharan Africa, especially single mothers and those from rural areas. The evaluation notes that scholarship programs can have positive gender impacts but only if they include strong affirmative action measures—for example, the allocation of places based on an equal ratio between men and women—to encourage a wide range of female applicants (p. 13) and provide additional support—for example, financing children to accompany the mother while she is studying abroad (pp. 20–21).

The MTV EXIT ASIA initiative provides an example of a case where women and other vulnerable groups were not well targeted. MTV EXIT is a large-scale multimedia campaign designed to raise awareness of trafficking in people in the Asia–Pacific Region. The evaluation found that the strategy for identifying at-risk persons for trafficking was unclear. All target groups were treated generically and this led to confusion in the media outputs and a poor ability to induce behaviour change. Although women are the focus of MTV EXIT's outputs, there was no appreciation of gender issues and no gender strategy.

4 Engaging with partners to make Australian aid more effective

This chapter brings together a series of lessons that reflect on the benefits of maximising engagement with different partners. Working more effectively with development partners is important for various reasons, including collaborating to achieve long-term development goals, achieving more efficient implementation by sharing costs or reducing overheads, and leveraging Australia's aid resources to increase support from partners in areas that are of concern to Australia. Partners include non-state actors such as the private sector and civil society as well as partner governments and other donors. The lessons here cover working with multilaterals, civil society and through regional bodies.

4.1 Working through multilateral organisations can promote efficiency and expand reach and policy influence but requires active DFAT engagement

Australian aid is provided both directly to multilateral organisations in the form of core funding and indirectly through multilateral organisations in the form of non-core contributions. Core contributions are not tied to a specific purpose and this gives partners the flexibility to direct the funding to their highest priorities with no restrictions. In contrast, non-core funding of multilateral organisations allows Australia to target its funds to a specific purpose, region, country or sector. Non-core funding is the largest component, representing around 60 per cent of \$1.6 billion of total multilateral funding in 2010–11.¹⁰ It is most often (but not always) provided through DFAT country and regional programs.

Unlike core funding to multilateral institutions, which is covered by the Australian Multilateral Assessment, non-core contributions are subject to the department's performance management and evaluation policies. As a result, seven evaluations included in the synthesis covered Australia's non-core contributions to multilateral organisations. The initiatives evaluated fell into three categories:

1. provision of aid to single or multiple recipient countries through the multilateral development banks through single-donor trust funds
2. provision of aid to single or multiple recipient countries through the multilateral development banks through multidonor trust funds
3. support for reform of the United Nations development system.

¹⁰ AusAID, Australian multilateral assessment, 2012.

Single-donor trust funds can provide opportunities for participating in and influencing policy dialogue, but strong engagement is required from DFAT staff for this to be realised

We considered the evidence in the evaluations about a number of examples of work through the multilateral development banks through single-donor trust funds with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The evaluation of two single-donor trust funds between the Australian Government and the World Bank and the ADB in South Asia shows that these arrangements can help to build partnerships, mutual learning and leverage. The evaluation covered two distinct trust fund arrangements: the AusAID–World Bank Facility for Decentralisation, Local Governance and Service Delivery (PFSDS) and the AusAID–ADB South Asia Development Partnership Facility (AASADPF). The two funds were established in 2006 for a five-year period. The PFSDS provided grant funding for capacity building, analytical work, advocacy and knowledge sharing. The AASADPF invested in subprojects related to reforms in service delivery and broad-based economic growth in South Asia.

The evaluation noted that recipient governments valued the policy research and the strengthening of statistical and policy analysis that was supported, and much of this occurred in countries where the DFAT aid program has relatively little direct engagement. Furthermore, these trust funds helped each of the banks to advance and strengthen existing programs by ameliorating resource gaps. The evaluation noted that the trust funds had played a role in supporting an increased volume of loan and co-financed moneys from partners for a range of interventions but did query the level of additionality, or the catalytic effect, that this created.

Both of the funds (the PFSDS and the AASADPF) were observed to have generated substantial returns from relatively modest investments—for example, by changing the way the service delivery arms of partner governments of Bhutan and Nepal interact with business and with their populations. In the case of the ADB, the AASADPF has also supported ADB to meet its gender mainstreaming targets as a result of trust fund supported capacity building (p. 16)—a change that aligns with the Australian Government’s own strong commitments to gender equality.

Access also improved for the Australian Government as a result of increased high-level dialogue between Australian and ADB leadership, although the evaluation noted that DFAT had struggled to engage consistently or substantively in many of the areas targeted by the facility (p. 21). Noting the substantive fixed costs of establishing and sustaining each partnership and ensuring DFAT leverage over partner operations, the evaluation questioned whether DFAT would be better off ‘focussing on supporting a single more substantive partnership where AusAID is likely to have greater leverage’ (p. 28). This was posed as an alternative to the existing path of ‘continuing to broaden potential opportunities and spread risks by supporting both partnerships’ (p. 28).

The evaluation of the Philippines Development Trust Fund (PH-PTF) (Box 8) illustrates how Australia has built effective partnerships with the World Bank and the Philippines Government through a single-donor trust fund. This reflects evidence from the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group, which has argued that single-donor trust funds are particularly effective when operating at a single country level rather than across multiple countries or partners.¹¹

¹¹ *‘The Bank should continue to accept trust funds created to support operations in a single country, because these funds have generally worked well in filling financing gaps and deploying donor funds in line with recipient priorities. They have allowed donors to target priority issues or countries, while at the same time helping mitigate limits of bilateral aid expertise and enhance aid coordination.’* World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, Trust fund support for development: An evaluation of the World Bank’s trust fund portfolio, 2011, p. 84.

Box 8 Philippines Development Trust Fund

The AusAID–World Bank Philippines Development Trust Fund (PH-PTF) is a seven-year strategic partnership established by the Australian Government and the World Bank in June 2009 to bring together their co-financed activities in the Philippines under one mechanism. It was set up with overall funding of up to \$50 million provided by the Australian Government and administered by the World Bank. The PH-PTF operates as a programmatic or ‘umbrella’ trust fund administered by the World Bank. It finances multiple grants to support analytical work, technical assistance and investments that contribute to sustained and inclusive growth in the Philippines.

The evidence shows that a single-donor trust fund with a multilateral development bank can build partnerships and mutually beneficial working relations between the Australian Government and the bank, and support the pursuit of common policy agendas. In the case of the PH-PTF, the evaluation mentions the key role it has played in social protection (especially cash transfers to the chronically poor) that has in turn led to strong government programs. In public finance management, the fund has supported public expenditure analysis and critical technical assistance provision. As a result of these trust fund engagements, costing a few hundred thousand dollars, the sector has moved to a fully-fledged program financed separately by Australia—the \$30 million Australia–Philippines Public Financial Management Program. The Australian Government is now the key player in the Public Financial Management reform agenda in the Philippines. These results might not have been achieved to the same extent without the PH-PTF. The Australian Government has also gained a ‘seat at the policy table’ with the Philippines Government (p. 3.3).

The PH-PTF also shows that a single-donor trust fund can be efficient in terms of greater simplicity, timeliness and lower overhead costs for the Australian aid program when compared with other joint financing arrangements. The PH-PTF has proved to be a workable concept in bringing together co-financing and joint projects of the Australian Government and the World Bank under one mechanism and links these effectively with other related programs of the two institutions in support of the Philippines Government’s development agenda. It is a flexible tool that allows financing of projects—from World Bank executed research to recipient-executed investments—in many sectors, and it can respond quickly to emerging needs (pp. 4.6, 4.10). Australia has been able to gain access to World Bank expertise and effectively leverage the World Bank’s relationship with the Philippines Government to build its own relationship with the Philippines Government (pp. 3.4, 5.3).

Source: Philippines Development Trust Fund Evaluation, 2012.

According to the PH-PTF evaluation, the trust fund supported work in areas of common policy interest through technical assistance and research in areas that the Philippines Government would not be willing to borrow for. This helped the partners to develop common policy agendas and build policy dialogue and complementarity (p. 4.7). This also provided a lever to scale up Australian aid program involvement into larger and separately managed Australian aid initiatives.

The evaluation concluded that as a result of the initiative:

AusAID has been able to engage substantively in a wider range of key areas and sectors, where previously it simply gave funds to Bank teams and waited for reports on results. (p. 4.17)

Multidonor trust funds can provide a flexible and efficient means of delivering at scale, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected settings

Two evaluations provided evidence that multidonor trust funds can provide a flexible and efficient means of delivery at scale, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected settings and where government capacity is very low.

One of the evaluations examined the World Bank’s State and Peace Building Fund (SPF)—a global multidonor trust fund involving six donors to support World Bank’s work in conflict and fragile states.

From 2009 to 2012, 50 projects were funded to a value of US\$134 million, to which Australia contributed 7 per cent. The fund provides complementary financing to support interventions that address important causes or consequences of violent conflict that are not easily addressed with other mechanisms. The evaluation observed that the fund's flexibility to use a diverse set of partnership arrangements and its broad project eligibility criteria had allowed it to support different responses to a wide range of post-conflict and fragile situations. On this basis, the evaluation observed that *'the SPF is an ideal tool for the Bank to pilot new forms of systematic support for risk taking, rapid response, and working within the wide range of fragile-and conflict-affected situations'* (p. 41). However, the evaluation also observed that this potential had not been fully realised. Reflecting an oft-cited challenge with trust funds that channel aid to multiple countries, the evaluation observed that it could have been *'more effective if it was more strategically linked to World Bank investments and strategies and was not just one-off interventions: so leverage partnerships, be more focused on lesson learning, do more political economy and conflict analysis'* (pp. 39–40).

Further evidence about the effectiveness of Australia's contributions to multidonor trust funds comes from the evaluation of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which is administered by the World Bank. The evaluation highlights the importance of such multidonor arrangements in providing a coherent vehicle for donors to support development efforts in fragile or conflict-affected settings and where government capacity is very low (Box 9). In particular, the convening power of multilateral organisations (in this case the World Bank) gave Australia (and other donors) a vehicle for providing substantial financing at scale and with efficiencies that it could not have achieved by acting alone.

Box 9 Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund

The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) is a very large (over US\$6 billion) multidonor trust fund supporting governance, service delivery and reconstruction through government systems. The Australian Government provided 7 per cent of ARTF funding in 2013 (A\$61.1 million) and had a small staff in-country that, though active in donor discussions, would not have had the capacity to directly manage the significant resources disbursed through this large fund, particularly in the context of a very difficult operating environment. The evaluation found that:

Funding through this national trust fund, channelled through government and administered by the World Bank, is more efficient than donor projects, as security costs are lower, economies of scale better and other overheads lower. (p. 16)

Moreover, transparency and accountability have been good (p. 23) and the fund structure and governance has increased the voice of the Afghan Government and provided a well-functioning arena for policy debate and consensus creation.

Source: Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund Evaluation, 2012.

Support to the United Nations to achieve a more unified approach to development efforts has had mixed results

The final category of partnerships with multilateral organisations covered by evaluations in the synthesis covers support to the United Nations (UN), both at a global level and through individual country programs to the UN's Delivering as One agenda. This agenda aims to make the UN development system more coherent, effective and relevant. The three evaluations in this category found that the programs that were supported showed mixed results: they had improved collaboration and coordination between UN agencies in two cases and they had resulted in efficiencies in one case but not another.

The 'Delivering as One' global evaluation examined the pilot implementation of the UN Delivering as One agenda in seven countries from 2006 to 2011. The \$585 million pilot undertook to reform and streamline UN agency operations, with Australia providing 3 per cent of donor funding. The global evaluation provides perhaps the most detailed examination of use of a global trust fund to support reform within a complex bureaucracy. While the evaluation concluded that donor cooperation with the UN and host governments had improved and there had been progress on UN common leadership, voice and programming, there was less success on office and business processes and efficiency was poor, as costs remained high (p. 22). Although the objectives of the fund were to improve coordination and delivery, the rigidities of UN agencies' institutional structures reduced its effectiveness. The conclusion drawn by the evaluation is that large multidonor trust funds remain subject to the existing systems and bureaucracies of the host agency.

Further support for this view is provided by an evaluation of Australia's support to the Philippines United Nations Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction initiative. Reflecting the objectives of the UN Delivering as One agenda, the initiative was designed as a jointly planned and implemented program through three UN agencies—the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)—in part to establish a more efficient way of working with the UN system in the Philippines. However, the evaluation observed that progress was badly affected by disagreements between these three agencies, as they were unwilling to plan and execute in a collaborative way. This situation appeared to improve after the United Nations Development Program took over the administrative leadership of the program in 2012 under the UN Coordinating Office and within the UN Delivering as One agenda. The evaluation team's initial impression of this change was that it had 'greatly assisted in bringing more trust, collegiality, collaboration and communication between all three agencies' (p. 26). This was because the different agencies had to work together collaboratively because funding was no longer under their separate control.

Unlike the two evaluations just discussed, the evaluation of Australia's \$9.4 million support for the UN Delivering as One agenda through the One UN Fund for PNG project provides better grounds for optimism about the prospects for substantive reform of the UN development system. While the evaluation did not assess the outcomes or impacts of Australia's investment, it did find that the fund is:

more efficient than individual UN agency overheads and in terms of processing time. Relating to costs, the total general management service fee payable by AusAID [is] 8%. In most cases, this is significantly less than fees previously charged by individual recipient UN agencies (e.g. WHO's standard 'Program Support Cost' fee is 13 per cent). (p. 10)

4.2 Support for civil society is most effective when underpinned by longer-term partnerships and selective use of core funding

Support for civil society is an important component of any aid program, as a wide range of effective civil society organisations (CSOs) can play a part in holding governments to account and can also supplement government efforts in some sectors. DFAT does not restrict its definition of civil society only to non-government organisations (NGOs); it also includes a wide range of non-government and non-market organisations through which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests or values in public life—for example, faith-based organisations, women's groups, community and village-based groups, indigenous groups and voluntary associations.

Support for civil society is an important component of the Australian aid program. In 2011–12, 360 CSOs received \$565 million (or 12 per cent) of direct funding managed by the former AusAID.¹² Much of this support to CSOs is designed to assist them to undertake specific projects—for instance, in water and sanitation, education, and humanitarian activities—while other initiatives aim to strengthen the CSOs themselves.

The lessons below are drawn from 13 evaluations. They are also consistent with the findings of ODE's 2012 evaluation, *Working beyond government: Evaluation of AusAID's engagement with civil society in developing countries*.

Providing long-term core funding to CSOs to allow them greater flexibility to invest over time in strengthening their own capacity will support more sustainable outcomes

CSOs and NGOs offer attractive channels for aid donors, especially in contexts where there are limitations in government service delivery. Several evaluations suggest that, rather than engaging with CSOs primarily as contractors for service delivery, providing long-term core funding to CSOs (as opposed to short-term funding or funding tied to the implementation of specific activities) allows them greater flexibility to invest over time in strengthening their own organisational capacity to be long-term agents of change. Core funding also encourages CSOs to plan and implement programs over a longer time scale, and this type of program normally has a greater chance of success than short initiatives.

For instance, in Indonesia, Australia supports SMERU—a research institute in social and economic analysis. The evaluation found that the core funding to SMERU had allowed it to invest in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff by providing security of employment and competitive remuneration. The core funding had also enabled organisational policies and systems to be strengthened. Project-based funding rarely allows for this type of organisational investment.

Further evidence indicating the value of core funding comes from the Civil Society Program in Fiji, which is especially noteworthy given that the evaluation concludes that this fund appears to have been successful even in the context of a fragile state and many serious external constraints. The evaluation found that:

the long term commitment by AusAID to civil society through political upheavals has ensured the survival of this sector in Fiji as well as to the defence of human rights and maintenance of service delivery in areas where public services have withdrawn. (p. 36)

However, this long-term commitment was not always evident to the CSOs themselves, and the evaluation suggests that, from the perspective of the recipient organisations, a multiyear commitment is preferable to a series of shorter grants.

Three evaluations of various types of funding agreements with NGOs underline the value of core funding, but the reports also suggest that this potential value can best be realised if the recipient organisation makes strategic use of this kind of funding: it is not enough just to use this funding to pay recurrent costs. In the case of the three organisations covered here, the evaluations found that core funding did allow the NGOs concerned to plan programs over a longer timeframe and to make investments in their own capacity and that of their local partners. In the case of the Australian Red Cross (ARC), the evaluation found that there was scope within the partnership agreement for flexibility in the way funds were used. This arrangement allowed the ARC to provide longer-term funding to build

¹² Data received on 30 October 2013 from the former AusAID's statistics unit by AusAID's Civil Society and Business Branch.

the capacity of its national societies. In the case of Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief (RedR), the evaluation suggested that the partnership agreement may have made RedR too dependent on Australian aid funding. The implication of this finding is that, when offering core funding, DFAT and the recipient agency need to have a clear understanding about the organisational changes this funding is meant to support. One appropriate use of this kind of funding appears to be in helping the recipient organisations to diversify their funding base, as was done in the case of the Australia NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) (see Box 10).

Box 10 The Australia NGO Cooperation Program

The Australia NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) is an annual grant program that provides funding to accredited Australian NGOs to deliver their own community development projects. As part of the ANCP, the Australian Government has committed to four-year funding agreements with 10 ANCP Partner NGOs (subject to annual budget processes).

The evaluation found that, with the long-term flexible funding made available under the partnerships and the recognition of their particular areas of expertise in the partnership agreements, the NGOs have been able to move away from funding individual projects on an annual basis and towards a programmatic approach looking for synergies and increased impact over the longer term. They have also been able to make use of the predictable long-term partnership funding to leverage and improve other support to increase the impact they are able to have on poverty reduction (pp. 12, 19).

Source: Mid Term Review of ANCP Partnership Agreements, 2012.

The Local Governance Innovations for Communities initiative in Aceh (LOGICA2) was implemented in the province of Aceh in Indonesia—an area that is now developing rapidly after many years of conflict and the devastating tsunami of 2004. The evaluation found that, while NGOs that have worked with this initiative directly as contracted partners reported an increased ability in their technical skills and capacities as a result of the funding received and the work that they were required to do under the contract, these same NGOs had inadequate involvement in program design and monitoring. This was seen as a missed opportunity to strengthen their skills in strategy development. This evaluation argues that:

strengthening the capacity of civil society includes attention to their organisational systems and structure. However it also includes attention to the ability to monitor, analyse and participate in strategic development of programs and activities. (p. 35)

It found that treating local CSOs and NGOs primarily as contractors rather than partners in the program meant that no focus was given to strengthening their capacity as long-term agents for change:

Building civil society organisations' capacity to maintain efforts towards improved service delivery requires a deliberate and sophisticated approach to partnership with those organisations which goes beyond contracting them for service delivery. (p. 35)

Local CSOs can be important partners, and more attention should be given to partnering with and strengthening local CSOs

Another lesson that emerges from the evaluations is that local CSOs (as well as larger international NGOs) can be important partners, so more attention should be given to partnering with and strengthening local CSOs.

The evaluation of the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) in Myanmar, which was established in 2009 as a multidonor trust fund to assist the livelihoods of two million beneficiaries,

found that too much of the support even in this relatively successful program had been channelled through well-established international NGOs. As a result, opportunities had been missed to support the development and strengthening of local NGOs, which is especially important in the context of the current liberalisation process in Myanmar.

A further example of this same lesson emerges from an evaluation of a very different kind of initiative: the Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR), which is a World Bank managed program that aims to improve the evidence base for policy making in Indonesia. The evaluation found that, though a well-resourced research program had been established, the program had missed opportunities to include local institutes in knowledge-sharing activities because it did not have well-established links or relationships with them. Local research institutes felt that PKPR did not have a broader interest in supporting local policy research capacity. The report goes on to recommend that, when it is funding similar research agencies in the future, the Australian Government needs to ensure these linkages are established at the outset.

The sustainability of development outcomes can be supported by engaging local action groups and undertaking a wide variety of tasks at the local level. This is especially important in water supply and sanitation, where investments will only supply sustainable benefits if a wide range of CSOs and local authorities can be mobilised to help with maintenance. The evaluation of the BESIK Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program in Timor-Leste provides useful lessons about the key role of local CSOs in maintaining water and sanitation facilities. The evaluation found that, even within the difficult context of Timor-Leste, with political insecurity and the continuing challenge to meet both the government's and people's expectations, BESIK had been broadly successful in combining immediate service delivery with a range of capacity-building measures for both government departments and CSOs. However, the evaluation shows that, while local user groups are vital to ensuring that water and sanitation facilities are maintained, there are also limitations in what these sorts of community groups can achieve in the long term: the emphasis on community planning was found to be essential but was also found to have 'diminishing returns' after the initial stages. The evaluation concludes that community engagements are critical in the initial/mobilisation phases of an intervention, but the initiative also needs to try to create an enabling environment for community-led initiatives to endure in the medium term (p. 29). This requires initiatives like BESIK to engage from the outset with a far wider range of actors—both government agencies and CSOs—than has traditionally been the case. A similar lesson is also provided by the Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (Box 11).

Box 11 Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund

When improving water and sanitation, implementing agencies often feel under pressure from users, local authorities and sometimes donors to complete installations in a tight timescale. However, maintenance is often left to be managed by communities, local authorities or line ministries. The evaluation of the global Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund found that, though this fund has helped an estimated 2.3 million people with improved services, the implementing CSOs gave insufficient attention to sustainability. The evaluation suggests that the CSOs receiving this kind of funding need to reconsider their strategy and role in the sector and move beyond simple service delivery type interventions to work with a far wider range of local partners to ensure greater sustainability (p. iii).

This evaluation found that the major CSOs that implemented this fund, while generally strong on service delivery, were far weaker in building up the capacity of smaller local CSOs to hold government service providers to account for the maintenance and continuation of these services (p. 20).

Source: Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund Evaluation, 2012.

Even in very large infrastructure initiatives, local CSOs can play a valuable role in encouraging government agencies to improve their performance. The Eastern Indonesia Roads Improvement Program is a large program of road construction funded by a loan of \$300 million from the Australian Government, but the counterpart agency—the Directorate of Highways in Indonesia—has a generally poor record in undertaking routine maintenance. The evaluation of this initiative argues that just building roads is not enough and that, without major improvements in maintenance, the benefits of the Australian Government’s large investment will not be felt in the long term. This report suggests that engineering projects like road construction will only provide long-term benefits if they are supported by interventions on the ‘demand’ side—for instance, supporting local CSOs working to hold government agencies to account (p. 29). The evaluation argues that in democracies like Indonesia the best hope for improving the performance of the government agency responsible—the Directorate of Highways—is through increased public pressure articulated through strong local CSOs.

4.3 Regional initiatives require flexible funding, a strategic agenda and effective engagement of partners

Supporting regional agencies can be a complex and highly political task. This is especially so in the Pacific, where the size of the region and variation in development contexts make the challenge even greater. The Pacific island states are spread across a region roughly four times the size of China (36 million square kilometres), 98.5 per cent of which is covered by ocean and only 1.5 per cent by land, and the region is characterised by small populations, geographical isolation, difficulties in transportation and communication, narrow economic bases and high unit costs for goods and services. The global economic crisis has imposed additional burdens. The region remains very vulnerable to natural disasters—a challenge that is likely to be exacerbated by climate change.¹³

Our lessons on Australian support for the work of regional initiatives come from evidence from five evaluations—four covering Pacific island states and one from support to the ASEAN Secretariat.

While regional initiatives require flexible funding, this should not be at the expense of strategic and coherent programming

The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) is a major initiative to strengthen political governance in the Pacific, which came out of the 2005 white paper on the Australian aid program.¹⁴ It works through regional governments and other key regional actors to improve governance by building capacity and promoting learning on leadership. The evaluation of the initiative noted that there is a tension between flexible funding and overall program coherence and strategy. These need to be reconciled for flexible funding to be more than simply ad hoc support to disparate initiatives:

In supporting a large and diverse range of organisations the program can appear, from the outside at least, rather ad hoc. A number of respondents posed the question ‘what doesn’t PLP do?’ and they saw risks in it being perceived as ‘all things.’ The program’s flexibility is recognised and largely appreciated but it appears to lack coherence, given the range of its engagements and its opportunistic approach to exploiting new openings ... Having a clearer rationale for different partnerships and their potential impact on poverty could help in developing a strategic perspective of the ... overall portfolio. (p. 11)

¹³ Evaluation of the Secretariat of Pacific Initiative, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁴ AusAID, Australian aid: Promoting growth and stability—A white paper on the Australian Government’s overseas aid program, Australian Government, 2005.

The ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation Program supports the ASEAN Secretariat in its work to build ASEAN integration through policy advice, technical assistance and other mechanisms. The secretariat has faced disruption, work overload and high staff turnover since its creation. But the evaluation noted that the work of the ASEAN Secretariat proved more effective when it adopted a more strategic direction by introducing work streams, a strong management unit and a relevant portfolio of projects (p. 14). The evaluation highlighted lessons on the need for greater use of Australia's practical expertise in dealing with challenges of integration and in donor coordination.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) also has a large remit covering all 22 Pacific island territories and is the premier provider of technical assistance to the region. Australian aid supplies one-third of the annual budget of around US\$100 million to support its work. The evaluation found that, while the SPC had grown substantially in staff and resources, its level of strategic engagement with Pacific island governments had not kept pace. It observed that the present imbalance between core resources and project funding has limited SPC's flexibility to strategically allocate its core budget resources across divisions and programs. The SPC has become increasingly reliant on project funding to fund some of its core administrative functions. Management structures needed to be adjusted to deal with the larger size and scope of the secretariat's remit and financing needs to be more stable and predictable.

In engaging with its regional partners, the Australian Government should invest in building strong relationships over time and take account of the differing needs of different partners

Several evaluations highlighted that, to engage most effectively with its regional partners, the Australian Government should invest in building trust and strong relationships over time and take account of the differing needs and capacities of the various partners.

Much can be learned about effective engagement from the success of the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) Program: according to the evaluation, the program has shown satisfactory progress towards its objectives of improving human rights and governance in the region. Its successes have been achieved in the highly sensitive area of human rights, partly because of its local origins and its influence on local leadership (Box 12).

Some regional bodies supported by the Australian aid program were found to be too distant from their members and their work would have been more effective through more regular contact at the right level. For the Secretariat of the Pacific community, the evaluation recommended:

... more continuous interactions with the [members] and a program of interaction that ensures that the SPC's contributions to the Pacific and member states are fully understood by members. The Director General should make annual visits to members. (pp. 21, 26)

Similarly, the evaluation of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) observed that members felt the secretariat was too remote and that its meetings and communication strategy had had limited effect. As the leading Pacific regional organisation with 16 member states, and an organisation that provides a locus for leaders to meet and determine the collective regional political agenda, its effectiveness depends on maintaining a strong relationship of trust with member states. The evaluation noted that:

A regional organisation needs regular contact with members if it is to understand their issues and represent them well. (p. 27)

The evaluation recommended that the PIFS should broaden its face-to-face engagement and ensure that its messages and requirements are more broadly communicated within the governments of member states.

Box 12 Leadership and engagement in the Regional Rights Resource Team

The Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) has been supported by the Australian Government since 2006 to provide policy advice, technical support and training on human rights, governance, democracy and the rule of law. Its effectiveness has been enhanced by the Pacific origins of the RRRT and its staff:

Pacific staff are seen as especially legitimate communicators of international human rights and are skilled in applying human rights concepts to local circumstances in ways that are culturally appropriate and understandable. (p. 23)

Moreover, engaging at different levels has proved effective for the RRRT. This covers:

- › macro-level capacity development for decision makers such as members of parliament, judges and senior public servants
- › meso-level training for service providers such as magistrates, mid-level public officials, local authorities, the police, social welfare and women's interest officers, teachers and health workers
- › micro-level training that targets community groups and NGOs.

In particular:

targeting human rights training across three levels (macro, meso and micro) has engendered credibility. The breadth of participants who have been trained has broadened awareness and acceptance of rights standards. (p. 24).

Source: Regional Rights Resource Team Evaluation, 2012.

The evaluation of the PLP found that much of its success was due to its ability to build strong partnerships over time based on trust. Part of this involved moving away from conventional donor approaches to managing and monitoring initiatives (Box 13).

Box 13 Pacific Leadership Program

The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) is unusual in a number of respects: organisationally, it is delivered jointly by staff from the Australian Government and Cardno, the managing contractor, through a co-located team in Suva and advised by a panel of eminent Pacific leaders; and the funding modality allows the program significant flexibility to respond to requests and pursue opportunities. However, unlike other small grants programs, the PLP has a high degree of engagement with key actors in the region and is involved in close partnerships with selected organisations. As a regional initiative, the PLP is not unique in facing challenges achieving linkages and complementarities with bilateral programs; nevertheless, it was able to overcome these and build trust and ownership:

In virtually every case, partners identified the high degree of ownership fostered and high levels of trust and mutual respect underpinning the relationship [with PLP]. The positive experience ... was consistently contrasted with the more contractual relationships and lower organisational impact of other donor programs. Even where other donors had provided core funding, respondents highlighted time consuming and bespoke reporting and accounting requirements which did little to leave the organisation stronger. (p. 12)

Source: Pacific Leadership Program Evaluation, 2012.

This concern over donor requirements and a need to change the approach was echoed in the ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation program evaluation. The evaluation found that the Australia aid program's support for the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) built trust by recruiting a strong management unit

and embedding program staff who have developed productive relationships within ASEC and earned the trust and respect of ASEC management and officers. Trust was also improved by sharing authority and decision-making, working through partner systems and strengthening those systems where needed, thus promoting transparency and joint learning. The result was that *'the most important achievement of the program is that it has developed a working partnership with high levels of acceptance and trust'* (p. 16).

However, these steps take additional time and resources: *'there is a cost in terms of time and money: resources ... will naturally be diverted into strengthening the partner's necessary policy, practice and/or capacity.'* (p. 17)

The lesson here for DFAT is that, in order to build partnerships at the regional level, it is necessary to adopt a patient and flexible approach and allow implementation to take place at a pace suited to the partner's capacity. The evaluation expresses it in the following way:

giving a commitment to partnership, but also applying normal AusAID 'standards' of direction (control), strategic planning, M&E and other factors will lead to frustration. The partnership inherently means that progress in these areas can only take place, if, and at a rate, the partner agrees and develops its associated absorptive capacity. (p. 27)

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

[These Terms of Reference were finalised in March 2013, before the absorption of the former AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Subsequent to the finalisation of these Terms of Reference, the proposed review was split into two separate reports: *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* and *Learning from Australian aid operational evaluations*.]

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and the Program Effectiveness and Performance Division (PEPD) of AusAID will jointly manage a review of the quality and synthesise the findings of independent evaluations commissioned by AusAID of aid initiatives. This topic (synthesis of AusAID evaluations) is included in ODE's forward work plan which was endorsed by the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) and approved by the Development Effectiveness Steering Committee.

1 Background

Independent Evaluation at AusAID is undertaken at several levels and managed by different areas. ODE undertakes evaluations of broad strategic relevance in line with its evaluation policy and three year rolling work program. Thematic areas commission sector evaluations (such as the Mid-Term Review of the Development for All Strategy, 2012) and geographic areas also commission evaluations (such as the Review of the PNG–Australia Development Cooperation Treaty, 2010). However, the bulk of independent evaluations are undertaken at initiative level. In accordance with AusAID's Performance Management and Evaluation Policy (PMEP), every monitored initiative¹⁵ is required to undertake an independent evaluation at least once over its life, at the time and for the purpose most useful for program management. (This replaces an earlier policy that distinguished between Independent Progress Reports (IPRs) and Independent Completion Reports (ICRs)). The purposes of these independent evaluations are:

- › **Management:** Independent evaluations help managers to understand what is working, what is not and why, and feed directly into improved management by informing initiative quality at implementation assessments and annual program performance reports, the ODE synthesis of evaluations and quality assurance report and the *Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness*.
- › **Accountability:** Independent evaluations are a key source of information on the effectiveness of the aid program to key stakeholders, such as the Australian public, partner governments, implementing partners and the communities that AusAID works with.

¹⁵ A 'monitored' initiative is where the expected Australian Government funding over the life of the initiative is greater than \$3 million, or the value is less than \$3 million but the initiative is significant to country or corporate strategies or key relationships with other development partners, including other government agencies.

- › **Learning:** Independent evaluations provide important information about what does or does not work in a particular context and why. This information may inform country and thematic strategies, design of new activities, management of existing ones, and provide learning to the global community.

For initiatives that are co-financed with other donors or implemented through partners, AusAID encourages joint or partner-led evaluations to be undertaken to share learning across all partners, and to avoid over-burdening implementing partners and beneficiaries with multiple evaluation processes. These evaluations are regarded as meeting AusAID's requirement to undertake an independent evaluation, and are expected to be published on the AusAID website.

With the exception of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), for most other Australian Government departments delivering the aid program, little data is available on evaluations conducted. In cases where those departments are funded through AusAID's budget, they are required to comply with AusAID's PMEP. Departments who directly appropriate aid funding follow their own performance management processes. In 2013 the Development Effectiveness Steering Committee (DESC) endorsed Whole of Government Uniform Standards for the aid program, including a standard on performance management under which all Australian Government departments must conduct an independent evaluation at least once over the life of every aid project.¹⁶

There are three drivers for this review of independent, initiative-level evaluations:

1.1 The need for effectiveness reporting on the Australian aid program to draw on a body of credible evidence

An Effective Aid Program for Australia states that Australia's approach will be based on 'concrete evidence of what works best on the ground to produce results'. Evaluations are central to this aid effectiveness and results agenda, in driving ongoing learning which informs the direction, design and management of the aid program. Independent evaluations also play an important accountability role in AusAID's performance management systems. They complement annual performance management processes which are based on self-assessment, and provide an independent perspective of the quality and results achieved through the Australian aid program.

In line with recommendations in the *Independent review of aid effectiveness* to strengthen initiative and program evaluation in AusAID, the government committed in Effective Aid to producing a smaller number of high-quality evaluations. Under the Transparency Charter, it is expected that evaluations will be published.

1.2 The need to improve the quality of the aid program's independent evaluations

Previous meta-evaluations of AusAID's independent evaluations have found issues with compliance with agency evaluation requirements, and the quality of initiative-level evaluations.

In response to issues identified in ODE's 2007 *Review of AusAID's approach to evaluation*, an Evaluation Review Panel was established by ODE in September 2008 to improve the quality of evaluations in AusAID, and also to build the capacity of AusAID officers to recognise the quality or otherwise of independent evaluations. A blind technical review process was used where consultants were asked to review and provide a technical rating for draft evaluation reports. Over 70 evaluations

¹⁶ ODE will work with AusAID's Whole of Government Branch as it works to apply uniform standards to ODA managed by other government agencies.

underwent technical review via this process between 2008 and 2010. An evaluation of the process¹⁷ found that the technical review could be improved, but should be continued. Nonetheless, the Technical Review Panel was discontinued in 2011. Since then, quality assurance of evaluation findings/reports has been through peer review, rather than the previous two-step technical review plus peer review system.

The March 2011 *Study of independent completion reports and other evaluation documents* (the Bazeley study)¹⁸ raised concerns regarding compliance with agency evaluation requirements, and with the quality of evaluations. For example, Bazeley found that evaluations were undertaken primarily for accountability purposes and not for learning or management, poor underlying data from M&E systems, and the average time allowed (23 days) was minimal given evaluation expectations.

Since April 2011 there have been no further meta-evaluations of the quality of AusAID evaluations or the evaluation process.

1.3 The increasing importance of evaluation across the Australian Public Service

The Department of Finance and Deregulation is overseeing a process of renewing evaluation processes across the Australian Public Service as part of the Commonwealth Financial Accountability Review (CFAR). ODE is a member of the inter-departmental committee advising on this issue. As the new financial accountability framework comes into place across the Australian Public Service, it will be important for the aid program and AusAID, including ODE, to maintain a high-quality and systematic program of evaluations. This review of operational evaluations will help to position the role of evaluations across the aid program.

2 Scope

The 2013 review of operational evaluations will consider all independent evaluations of initiatives completed by AusAID and/or partners (where that evaluation is used for AusAID internal purposes) in the 2012 calendar year.

Under the current Performance Management and Evaluation Policy, AusAID expects approximately 111 initiative evaluations to be undertaken each year.¹⁹ A recent stocktake of evaluations conducted for the 12 months ending October 2012²⁰ identified 103 independent evaluations having been undertaken during that period, excluding ODE, thematic and geographic-based evaluations. A relatively small number have been published.

Future reviews of operational evaluations may move to a financial year reporting period to align with other corporate reporting processes. Future reviews may also look at other types of evaluations (e.g. thematic evaluations, ODE evaluations, evaluations by other government departments). For the

¹⁷ Patricia Rogers, *Meta-evaluation of AusAID's technical review process*, RMIT University, April 2011.

¹⁸ Commissioned in support of the Independent review of aid effectiveness. This study reviewed evaluations from a four-year period from July 2006 to June 2010.

¹⁹ In the 2011–12 financial year there were 588 monitored initiatives with an average duration of 5.3 years. Every initiative is required to undertake an evaluation at least once over its life. So, assuming an even split of evaluations per year, approximately 110–111 evaluations would be expected in 2012.

²⁰ Since the Bazeley study, which covered the 2006–2010 financial years, no financial year stocktakes of completed evaluations have been undertaken.

purposes of this review, the basic characteristics of these other evaluations will be briefly considered by way of context.

All evaluations will be included in the quality review component of the review of operational evaluations. A selection of these evaluations will be used in the synthesis component.

3 Objectives

In line with the purposes of evaluation in AusAID, and the quality issues highlighted in the meta-evaluations outlined above, this review of operational evaluations has two objectives:

- › to promote good quality independent evaluations (including appropriate coverage)
- › to inform the Minister, public, partners and aid program staff of overarching lessons emerging from The findings of independent evaluations.

The findings from the review of operational evaluations will also provide input for ODE's 2014 synthesis of evaluations and quality assurance review and the *2014 Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness*. It is anticipated that the review will become a regular product and this will be reflected in the agency's PMEP.

4 Focus questions

The review of operational evaluations will seek to answer the following questions.

Quality review

1. What are the basic characteristics of different levels of independent evaluation in the aid program and the history and nature of independent evaluation at the initiative level?
2. To what degree do independent evaluations²¹ provide a credible source of evidence for the effectiveness of the Australian aid program?
3. What are the major strengths and weaknesses of independent evaluations conducted for AusAID?
4. What are the factors that contribute to their quality?
5. What actions should be taken to improve the quality and/or coverage of independent evaluations?

Synthesis

1. What are the main lessons for the aid program emerging from the findings of independent evaluations?
2. Are there any trends or patterns regarding the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability or other characteristics of evaluated initiatives?²²

²¹ 'Independent evaluations' is hereafter used in these terms of reference to mean initiative-level independent evaluations.

²² This question was dropped. The question had assumed that a high number of the evaluation reports under review would provide numerical ratings for quality. However, the quality review revealed that only 40 per cent of evaluations provided any numerical ratings, so the question was no longer relevant.

5 Approach

The review of operational evaluations will be conducted by a small team of consultants, and jointly managed by ODE and PEPD (Quality Performance and Results Branch), with input from a reference group comprised of AusAID senior management/advisers. The review will be overseen by the IEC.

Preparatory phase

PEPD will look at the population of monitorable initiatives and conduct a compliance check against the evaluation requirements set out in the PMEP. PEPD will collate a list of all independent evaluations which have been completed (i.e. the date of the final evaluation report) in the 2012 calendar year.

To identify any patterns in coverage or compliance, PEPD/ODE will analyse AidWorks data to compare the characteristics of the initiatives for which independent evaluations have been completed (including, for example, stage of implementation, value, location, sector, implementing partner, modality) with those for which they haven't been completed (including those for which exemptions were granted). This analysis will feed into the quality review.

In addition, the number and characteristics of thematically-based evaluations completed in the 2012 calendar year (i.e. the date of the final evaluation report) will be identified. This data will inform the quality review; however, these evaluations will not themselves be quality reviewed.

A review plan providing details on the agreed methodology and how the review will be implemented will be prepared, and endorsement sought from the IEC. This review plan will be revised before the commencement of part 2: synthesis.

Part 1: Quality review

Part 1 of the review of operational evaluations is a meta-evaluation to assess the credibility and quality of evaluation reports, including the major strengths and weaknesses of independent evaluations and contributing factors. It will also identify actions that should be taken to improve the quality and/or coverage of independent evaluations.

Key activities will include:

- › assessing each evaluation against the OECD–DAC evaluation criteria and a selection of the 2013 AusAID M&E Standards. A clear method and pro forma will be developed to assess the credibility and quality of each evaluation's assessments against each of the criteria²³
- › conducting analysis to determine whether there are any correlations between the quality of evaluations and the characteristics of the initiative (for example, value, location, sector, implementing partner, modality), or between the quality of evaluations and the characteristics of the evaluation (for example, stage of implementation, length of evaluation, time taken for evaluation fieldwork and reporting, focus on project or sector issues, degree of country-specific analysis)
- › conducting interviews with evaluators and program managers from a sample of evaluations to help identify the factors contributing to stronger or weaker evaluations, primarily focusing on using an 'appreciative inquiry' approach.

²³ For example, the ALNAP pro forma: www.alnap.org/pool/files/QualityProforma05.pdf.

During the quality review, approximately six (6) examples of ‘good practice’ evaluation products (terms of reference, evaluation plans, and evaluation reports) will be identified. These examples illustrating ‘good practices’ identified during the quality review of the evaluation population will be discussed in an annex to the final report, with a focus on providing learning to AusAID staff. At least two good quality examples of each type of evaluation product will be sought.

Following an approach yet to be decided, feedback on the assessment of individual evaluations will be provided to initiative/program managers.

In the case that the consultants in the review team have been involved in undertaking an evaluation that is subject to quality review, or in designing or implementing that initiative, they will be recused from conducting the quality assessment for that evaluation to avoid a conflict of interest. The AusAID management team will identify a suitable substitute quality reviewer for the evaluation in question, and this will be acknowledged in the report.

Part 2: Synthesis

Part 2 of the review of operational evaluations will be a synthesis of insightful and useful lessons from a selection of evaluations with particular characteristics (for example, sector, location, implementing partner, modality).

The following approach will be taken:

- › Using a methodology to be developed in consultation with the consultants, the synthesis focus and sample will be determined, drawing on the analysis of the characteristics of evaluations during the quality review and discussion regarding possible focus areas with the reference group and relevant program/thematic areas. Through this process, more specific evaluation questions will be developed for the synthesis and the final sample selected on the basis of these questions.
- › It is anticipated that a maximum of 60 evaluation reports will be included in the synthesis.
- › Findings from the individual evaluations which fall within the synthesis sample will be analysed and synthesised. This may include interviews with key specialist staff and/or seeking to compare the synthesised findings with findings from other international evidence sources (particularly if there is clear contradiction or correlation) in order to explore particular issues in more depth.
- › The findings of the synthesis will be tested through peer review with the reference group and other subject matter specialists, country specialists or modality specialists (depending on the focus areas covered).

6 Outputs

A **review plan** will provide details on the methodology to be used and how the review will be implemented. The review plan will be prepared by the review team (consultants), and will be endorsed by the IEC prior to the quality review commencing. This review plan will be reviewed after part 1: quality review has been completed.

The key output will be a **final report** presenting the findings of the quality review and the synthesis. This report will summarise the evidence collected, present analysis and findings, and make recommendations where appropriate. The report will be approximately 30–35 pages in length (plus 4-page executive summary), and will include a quality review section of a maximum of 15 pages and a synthesis report of maximum 15 pages. The report will include a context section that describes the characteristics of different types of independent evaluation conducted at different levels of the aid

program (ODE, thematic, geographically based, other government department and initiative level) before focusing in more detail on the history and nature of initiative-level independent evaluations since about 2006. The report will be prepared by the review team (consultants) in two separate parts, and will be reviewed by ODE, PEPD, the reference group, peer reviewers (part 2: synthesis only) and the IEC.

Approximately six (6) **examples of 'good practice' evaluation products** will be identified and discussed in an annex to the final report. If possible, the examples chosen will be from initiatives with diverse characteristics (e.g. sectors, geography, implementing partner). The examples should include at least two (2) examples of each of a range of good practice products (e.g. terms of reference, evaluation plans, evaluation reports).

Detailed records of all evidence collected or analysis undertaken (including records of the quality assessments, interview notes, spreadsheets containing raw data) will be retained by ODE and PEPD for possible future analysis, but will not be included in the report.

7 Roles and responsibilities

An **AusAID management team** comprising one Director and one manager from ODE and one Director and one manager from PEPD will collaboratively manage the review of operational evaluations. During the preparatory phase, this team will collate the independent evaluations for review, and undertake analysis of AidWorks data, subject to the availability of resources. The team will agree on methodology and comment on reports from the consultants. If the team cannot agree through a collaborative approach, issues may be taken to the reference group for resolution. However, in the case of any issue arising that cannot be resolved collaboratively, the Assistant Director General ODE will make a determination.

A **review team** of up to four consultants with skills in evaluation, analysis and report writing will prepare the review plan, undertake the quality analysis and the synthesis using a methodology agreed with the AusAID management team, and prepare the draft report.

A small **reference group** comprised of AusAID senior management/advisers will be consulted at key decision points.

The **Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC)** will provide technical oversight of the review of operational evaluations. The final report will be made public as an ODE product.

8 Timeframes

| Date | Activity | Primary responsibility |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Preparatory phase | | |
| April - May 2013 | Collate independent evaluations and conduct preliminary analysis | AusAID management team |
| May 2013 | Prepare review plan (Parts 1 and 2) | Review team |
| May 2013 | Finalise review plan (Parts 1 and 2) (including endorsement by IEC) | AusAID management team reference group |
| Part 1: Quality review | | |
| May - July 2013 | Conduct quality analysis and prepare draft report (Part 1) | Review team |
| July 2013 | Review draft report (Part 1) (including review by IEC) | AusAID management team reference group |
| Part 2: Synthesis | | |
| July 2013 | Revise review plan (Part 2) | Review team |
| July 2013 | Finalise revised review plan (Part 2) (including endorsement by IEC) | AusAID management team reference group |
| July - September 2013 | Conduct synthesis and prepare draft report (Part 2) | Review team |
| September - October 2013 | Peer review of draft report (Part 2) | Reference group plus additional stakeholders/experts |
| October - November 2013 | Prepare proposed final report (Parts 1 and 2) | Review team |
| Finalisation | | |
| November 2013 | Provide comments on proposed final report | IEC |
| December 2013 | Prepare final version of final report | AusAID management team |
| December 2013 | Publish report | AusAID management team |

Annex 2: Detailed methodology

1 Overview of approach

Learning from Australian aid operational evaluations synthesises the findings of those evaluations found to contain credible evidence and analysis during the *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* review to provide a set of lessons for improving the quality and performance of the Australian aid program. The synthesis sought to answer the key evaluation question:

- › What are the main lessons for the aid program emerging from the findings of the independent evaluations?²⁴

2 Detailed methodology

The evidence base

Starting with the population of 87 operational evaluations completed in 2012, the *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* review identified 64 evaluation reports (74 per cent) that were assessed as adequate quality or better for ‘credibility of evidence and analysis’. This criterion was selected based on its central importance to the robustness of the overall report. This group of 64 independent operational evaluation reports formed the pool on which the synthesis was based.

The evaluation synthesis methodology comprised the following steps.

Step 1: Developing the organising framework

Evidence was collected to answer the questions ‘What worked well and why?’ and ‘What didn’t work well and why?’ To structure the collection of evidence on these questions and to organise and categorise the evidence collected, the team developed a list of provisional hypotheses based on the initial reading of the evaluation reports during the quality review phase.

Step 2: Detailed report reading and recording the evidence

The 64 reports were divided between the review team members. Team members reviewed the contents of each report, focusing on the sections related to findings, conclusions and recommendations, to answer the questions set out in step 1. The evidence collected was used to refine the initial list of hypotheses developed and, where needed, add other hypotheses so that the

²⁴ Originally it was planned that there would be an additional key evaluation question: ‘Are there any trends or patterns regarding the effectiveness, sustainability or other characteristics of evaluated initiatives?’ However, this had assumed a high number of the evaluation reports under review would rate initiatives against the Australian aid quality criteria. The *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* review revealed that only 40 per cent provided ratings, so this is no longer a focus of this evaluation synthesis.

framework was refined as the reading progressed. The text was marked and categorised for reference so that the framework was continually refined in an iterative process. Regular communication between team members was important—and we had substantive discussions on data collection and emerging lessons after reading approximately every five evaluations.

Explanations or theories associated with emerging concepts were extracted and lines of argument developed that pulled corroborating concepts together in a way that goes beyond the content of the individual reports. We recorded evidence (e.g. text or text references) for each hypothesis in a spreadsheet. During the analysis, relevant text from reports was tagged and drawn upon to support the analysis. We included the main characteristics of each initiative such country or region, sector, value and duration. Innovative initiatives were identified as well as those implemented in a high-risk setting.²⁵ The aim of this was to allow patterns to be identified through filtering the evidence for what works well and what does not work well against various characteristics. This allowed the lessons to be placed within a context: i.e. ‘what worked or did not work well *under what circumstances* and why?’

Step 3: Synthesising the evidence collected

During the next stage, the review team synthesised and analysed the evidence collected, taking contextual factors into account, testing the strength of the provisional hypotheses and refining them, and developing more significant and higher-level lessons. To manage the large volume of data, the team took a structured approach, dividing up the evidence according to their areas of expertise and each focusing in depth on specific evidence and provisional hypotheses to develop these into draft lessons and explanatory text. The analysis looked for patterns and commonalities across the evidence collected and across variables such as initiative characteristics to develop lessons; however, outliers were also taken into account.

Step 4: Refining and prioritising the draft lessons

A shortlist of the strongest hypotheses was identified and a set of proposed lessons developed, drawing on the team’s international experience to ground the lessons within broader aid practice and thinking. The proposed lessons were presented to the DFAT management team in a teleconference workshop and discussed further. The final articulation of lessons was made in agreement with the DFAT management team and was based on the strength of the evidence across the 64 evaluations; the salience of the findings; and the priority areas for Australian aid program learning.

Step 5: Synthesis write-up

The agreed lessons from Step 4 were divided up between the team members to complete any further analysis and prepare a concise write-up.

Step 6: Peer and Independent Evaluation Committee review

The draft report was submitted to DFAT’s Independent Evaluation Committee for review. At the same time a selection of peer reviewers also considered the draft report. The peer review served as an additional level of validation for the results.

²⁵ Innovative initiatives may be defined as ‘initiatives where new and untested approaches were funded’. Initiatives in a high-risk setting may be defined based on the evidence from the initiatives but include those implemented in fragile and conflict-affected states, as per the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition.

3 Quality assurance

To ensure consistency in the evaluation synthesis, a number of measures were taken. The team met face to face and regularly discussed and compared their progress by teleconference to ensure that the team members had a common understanding of adequate evidence to back up the data extracted from the evaluation reports. The team leader also checked on the work of the other team members by examining their findings (evidence of what worked and what didn't work) by reviewing five of the reports of the other two team members at various intervals, comparing their results with his own, providing guidance and ensuring appropriate changes were made where necessary. The team leader also regularly checked the consistency of the data entered into the spreadsheet by the team members to ensure it sufficiently captured the core of 'what is working and why' or 'what is not working and why'.

4 Limitations

Given that we synthesised evidence from a *selection* of evaluations to produce lessons for the *whole* Australian aid program, the representativeness of the sample of evaluations is important. The *Quality of Australian aid operational evaluations* review confirmed that the initiatives evaluated can be considered broadly representative of the overall aid program. Furthermore, we have taken contextual factors into account in our analysis in this report to the extent possible. Nonetheless, a cautious approach should be taken to generalising beyond the evidence base to circumstances that may be markedly different.

5 Conflict of interest

A potential conflict of interest may have arisen if the team were to review an evaluation or an initiative that either ITAD Ltd or the individual review team members were involved in designing, implementing or evaluating. However, this did not occur.

6 Ethical conduct

ODE's evaluations are guided by relevant professional standards, including the Australasian Evaluation Society's guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluations.

ITAD adopts accepted standards and ethical principles for the conduct of evaluations. ITAD is a corporate member of the UK Evaluation Society (UKES) and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), and adopts the UKES *Guidelines for good practice in evaluation* and the IDEAS *Competencies for development evaluation evaluators, managers, and commissioners*. ITAD recognises the United Nations Evaluation Group's *Ethical guidelines for evaluation*, the UK Department for International Development's *Ethics principles for research and evaluation* and the OECD Development Assistance Committee's *Quality standards for development evaluation*. For this review, ITAD observed the Code of Ethics of the Australasian Evaluation Society.

Annex 3: List of evaluations included

Those evaluations that have been published externally can be accessed through the DFAT aid publications webpage²⁶ or, in some cases, through aid country program webpages.

| Initiative number | Evaluation title | Country | Primary sector | Published on DFAT website? |
|-------------------|--|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| INC357 | Independent Evaluation of Agusan del Sur Malaria Control and Prevention Program | Philippines | Health | Yes |
| IND982 | Evaluation of the outcomes and sustainability of the Laos–Australia Basic Education Project (LABEP) | Laos | Education | No |
| INE114 | Independent Completion Review of Provision of Core Funding Support to the SMERU Research Institute | Indonesia | Improved government | Yes |
| INE887 INJ788 | Independent Completion Review of Australian Civil Society Program Fiji | Fiji | Human rights | No |
| INF725 | Evaluation of Africa–Australian Development Scholarships Management Program | Africa | Education | No |
| INF759 | Independent assessment report and recommendations on possible future activities for Papua New Guinea Media Development Initiative 2 | Papua New Guinea | Human rights | Yes |
| ING002 | Independent evaluation of AusAID’s support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) | Timor-Leste | Water and sanitation | Yes |
| ING236 | South Asia Regional Program Evaluation (AusAID-ADB South Asia Development Partnership Facility and AusAID-World Bank Facility for Decentralisation, Local Governance and Service Delivery) | Multicountry | General development support | Yes |
| ING357 | Evaluation of Public Sector Capability Development Program (PSCDP) in Timor-Leste | Timor-Leste | Improved government | Yes |

²⁶ The DFAT aid publications webpage is currently located at: <http://aid.dfat.gov.au/Publications/Pages/List.aspx?publicationcategory=Evaluation%20Reports>.

| Initiative number | Evaluation title | Country | Primary sector | Published on DFAT website? |
|-------------------|--|------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ING406 | Independent Progress Review of Eastern Indonesia Road Improvement Program | Indonesia | Infrastructure | Yes |
| ING661 | Final Evaluation Report for Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project (RRHLSP) | Myanmar | Rural development and food security | No |
| ING723 | ODE Evaluation of Australian Law and Justice Assistance: Cambodia case study | Cambodia | Security and justice | Yes |
| ING754 | Mid Term Review of Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain (CAVAC) program | Cambodia | Rural development and food security | Yes |
| ING854 | Independent Review of the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) | Multicountry | Improved government | Yes |
| ING918 | End of Program Review of the Papua New Guinea–Australia Sexual Health Improvement Program (PASHIP) | Papua New Guinea | Health | Yes |
| ING948 | Mid-Term Review of the State- and Peace-Building Fund (SPF) | Multicountry | Conflict prevention and resolution | No |
| ING967 | Mid-term Review of Implementation Support Program to P135 Phase II in Quang Ngai Province | Vietnam | Rural development and food security | No |
| ING982 | Independent Completion Report for Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) | Multicountry | Security and justice | No |
| ING997 | Final Evaluation of the Three Diseases Fund | Myanmar | Health | Yes |
| INH095 | Independent Completion Report for Laos–Australian Scholarships Program | Laos | Education | No |
| INH274 | Independent Completion Report for Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) Phase II | Bangladesh | Rural development and food security | No |
| INH361 | Independent Progress Review of Support for Education Sector Development in Aceh (SEDIA) | Indonesia | Education | No |
| INH436 | Independent Progress Review of Australia-UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat | Indonesia | Education | No |

| Initiative number | Evaluation title | Country | Primary sector | Published on DFAT website? |
|-------------------|--|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| INH497 | Independent Completion Report for Timor–Leste Asian Development Bank Infrastructure Project Management/Infrastructure Technical Assistance | Timor-Leste | Infrastructure | Yes |
| INH528 | Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program | Pacific | Improved government | Yes |
| INH602 | Mid Term Evaluation of the School Sector Reform Program | Nepal | Education | Yes |
| INH843 INI153 | Independent Review of two remote service delivery and community development programs in Papua New Guinea | Papua New Guinea | Environment and natural resource management | No |
| INH157 | Independent Progress Report for ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II | Multicountry | Improved government | Yes |
| INH947 | Evaluation of Education for Children in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict–Mindanao Philippines | Philippines | Education | No |
| INI035 | External review of the Indonesia Project | Indonesia | Education | No |
| INI171 | Independent Progress Report for Provincial Road Management Facility (PRMF) | Philippines | Infrastructure | Yes |
| INI194 | Independent Progress Report for PNG–Australia Law & Justice Partnership | Papua New Guinea | Security and justice | Yes |
| INI311 | Mid Term Review of the Vanuatu Kastom Governance Partnership Program | Vanuatu | Improved government | No |
| INI355 | Independent Progress Report for Local Governance Innovations for Communities in Aceh, Phase II (LOGICA2) | Indonesia | Improved government | Yes |
| INI422 | Independent Progress Review of the Australia Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction | Indonesia | Humanitarian response | No |
| INI426 | Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from UN Delivering as One | Multicountry | General development support | No |
| INI510 | Review of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund | Afghanistan | General development support | Yes |

| Initiative number | Evaluation title | Country | Primary sector | Published on DFAT website? |
|-------------------|--|------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| INI592 | Independent Completion Review of the Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund | Multicountry | Water and sanitation | Yes |
| INI632 | Mid Term Review of the Australia-WB Philippines Development Trust Fund | Philippines | General development support | Yes |
| INI661 | Independent Review of the SIG-RAMSI Public Sector Improvement Program (PSIP) Year 4 | Solomon Islands | Improved government | No |
| INI674 | Independent Progress Review of the Solomon Islands Media Assistance Scheme Phase 3 | Solomon Islands | Human rights | No |
| INI865 | Independent Mid Term Review of the Australian Community Rehabilitation Program Phase 3 | Sri Lanka | Humanitarian response | Yes |
| INI903 | Independent Progress Review of the PNG-Australia Economic and Public Sector Program (EPSP) | Papua New Guinea | Improved government | No |
| INI941 | Mid Term Review of AusAID NGO Cooperation Program Partnership Agreements | Multicountry | Human rights | Yes |
| INJ052 | Independent Review of the Tonga Sector Consolidation Project (TSCP) | Tonga | Infrastructure | No |
| INJ124 | Independent Completion Report for the Padang Pariaman Health Facility Reconstruction Program | Indonesia | Health | Yes |
| INJ135 | Interim Review of the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund | Myanmar | Rural development and food security | Yes |
| INJ152 | Independent Progress Report for Solomon Islands Clean Water & Sanitation Program | Solomon Islands | Water and sanitation | No |
| INJ189 | Independent Completion Report for Zimbabwe NGO Food and Water Initiative | Zimbabwe | Water and sanitation | No |
| INJ197 | Final Annual Performance Assessment 2011 ²⁷ for Kiribati Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program Phase I | Kiribati | Business, finance and trade | Yes |

²⁷ Completed in 2012.

| Initiative number | Evaluation title | Country | Primary sector | Published on DFAT website? |
|----------------------------|--|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| INJ235 | Independent Progress Review of Education in Emergencies Capacity Building | Multicountry | Education | No |
| INJ241 INJ398 INI309 | Independent Review of Two AusAID Funded UNICEF Projects on Child Survival and Nutrition and Maternal Health in Nepal | Nepal | Health | Yes |
| INJ244 | Independent Progress Review of Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR) | Indonesia | Improved government | Yes |
| INJ251 ING400 | Independent Progress Review of the UN Joint Program on Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction | Philippines | Health | Yes |
| INJ321 | Independent Review of AusAID's Support to the UN in PNG through the UN Country Fund | Papua New Guinea | General development support | Yes |
| INJ344 | Independent Review of Australia Africa Community Grants Scheme | Multicountry | General development support | No |
| INJ371 | Final Evaluation of Timor-Leste Investment Budget Execution Support for Rural Infrastructure Development and Employment Generation | Timor-Leste | Infrastructure | Yes |
| INJ632 | Independent Progress Review of the Australia Indonesia Electoral Support Program 2011-15 | Indonesia | Human rights | No |
| INJ657 | Mid Term Review of Partnership agreement between AusAID and Australian Red Cross | Multicountry | Humanitarian response | Yes |
| INJ675 | Independent Progress Report for the Vanuatu Australia Police Project | Vanuatu | Security and justice | No |
| INJ691 | Mid Term Independent Review of the RedR Australia and AusAID Partnership Agreement | Multicountry | Humanitarian response | Yes |
| INJ746 | Independent External Review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) | Multicountry | General development support | Yes |
| INJ794 | Independent Review of MTV Exit Asia III | Multicountry | Human rights | Yes |
| INK299 | Review of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) | Multicountry | Improved government | No |

Annex 4: List of evaluations providing evidence for each lesson

| Lesson | Evaluations providing evidence for the lesson |
|---|--|
| 2. Program design and management | |
| 2.1 Improving monitoring and evaluation requires attention to outcomes, better intervention logic and more accessible information | ING002 Independent evaluation of AusAID's support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) |
| | ING754 Mid Term Review of Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain (CAVAC) program |
| | ING918 End of Program Review of the Papua New Guinea–Australia Sexual Health Improvement Program (PASHIP) |
| | INH436 Independent Progress Review of Australia-UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat |
| | INH843 Independent Review of two remote service delivery and community development programs in Papua New Guinea |
| | INI153 |
| | INI194 Independent Progress Report for PNG–Australia Law & Justice Partnership |
| | INI592 Independent Completion Review of the Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund |
| 2.2 Poor coordination adversely affects effectiveness | ING235 Independent Progress Review of Education in Emergencies Capacity Building |
| | ING675 Independent Progress Report for the Vanuatu Australia Police Project |
| | ING002 Independent evaluation of AusAID's support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) |
| | INH528 Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program |
| | INH602 Mid Term Evaluation of the School Sector Reform Program |
| | INJ241 Independent Review of Two AusAID Funded UNICEF Projects on Child Survival and Nutrition and Maternal Health in Nepal |
| | INJ398 |
| | INI309 |
| 2.3 Implementation is stronger where there is close engagement by DFAT staff and the role of managing contractors is clear | INJ675 Independent Progress Report for the Vanuatu Australia Police Project |
| | ING357 Evaluation of Public Sector Capability Development Program (PSCDP) in Timor-Leste |
| | ING967 Mid-term Review of Implementation Support Program to P135 Phase II in Quang Ngai Province |
| | INH095 Independent Completion Report for Laos–Australian Scholarships Program |
| | INH528 Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program |
| | INH157 Independent Progress Report for ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II |
| | INI171 Independent Progress Report for Provincial Road Management Facility (PRMF) |
| | INI422 Independent Progress Review of the Australia Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction |
| | INI865 Independent Mid Term Review of the Australian Community Rehabilitation Program Phase 3 |
| INJ189 Independent Completion Report for Zimbabwe NGO Food and Water Initiative | |

3. Supporting capacity development and sustainable reforms

| | | |
|--|------------------|---|
| 3.1 Capacity development is most effective when it is driven by partners, uses a range of methods and takes the local context into account | INE887 INJ788 | Independent Completion Review of Australian Civil Society Program Fiji |
| | ING002 | Independent evaluation of AusAID's support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) |
| | ING357 | Evaluation of Public Sector Capability Development Program (PSCDP) in Timor-Leste |
| | ING854 | Independent Review of the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) |
| | INH436 | Independent Progress Review of Australia-UNICEF Education Assistance to Papua and Papua Barat |
| | INH528 | Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program |
| | INJ244 | Independent Progress Review of Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR) |
| | INH602 | Mid Term Evaluation of the School Sector Reform Program |
| | INH497 | Independent Completion Report for Timor-Leste Asian Development Bank Infrastructure Project Management/Infrastructure Technical Assistance |
| | INI661 | Independent Review of the SIG-RAMSI Public Sector Improvement Program (PSIP) Year 4 |
| 3.2 Public sector reform requires better diagnosis and incremental approaches | ING357 | Evaluation of Public Sector Capability Development Program (PSCDP) in Timor-Leste |
| | ING723 | ODE Evaluation of Australian Law and Justice Assistance: Cambodia case study |
| | INH361 | Independent Progress Review of Support for Education Sector Development in Aceh (SEDIA) |
| | INI194 | Independent Progress Report for PNG-Australia Law & Justice Partnership |
| | INI355 | Independent Progress Report for Local Governance Innovations for Communities in Aceh, Phase II (LOGICA2) |
| | INI903 | Independent Progress Review of the PNG-Australia Economic and Public Sector Program (EPSP) |
| 3.3 Improving opportunities for women requires long-term support and targeted programs | INF725 | Evaluation of Africa-Australian Development Scholarships Management Program |
| | ING002 | Independent evaluation of AusAID's support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) |
| | ING982 | Independent Completion Report for Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) |
| | INI194 | Independent Progress Report for PNG-Australia Law & Justice Partnership |
| | INI311 | Mid Term Review of the Vanuatu Kastom Governance Partnership Program |
| | INJ189 | Independent Completion Report for Zimbabwe NGO Food and Water Initiative |
| | INJ794 | Independent Review of MTV Exit Asia III |

4. Engaging with partners to make Australian aid more effective

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4.1 Working with multilateral organisations can promote efficiency and expand reach and policy influence but requires active DFAT management and engagement | ING236 | South Asia Regional Program Evaluation (AusAID-ADB South Asia Development Partnership Facility and AusAID-World Bank Facility for Decentralisation, Local Governance and Service Delivery) |
| | ING948 | Mid-Term Review of the State- and Peace-Building Fund (SPF) |
| | INI426 | Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from UN Delivering as One |
| | INI510 | Review of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund |
| | INI632 | Mid Term Review of the Australia-WB Philippines Development Trust Fund |
| | INJ251 ING400 | Independent Progress Review of the UN Joint Program on Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction |
| | INJ321 | Independent Review of AusAID's Support to the UN in PNG through the UN Country Fund |
| 4.2 Support for civil society is most effective when underpinned by longer-term partnerships and selective use of core funding | INE114 | Independent Completion Review of Provision of Core Funding Support to the SMERU Research Institute |
| | INE887 INJ788 | Independent Completion Review of Australian Civil Society Program Fiji |
| | ING002 | Independent evaluation of AusAID's support to rural WASH in Timor-Leste through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP/BESIK) |
| | ING406 | Independent Progress Review of Eastern Indonesia Road Improvement Program |
| | INH528 | Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program |
| | INI355 | Independent Progress Report for Local Governance Innovations for Communities in Aceh, Phase II (LOGICA2) |
| | INI592 | Independent Completion Review of the Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund |
| | INI674 | Independent Progress Review of the Solomon Islands Media Assistance Scheme Phase 3 |
| | INI941 | Mid Term Review of AusAID NGO Cooperation Program Partnership Agreements |
| | INJ135 | Interim Review of the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund |
| | INJ244 | Independent Progress Review of Partnership for Knowledge-Based Poverty Reduction (PKPR) |
| INJ657 | Mid Term Review of Partnership agreement between AusAID and Australian Red Cross | |
| INJ691 | Mid Term Independent Review of the RedR Australia and AusAID Partnership Agreement | |
| 4.3 Regional initiatives require flexible funding, a strategic agenda and effective engagement of partners | ING982 | Independent Completion Report for Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) |
| | INH528 | Independent Progress Report for Pacific Leadership Program |
| | INH157 | Independent Progress Report for ASEAN Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II |
| | INJ746 | Independent External Review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) |
| | INK299 | Review of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) |