Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

End of Program Evaluation of Australia Assists | MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

In June 2022, DFAT commissioned an independent evaluation of the Australia Assists program to examine the effectiveness of the investment and achievement of outcomes; its efficiency and value for money; and its relevance. The evaluation report was completed in December 2022 and includes a number of useful findings and practical recommendations to help inform the remaining months of implementation, as well as any potential new phase of investment.

DFAT agrees or partially agrees with all eight of the recommendations, noting that no decision has yet been made on the design or scope of a future program.

End of Program Evaluation Recommendations and Management Response
Recommendations for DFAT

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
1. The new design should progress the Australia Assists Deployment Framework towards a more sophisticated, multi-tiered approach that enables greater variability in deployment mechanisms including enhanced rapid response (24–48 hours following signing of a mission directive from DFAT), increased in-country surge capability (including through an enhanced localisation approach), and non-host organisation placements.	Agree	DFAT recognises the high-quality deployments delivered through this program. DFAT agrees that increased flexibility in deployment approaches will provide even greater responsiveness, effectiveness and innovation.	This recommendation will be considered as part of DFAT's design for a future phase of investment, should it proceed.	2023
2. The new design for Australia Assists should include management models that provide DFAT with an enhanced bandwidth to engage with the implementing partner in contractual, technical, and strategic matters related to the	Agree	DFAT agrees there are benefits to introducing a more enhanced role for DFAT staff in the management of deployments. Appropriate DFAT resourcing is also essential for	This recommendation will be considered as part of DFAT's design for a future phase of investment, should it proceed.	2023

	program, and engage with international fora, regional organisations and with Posts (for example, by in-sourcing management support).		effective program and partnership management.		
3.	Utilise the opportunity afforded by the upcoming design process to develop a new Theory of Change and MEAL system (including a structured approach to adaptive management and continuous improvement) and conduct a baseline study. This will provide the new phase with a robust MEAL system, data sets and tools to begin implementation.	**Agree**	DFAT agrees any new design should examine and update the current Theory of Change and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.	This recommendation will be addressed as part of DFAT's design for a future phase of investment, should it proceed.	2023
4.	Conduct a review of DFAT's approach to branding humanitarian assistance across all humanitarian investments, with a view to the development of a strong and consistent brand going forward and consider drawing upon external communications expertise to facilitate the process.	**Partially Agree**	Branding is a key mechanism for enhancing the visibility of the Australian Government's international assistance to both overseas audiences and to the Australian public. DFAT agrees that consideration should be given as to the feasibility of introducing a single humanitarian brand for DFAT's suite of humanitarian programs. DFAT agrees program branding should be strengthened including in any future design.	DFAT will consider a review of current humanitarian assistance branding informed by DFAT's overarching branding and communication strategies and policies. As per Recommendation 6, DFAT will consult with RedR on ways to strengthen the Australia Assists branding for the remainder of the program. Strengthened branding will also be prioritised as part of DFAT's design for a future phase of investment, should it proceed.	2023/2024
5.	Ensure sufficient DFAT resourcing (time and human resources) of the design, tender, contract negotiations and implementation, to ensure the next phase has the right foundations to implement an enhanced deployment framework and management approach.	**Agree**	DFAT agrees sufficient resourcing is critical to ensure the success of any future design and procurement process.	DFAT will continue to allocate necessary resources for ongoing management of this program, and any future phases.	2023/2024

Recommendations for DFAT and RedR Australia

6. **Current Contract: Strengthen the distinction between the Australia Assists program and RedR, and address issues that emerged through this evaluation (intellectual property, branding and MEAL) with a view to enhancing clarity, accountability, and transparency, and agree expectations through to contract end. This could be achieved through a series of facilitated discussions to negotiate a contract amendment between DFAT and RedR, with a contracts specialist to provide advice.**	**Agree**	DFAT agrees that it is appropriate to reconfirm expectations regarding issues such as intellectual property, branding, revenue streams and monitoring and evaluation, and ensure the current contract reflects these accurately.	DFAT and RedR will work together to clarify the programmatic and operational matters raised in this evaluation and ensure the current contract accurately reflects the expectations of both partners.	2023
7. **Focus the current Australia Assists MEAL resourcing (and increase if needed), on collecting outcome data that will contribute to the End of Program Completion Report in 2023.**	**Agree**	DFAT agrees that the collection and analysis of outcome-level data covering the lifespan of this investment will be critical for the End of Program Completion Report and the Final Investment Monitoring Report.	RedR has recently restructured the management oversight of its monitoring and evaluation.\n\nDFAT will continue to work with RedR to allocate adequate resourcing to collect and analyse outcome data for this investment.	2023
8. **Strengthen complaints handling in line with emerging best practice through the introduction of an independent complaints handling mechanism and consider introducing one for DFAT's humanitarian assistance more broadly.**	**Partially Agree**	Easily accessible and reliable mechanisms for incident reporting and accountability are critical to managing safeguard risks, preventing harm, and strengthening learning and improvement.\n\nThe findings of this evaluation provide valuable insights to help strengthen the mechanisms used by Australia Assists to manage safeguard risks. This is a matter for RedR to consider, consistent with	Review and strengthening of complaints handling will continue to be a focus of both RedR and DFAT for the remainder of the program, drawing on the findings of the evaluation.\n\nEffective complaints handling will also be considered as part of DFAT's design for a future phase of investment, should it proceed.	2023/2024

its own policies, and in line with DFAT's safeguard policies (Child Protection, Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH), Environmental and Social Safeguards), and the mandatory reporting requirements and reporting timeframes of those policies.

DFAT does not tolerate sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, or child exploitation, abuse or harm of any kind. This applies within DFAT and extends to those we work with.

DFAT takes all allegations and reported incidents seriously and has zero tolerance of inaction. Anyone can report an incident to DFAT – employees of partner organisations, beneficiaries of DFAT programs, contractors, or members of the public. Reporting can be anonymous.

DFAT's safeguard policies and processes apply to our humanitarian assistance programs and partners. The introduction of an additional internal independent complaints handling mechanism for humanitarian assistance would be duplicative and would not be practical.