

# SELECTED PARTS OF THE EXPANDED INVESTMENT CONCEPT NOTE (FOR PUBLICATION PURPOSES)

Investment Concept Title: Australia Awards in Myanmar	
Start date: February 2020	End date: February 2023 (Proposing a 3+3 year contract)
Total value of the investment:	Up to AUD 24 million - Up to AUD 6 million to be contracted out to support implementation - Up to AUD18m for long-term scholarships
Proposed design pathway: Expanded Concept to Tender	

## A. Analysis of Context (What is the problem?)

### *Myanmar Context*

**Myanmar has some of the lowest social development indicators in the Southeast Asian region.** Over one third of the population of 53.4 million is living in extreme poverty (less than US\$1.90 per day)<sup>1</sup> and public investment in both education and health is among the lowest in the world. Myanmar's significant challenges are due to a legacy of poor governance and administration. In 2011, after decades of relative isolation and internal armed conflict, the Myanmar Government began to introduce a broad array of political, economic and social reforms, which are helping to open the country and rejuvenate the economy. These reforms are complex and interrelated; generating and sustaining momentum for them remains a key challenge. If the reform process continues, Myanmar has the potential to be an important regional partner. It is the largest country by land area in mainland South East Asia. It has significant natural resources, a young population and is strategically positioned between two of the world's fastest growing economies: China and India. International interest, investment and foreign aid has increased dramatically over the past decade, including from Australia.

Enrolments in the higher education sector are low by international standards, and disciplinary choice is highly stratified by gender. Educational access and attainment is also curtailed for certain groups, such as children with disabilities and particular minorities, on account of physical and attitudinal barriers. Graduates from this system struggle to align domestic qualifications with international institutions<sup>2</sup> and proficiency in English is synonymous with social class and access to opportunity.

**Myanmar's reform agenda needs well-educated leaders, officials, entrepreneurs and civil society members.** Australia has, as part of its aid investment and foreign policy, invested in individuals from developing countries to undertake tertiary education since the Colombo Plan of the 1950s. The Australia Awards build on this long history of enabling individuals to access high quality education opportunities. They support Australia to build meaningful connections with future leaders who contribute to the bilateral relationship as they progress through their career.

### *Australia Awards in Myanmar*

**Over the past decade, as the context within Myanmar began to change, the Australian Government considered opportunities to re-establish scholarships.** In 2010, the Australian Embassy in Yangon recruited

<sup>1</sup> Myanmar Aid Fact Sheet, DFAT, April 2019

<sup>2</sup> While data is limited, Post has, in recent years, started recording Australian Qualifications Framework equivalency of awardees to develop evidence of the scale of non-equivalency and the implications for admissions to Australian universities (see notes 3, 4 below). The Australian Qualifications Framework Country Education Profile for Myanmar uses outdated sources – the most recent being from 2008 – and remains both an opaque system to university applicants and a significant obstacle for Myanmar students seeking to access Australian education.

an internal team (one FTE and one international consultant) to administer Australia Awards in Myanmar. The Embassy received approximately 100 applications in the pilot year and awarded 10 scholarships (2011 intake). In the first few years, the Awards supported a mix of Bachelors, Masters and PhD study and focus areas were broad. Over time the allocation of Australia Awards for Myanmar grew. The number of awards peaked in 2016 with the selection of 55 awardees<sup>3</sup>. In 2016, the Embassy also changed to focus on Masters level study (one to two years) to provide faster return on investment and facilitate rapid skill building. The present 2019 intake comprises 40 awardees<sup>4</sup> undertaking Master degrees.

**Data collection, analysis and review from 2017 to 2019 has contributed to a growing body of evidence on the Australia Awards in Myanmar.** In 2018 the Embassy engaged a Managing Contractor on a short term contract (May to October 2018) for the first time. The Contractor supported the selection process through provision of logistical and administrative activities. This proved to be a highly efficient arrangement, effectively outsourcing some of the administrative burden and creating space for DFAT staff to refine policy settings and reshape direction of the investment. The pilot has provided impetus DFAT to pursue a management model that outsources support functions over a longer period.

## **B. Strategic Intent and Rationale (Why should Australia invest?)**

**Australia Awards in Myanmar support implementation of Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper<sup>5</sup> and complement the bilateral relationship.** Investment in individual capacity within Myanmar supports Australia's efforts in the region to strengthen the institutions and policies that in turn facilitate trade and stronger engagement, and promote better functioning economies.

**Australia Awards are a modality to progress objectives aligned with Australia's aid investment in Myanmar.<sup>6</sup>** Australian aid is helping to build an environment conducive to inclusive economic growth and increased trade. It does this by strengthening government capacity and supporting the development of an educated and competitive workforce. Myanmar's challenges have regional and international dimensions and Australia Awards can play a role in linking ideas, skills and collaboration to new solutions for sustainable development outcomes. Changes in Myanmar, including its transition towards democracy and durable peace, present opportunities to make a greater contribution to reducing poverty and creating conditions that support equitable economic growth.

**The investment has further benefits to the reputation of Australia as a quality education destination; Alumni are in-person advocates for Australian universities and the Australian education experience.** Australia Awards offer significant opportunities for Australia to promote its brand as a quality education destination in the region to a new market, building a strong reputation among the growing middle-class in Myanmar and generating new opportunities for Australian education service providers to engage in-country.

**International scholarships deliver highly qualified people, and Australian education institutions are well placed to service demands of the Myanmar workforce.** Whilst the Awards cannot address the entirety of these demands, or the inadequacy of Myanmar's education sector, they can support the development of credentialed, future leaders in priority sectors. The opportunity to study in Australia provides access to

<sup>3</sup> Of the 2017 intake (55 awardees): 28 women, 27 men; 1 person with a disability. Post commenced tracking Australian Qualifications Framework equivalency in the 2018 intake onwards. This data was not considered in the 2017 intake.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 2019 intake (40 awardees): 19 women, 21 men; 1 person with a disability; 18 from ethnic minorities and 14 with a degree not equivalent to an Australian Bachelors degree under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

<sup>5</sup> Foreign Policy White Paper November 2017

<sup>6</sup> These objectives are outlined in the Aid Investment Plan for Myanmar (AIP). The current AIP runs from 2015-2020.

world-class education, research and training institutions. It also provides men and women from Myanmar with increased experience and understanding of Australia. These individuals are equipped to work with their governments, private sector and communities, with each other, and with Australia to meet local, regional and global challenges.

**Australia Awards practically support the priorities and skills gaps identified by the private sector, thereby strengthening access to the sector in Myanmar and the region.** Alumni become a source of knowledge on private sector dynamics and trends in the region, including opportunities to strengthen relationships with the Australian business community. The private sector has not traditionally been a focus of the Australia Awards, although the prioritisation of private sector development in the Aid Investment Plan has resulted in an increase in private sector applicants and awardees in the past three years.

Private sector organisations often have limited capacity to release staff for long periods of time, and usually require employees who are awarded a scholarship to resign their position. While the individual may benefit from the scholarship they are awarded, measuring the impact on the specific sector or organisation is limited if they do not return to their original workplace. **A Contractor will support the Embassy to target engagement with the Private Sector and explore the benefits of short-courses for this group.** This process will also test viability to target organisations that facilitate improved regulation, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility.

**Utilising a contractor's organisational capacity and connections DFAT will tailor a fit-for-purpose Alumni program that will foster the connections and skills that individuals develop while studying in Australia.** Returning from study in Australia, Alumni bring to their workplaces and communities new technical skills, knowledge and networks, as well as an understanding of good governance, transparent and accountable decision-making, equality and inclusiveness. The Myanmar Government, private sector and civil society value the presence of internationally trained professionals returning to workplaces across Myanmar. This investment will facilitate and contribute to the development of these connections and skills.

**A Contractor can help to maximise the intercultural experience for scholars whilst studying in Australia.** The links created between Myanmar people and Australians through a study experience can have a long-lasting and enduring impact on individuals, organisations and attitudes. In addition to the technical skills and knowledge gained, undertaking study in Australia exposes students to new and complex global issues. It helps increase intercultural literacy, which has been absent in Myanmar due to its relative isolation.

**A Contractor will support DFAT to apply evidence and build inclusive opportunities for marginalised groups in Myanmar to access tertiary education through the Awards.** This contributes to an increased representation of women, people living with disability and ethnic minorities with skills to acquire prominent positions in society. There will be opportunities to reshape engagement with minority groups, establish short courses and draw on the flexible funding mechanism to develop fit-for-purpose activities to increase competitiveness. This approach is complementary to the Embassy's Equality Strategy<sup>7</sup>. Section F expands on inclusion vis-à-vis a proposed GEDSI strategy.

### C. Investment Description and Proposed Outcomes (What?)

**Globally, the goal of the Australia Awards is to support partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests<sup>8</sup>.** The Australia Awards

<sup>7</sup> The Australian Embassy in Myanmar will launch its own Equality Strategy in 2019. This will shape engagement across all endeavours.

<sup>8</sup> Australia Awards Global Strategy

Global Strategy 2016-2020<sup>9</sup> (Annex A) expands on this. Underpinning the Australia Awards modalities is the [Global Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#). The Myanmar investment is structured under this global program logic (Annex B).

**In Myanmar, the overarching goal of Australia Awards is to support development through enhancing human development and government capacity, contributing to private sector growth and promoting conditions for peace and stability.** Through ensuring a positive study experience in Australia and investing in alumni engagement we are also aiming to enhance positive and productive relations with Australia – and strengthen Australia’s reputation as an education destination.

**As per the Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the intended outcomes of this investment are that:**

- men and women alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to Myanmar’s sustainable development
- alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and Myanmar
- effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and Myanmar are established
- alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively.

**The investment in Australia Awards in Myanmar will operationalise the global program logic and deliver the intended outcomes under an agile and cost-efficient model.** It will follow established best practice in the delivery of Australia Awards by outsourcing administrative and operational activities, enabling DFAT to concentrate on the management of the investment and ensure efficient, coherent delivery.

The investment will provide well-targeted study, training and networking opportunities to individuals. It will identify, engage, recruit, mobilise and support scholarship recipients, including upon their return to Myanmar. Specifically:

- Establishing priorities and targets as part of the annual cycle of selection and mobilisation
- Attracting high quality applications
- Selecting high calibre, of-interest applicants
- Supporting enrolment in relevant and good quality courses of study
- Preparing of awardees for their Australian experience
- Providing targeted on-award support for awardees in Australia
- Delivering high quality public diplomacy materials
- Engaging alumni upon return to Myanmar.

Through considered implementation of these activities within Myanmar’s evolving context, the investment will ensure:

1. Awardees complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities
2. Awardees and their families have a positive experience of life in Australia; and
3. Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses.

<sup>9</sup> The Global Australia Awards Strategy is in the process of being refreshed and outcomes may be adjusted, however any changes are anticipated to be minimal.

Australia Awards in Myanmar will be delivered through three core components:

1. **Australia Awards Scholarships**, including the full cycle of management and activities required to successfully deliver up to 40 Scholarships<sup>10</sup> per year
2. **Australia Awards Short Courses**<sup>11</sup> that over three years pilot a demand-driven identification and implementation process, with potential to scale up
3. **Enabling Activities** that support the successful delivery of Australia Awards, including:
  - provision of English language training
  - on-award support in Australia
  - structured alumni engagement in Myanmar
  - administrative support to ensure all of the above happens effectively and efficiently

A **Flexible Funding Mechanism** will pilot initiatives that identify and generate pathways for disadvantaged and/or high interest groups to access the Award and increase competitiveness. For example targeted support for people living with disability or pre-application skill building for government officials.

Across all modalities, quality monitoring and evaluation will be essential to assessing the investment's progress against achieving these goals. Section E expands on this. Through the governance mechanisms (Section D), DFAT will remain able to adapt the investment, where required, to better meet these goals.

#### *Scholarships and Short Courses*

Australia Awards scholarships in Myanmar are currently offered at Masters level and include both research and coursework Masters. Masters are generally of two years duration and are able to target mid-career candidates in civil society, government and the private sector. Many Australian Masters programs are specialised and focus on providing practical professional education, making them valuable in meeting professional development needs. **The focus of Australia Awards in Myanmar will remain at the Masters level. However, work to scope the cost-effectiveness and relevance of PhD scholarships will be undertaken with the view to inform adjustments in future approaches.**

**This investment will pilot a demand-driven identification and implementation process for Short Courses.** Short Courses are substantially more flexible and responsive than long-term scholarships. They enable Australian funding to support many more recipients, but are less substantive in content and administratively heavy to manage. However, the timing and content of a short course makes them a useful and responsive tool for dealing with new requests for support or emerging priority areas. Short courses could be delivered in Myanmar without the need for an Australian provider to have existing local campuses or relationships with local teaching institutions. Pilots will consider the benefits of split-site delivery (partly delivered in Australia and Myanmar). DFAT will maintain rigour in short course design and outcomes through the implementation of these modalities under the Global Strategy and M+E Framework.

**Through an annual planning process, DFAT will confirm the final composition of awards (both short and long term awards).** While long-term awards will remain focused on Australian study opportunities, under this investment the pilot of short courses will commission research to investigate opportunities for in-country or regional study. This focus is two-fold 1) to continue to build the brand of Australia as an education destination in our region amongst Myanmar's emerging market and 2) to explore new opportunities for Australian service providers to support short courses in-country or in the region.

<sup>10</sup> Maximum allocation set through to 2022/23 Financial Year

<sup>11</sup> The current definition of Australia Awards Short Courses is: *Opportunities for formal study or training, generally less than 3 months duration, and no more than five months duration, delivered by Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTO), that will at least result in either a formal transcript of a complete unit (or subject) offered within a course under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)11 or a formal Statement of Attainment in relation to a skill or competency covered by Australian nationally-registered Vocational Education or Training (VET) material.*



## *Targeting and selection*

### **Selection of high quality and appropriate candidates – who have the greatest potential to make long-term contributions to Myanmar’s development and Australia’s aid objectives in Myanmar – needs to be calibrated for Myanmar.**

Selecting the ‘right’ people for the ‘right’ course is critical to maximising the benefits of the investment. Determining who the ‘right’ people are is the foundation of achieving a clear strategic intent for the Australia Awards, in the context of the broader bilateral relationship. Currently the Australia Awards in Myanmar target priorities using two tools: the Country Profile available to all prospective applicants (**Annex C**); and a formal Third Person Note to the Government of Myanmar requesting nominations. While both of these tools remain flexible and adjusted each year, they do not go through a formal consultation process to target areas of potential interest to Australia. This impacts on the ability of the program to effectively target key sectors of the government in particular. Similarly, priorities and targets need to be identified to ensure access issues are addressed – that is, making Australia Awards accessible to applicants in line with Australia’s commitment to gender equality and disability inclusive development.

**The new investment will implement an improved approach to identifying priority fields of study and sectors of employment, as well as determining the appropriate level of study or training, through an annual planning process.** This planning process will also consider incoming alumni (i.e. those currently studying) and areas of future (i.e. 2 to 3 year post-Masters) alumni engagement. It will engage DFAT and broader stakeholders to identify priority sectors and study areas that are best supported by Australia Awards. This will help ensure that scholarships are targeted to candidates from ministries, organisations and professional areas will contribute to the development issues and economic growth in Myanmar which are given priority by Australia. Ensuring the program incorporates a more formal and strategic approach to alignment will be particularly important as new emerging sectors are prioritised under the bilateral relationship.

## *Enabling Activities*

### English language training

While experience indicates the English language component of Australia Awards in Myanmar continues to be integral to support high calibre applicants and attract interest, there is insufficient evidence about how English language requirements affect access for different cohorts, or more generally about the level and type of English language support that will best enable the successful delivery of Australia Awards. **This investment will initiate a rapid review exploring this issue, and options to tailor and sequence English language support. This will inform the subsequent planning cycles.**

Myanmar’s relative isolation over several decades, and limited exposure to English language and western education systems, has had a significant impact on English competency. English language capability is frequently cited as a key barrier to participating in international scholarship opportunities. This challenge is often exacerbated for women, people with a disability, and those from disadvantaged groups or locations. The cost of English language training and obtaining an English language test results remains prohibitive for many prospective applicants<sup>12</sup>.

Since 2010 Australia has offered English language support complementary to the Australia Award selection process. In the initial years applicants were able to access pre-course English language training through the British Council. From 2013 to 2015, DFAT supported awardees to be in Yangon to do intensive training

<sup>12</sup> For instance, the cost of an IELTS test is equivalent to a typical monthly salary payment for a government employee.

through the British Council. Awardees were provided with a stipend during this time in recognition of loss of income. This was also an expensive model, however, it was 100% successful in ensuring applicants met entrance requirements. Monitoring information suggested that there was an environment of significant stress and pressure in the cohort during this time. Government staff faced significant issues securing release for Yangon based study and generally it was being considered as additional leave.

The Embassy's approach to English language testing for applicants has made Australia Awards scholarships attractive against an increasing number of options for Myanmar applicants. Under the model, candidates unable to demonstrate appropriate documentation (e.g. an IELTS test result) are invited to sit an English proficiency test provided by the Embassy prior to interview. Since 2016, successful awardees whose English level is not at the required level have been eligible for reimbursable funding (up to US\$1500) for up to 12 months<sup>13</sup>.

#### On-award support in Australia

Alumni will not view Australia positively unless they leave Australia having had positive experiences, and continue to have positive experiences in their interactions with Australia and Australians post-award. Alumni and their attitudes to Australia shape future cooperation with Australia and so the bilateral relationship. By virtue of their being physically in country, the investment assumes that awardees will actually develop links with Australia while they are in Australia. At present, little deliberate activity addresses this aim and there is a dearth of data around the awardee experience as it relates to Myanmar.

**This investment will develop a coordinated approach to understanding and providing on-award engagement for Myanmar awardees.** This will involve identifying opportunities for awardees:

- enhance awardees' knowledge and understanding of Australia and Australians, and contribute to awardees' positive perception of Australia
- develop personal and professional links with Australia that are most likely to endure upon return home and assist awardees to contribute to development in their area of professional expertise
- complement and make purposeful links with other people-to-people programs supported by the Australian Government, particularly the New Colombo Plan
- to connect with other ASEAN awardees, peers in the public and private sector, academics and the Australian community.

#### Alumni engagement in Myanmar

Meaningful engagement with our alumni contributes to our national interests by strengthening diplomatic relationships, growing trade investment and business linkages, promoting our capabilities and credentials and showcasing Australia as a contemporary, innovative and open society. **In Myanmar, we will continue to operationalise the Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy and, in doing so, build enduring connections between alumni and Australia.**

Funding supports community leadership initiatives under a small grants mechanism, organised professional development, participation in regional events to foster ASEAN relations, and structured engagement and networking with the Embassy and wider community. The alumni cohort connected with the Embassy is growing from a small base (fewer than 50 only three years ago to now over 250 men and women). The group is active and members are independently driving initiatives upon their return. Two alumni committees (award and self-funded) were independently established in Yangon to coordinate activities and

<sup>13</sup> In line with Australia Awards Policy Handbook changes (January 2019) this will be reduced for 2020 intake awardees to facilitate mobilisation in the year of award.

engagement with the Embassy. A third committee was established in 2018 in the capital city of Nay Pyi Taw to help facilitate engagement with a growing cohort of alumni working in government institutions.

There is momentum around alumni engagement in Myanmar, primarily a result of the enthusiastic, motivated and talented leaders within the alumni cohort. The model of engagement is less formalised than in other countries and has been beneficial in maintaining genuine links between alumni and the Australian community. It has also been beneficial in empowering the alumni groups to drive initiatives, organise themselves organically and promote leadership amongst the cohort – all critical elements to support sustainability of investment at an individual level.

There is scope to consider new opportunities for alumni under a framework that represents the broad interests of the Embassy – and the respective alumni committees. **This investment will explore this – whilst continuing to provide ongoing support for alumni (Australia Awards and privately-funded, through the Global Alumni framework) to facilitate networking and professional development activities.**

Without opportunities to make use of their new skills, knowledge and networks, the opportunities of alumni to contribute to development or the relationship with Australia is lessened. Evidence has shown that without ongoing connection whilst on award, employers are unlikely to make best use of their returning staff and alumni are less likely to connect with professional networks upon return. **Under this investment the Embassy will also seek to define and enhance its role in engaging employers to support both effective deployment of awardees and reintegration of alumni to the workforce.** This will be relevant for relationships with government and private sector.

#### *Flexible Funding Mechanism*

The Australia Awards in Myanmar is approaching 10 years of implementation. The context has changed, as has Australia's understanding of how the Awards can be used to engage with new opportunities. In 2021 a new Aid Investment Plan will be established to guide Australia's engagement in Myanmar. An evolving private sector has stimulated new economies and invited deeper engagement from Australian business. The Government reforms has improved bilateral engagement and made capacity deficits more explicit.

Over the next three years it is important this investment remains flexible to respond to changing priorities. **As evidence is generated, the Embassy will pilot new initiatives to engage high interest and/or disadvantaged groups prior to or during application processes. To support this a flexible funding mechanism will be established and kept under review.**

The mechanism has three key characteristics: (i) it can be much more flexible and responsive than activities under the three core components of the Australia Awards i.e. activities may not need to be included in annual planning process or the Annual Plan; (ii) they are not funded from within Australia Award funding allocations; and (iii) activities are not included in Australia Awards global reporting.

The mechanism will be used to pilot small-scale, targeted support such as skill building for government officials pre-application or prior to interview, or tailored support for people living with disability to engage in the application process. By outsourcing administration of this funding component the workload on Embassy staff will be reduced, protecting the space necessary to explore opportunities and guide investment. The mechanism will have separate monitoring and evaluation arrangements, which will be established during the inception phase.



## D. Implementation Arrangements and Delivery Approach (How?)

### *Delivery Approach*

A six-month inception phase (see below) will support a transition from in-house to Contractor operations. A full set of roles and responsibilities will be informed by a multi-faceted analysis undertaken by the Contractor. This analysis will be framed by the Global Strategy and reflect institutional experience in the use of scholarships and alumni engagement to achieve aid and foreign policy objectives. The Contractor will use it to develop strategies to underpin service delivery. This will include presenting recommendations to DFAT on the use of flexible funding and targeting scholarships and alumni engagement.

The Australian Embassy in Yangon will retain responsibility for the overall direction and management, including chairing selection panels, financial commitments (including OASIS variations), approving strategies or other documents produced by the Contractor and approving any sub-contracting arrangements such as English language delivery and short courses. The Embassy will also retain all decisions over scholarship awardees.

The Scholarships and Alumni Branch has lead responsibility for global policy and guidance, including Australia Awards systems, branding and communications, and tracer studies. The Branch also manages the relationships with contracted Australian institutions, as outlined in the [\*Australia Awards Policy Handbook\*](#).

### *Governance*

**The Oversight Committee, meeting on a six monthly basis, will provide a strategic overview of the scholarships and alumni programs, including a review of program implementation and future approaches.** The Committee will be chaired by the Head of Development Cooperation at Yangon Post, or their delegate, and will be attended by relevant DFAT officers and the Contractor. Other Australian Government agencies will be invited to participate. The managing contractor may observe or present if invited by the Chair.

The Committee Meetings will be structured each year as follows:

- **November:** Review Annual Plan submitted by the Contractor; approve allocations (mix of long and short awards) and priorities (sector, fields of studies, organisations etc.); review of evidence including M&E data to support decisions; update on Alumni activities; and approve calendar of activities and events for coming year.
- **June:** Review Mid-Year Program Update; review progress of Australia Awards Scholarship applications against targets; review of Short Courses applications against targets; update on Alumni activities; and approve any adjustments to the Annual Plan.
- **Both meetings** will include as standing agenda items an examination of:
  - monitoring and evaluation data with comparisons to global / Myanmar benchmarks; and
  - impacts of Committee developments on cross-cutting issues, social inclusion and gender.

### *DFAT Management*

**The investment will be managed by the Embassy in Yangon (DFAT).** An A-based DFAT officer will provide up to 30 per cent of their time to representational, planning, delivery oversight and contractual management activities. The A-based officer will manage a full-time Program Manager and a Program Officer with primary responsibility for managing the Australia Awards. These staff will oversee the duties

carried out by the managing contractor; manage communication and coordination with the Scholarships and Alumni Branch; facilitate financial approvals required by OASIS; and lead on engagement with Alumni.

The Australian Embassy in Yangon will have overall responsibility for engagement and lead consultations with all program stakeholders including Whole-of-Government partners, the Government of Myanmar, Alumni Executive Committees and other relevant organisations.

**DFAT will oversee an annual planning process to achieve long-term alignment with aid priorities and objectives.** The process will be guided by the A-based officer, with support from the Head of Development Cooperation. The planning process will consider alignment with existing thematic sectors, emerging priorities such as private sector engagement, and complementary activities including engagement of Australian Volunteers and New Colombo Plan scholars. To this end, the process will determine the annual parameters for the Australia Awards scholarship program – such as level of study and targeted sectors, any priorities in terms of organisations or geographic locations and fields of study – and will allocate resources for short courses and other program enabling opportunities. The contractor will provide inputs into this process, and the Oversight Committee will form the decision making body.

#### *Contractor Responsibilities*

**The Contractor will provide all the personnel and operational resources required for planning, management and implementation of the Australia Awards modalities in Myanmar.** The Contractor will undertake these tasks in support of, and in collaboration with, DFAT – undertaking administrative responsibilities as well as providing analytical inputs into the decision making process to increase impact and efficiency.

The Contractor will communicate with the Embassy (DFAT) and with the Scholarships and Alumni Branch as specified in the *Australia Awards Scholarships Handbook* and other relevant procedural guides and policy documents. The contractor will manage all relevant Australia Awards systems, such as OASIS (except financial approvals) and the Alumni database. The Contractor will provide all necessary support for the annual cycle of scholarships processes, from annual planning, through promotion and selection, through to mobilisation and return home. It will also support DFAT in alumni engagement as agreed as ‘Enabling Activities’.

#### *Inception Phase (6 months)*

**The six month inception phase will be used to collate information, initiate new research required to inform options and develop a prioritised and considered approach to the first year of service delivery and implementation.** This will include process mapping of proposed Contractor and DFAT roles and responsibilities; consideration of alumni engagement activities drawing on other models / examples; approaches to support mobilisation and reintegration of awardees; and research to inform scholarship priorities in terms of geography, fields of studies and other associated criteria. These key deliverables during the inception phase will provide DFAT with the analytics to facilitate decision making on the future years of the investment.

It is anticipated the inception phase will commence in the first quarter of 2020. The indicative timeline and prioritisation of deliverables for the inception phase will be outlined in the Statement of Requirements.

## E. Monitoring and Evaluation (How will DFAT measure performance?)

Quality data monitoring is of the utmost importance in evaluating the investment's performance against the Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework's program logic. **The investment will be assessed using the Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Annex B).** The purpose of the Framework is to: 1) provide the information required for DFAT to make day-to-day and strategic management decisions about Australia Awards; 2) support accountability and communication to program stakeholders around the use of resources and the achievement of articulated program outcomes; enable DFAT and stakeholders to learn from the program and apply that learning to other relevant investments<sup>14</sup>. An effective monitoring and evaluation plan provides a mechanism for tracking progress towards country program level and global Australia Awards objectives.

The monitoring and evaluation plan will contribute to the requirements for results data across the suite of Australia Awards modalities and ensure implementation responds to the specific and changing needs of the Myanmar context. Assessing the outcomes of tertiary scholarships is a long-term endeavour, with substantial challenges of attribution, contribution and causality. Similar challenges face short-term training that is delivered in diverse organisational, personal, and technical contexts, and there are specific issues with evaluating the success of ad hoc, small scale capacity building activities. Nevertheless, there are some established approaches that enable monitoring and evaluation of Australia Awards.

**The Contractor will develop and implement an investment monitoring and evaluation plan after mobilisation, working with DFAT stakeholders in Myanmar and Canberra to ensure alignment with the Global Framework<sup>15</sup>.** As part of this deliverable, the Contractor will develop a country-specific monitoring and evaluation plan – focusing on the achievement of immediate and intermediate outcomes specific to Myanmar – to feed into the Global Framework.

The M&E plan will provide information about:

- *How* monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken and when;
- *Who* is responsible for M&E tasks;
- *How* the evidence generated by M&E will be shared and used at each point in the scholarships cycle, and by whom; and
- *How* information will flow throughout the program cycle, who will use it and to what end.

The plan will monitor and report on activities and outputs (enabling monitoring of implementation efficiency) and immediate to intermediate outcomes (enabling the monitoring of relevance and effectiveness). The contractor will work with existing data collection tools used by DFAT (through the Embassy and the Australia Awards and Alumni sections in Canberra) with a view to developing and synthesising these tools. The resulting plan should use a range of qualitative and quantitative M&E tools to ensure DFAT and the contractor are able to assess what success looks like at an aggregated level and in specific sectors of the investment (for example, in outcomes against disadvantage or outputs in private sector strengthening). The plan will generate disaggregated data and insights, in line with DFAT's commitment to gender equality, disability inclusion and addressing disadvantage.

Regular M&E reporting will allow assessment of the return on investment of different types of assistance as well as a clear assessment of what is working and why. The managing contractor should propose an

<sup>14</sup> Global Australia Awards Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2017)

<sup>15</sup> The investment's Monitoring and Evaluation systems must remain flexible to any changes to the Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework mandated by DFAT Canberra. The Framework is currently under review and an updated Global Strategy is due to be finalised in late 2019.

approach to return on investment M&E, including suggesting proxy indicators. The tools should be embedded in decision-making processes in the program. The M&E framework should be able to give DFAT close to real time evidence on the impact of different modalities so that we can offer the right approaches to fit the needs of awardees and priorities of the governments of Australia and Myanmar.

## F. Access and Inclusion

**During the six month inception phase the Contractor will undertake analysis, consultation and research to inform the preparation of an Australia Awards in Myanmar – Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Strategy.** This GEDSI Strategy will be costed, and relate to all four components of the program (AAS, short courses, enabling activities, and the flexible funding mechanism). The Strategy will propose a compelling rationale and model for how GEDSI serves rather than conflicts with Australia’s national and diplomatic interests. The GEDSI strategy will set out practical and feasible ways the Investment will address equity issues associated with gender, disability and the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups.

DFAT recognises that the situation of educational attainment of women in Myanmar differs from many other countries. For instance, women comprised 19% of the tertiary-education-aged cohort, compared to 16% of tertiary-aged men<sup>16</sup>. Ministry of Education data from 2012 indicated that women accounted for 85% of master degree enrolments and around 80% of doctoral candidates.<sup>17</sup> Updated data is not readily available. Even allowing for the small number of tertiary enrolments overall, gender norms appear to in fact favour women’s tertiary study. However, women’s tertiary education and qualification level is not converting to equal employment rates or progression to senior decision-making positions. Choice of degree is also highly segregated based on gender, with women predominating in law and men in STEM courses. DFAT’s focus on offering Masters degrees for mid-career awardees has aimed to boost this progression to senior decision making positions.

**This investment will test assumptions around the suitability of short courses and doctorate programs in the Myanmar context.** Short courses could be effectively deployed to support leadership pathways for women, or to promote shared leadership among men and women alumni, upon return. Similarly, doctorate programs may be more appropriate in advancing women to higher levels of decision-making. Monitoring and evaluation, as well as the development of a concrete and well-evidenced GEDSI strategy, will be key to testing these assumptions.

**Complementary to this will be an alumni strategy that support women to use the skills, knowledge and networks from their Australian study experience to progress to senior decision-making position.** Women alumni are active in Myanmar, particularly in the alumni Executive Committees. DFAT is keen to engage a wider range of women in further professional development and network strengthening. The alumni strategy will also seek ways to link with Embassy public diplomacy activities to showcase and highlight as role models the work of alumni women.

Australia Awards in Myanmar have sought to maintain an approximate 50:50 gender split through the shortlisting and final selection phases, despite annually receiving a much larger number of female applications. This could be due to a higher number of women graduating from non-military universities in Myanmar or reflective of current and previous targeting to Ministries of Education, Health, and Planning

<sup>16</sup> World Development Indicators – Myanmar. World Bank. 2019

<sup>17</sup> Asian Development Bank. 2014. Gender Situation Analysis in Myanmar, p105

and Finance, respectively, which have a high proportion of female employees. It may also be a result of women's limited access to employment and promotion opportunities upon graduation, rendering further study particularly attractive for women. Gender-related demand factors, as well as outcomes for awardees upon return to Myanmar, warrant further analysis in the early stages of implementation as part of the GEDSI strategy.

It is evident from a recent review and evaluation of implementation of Australia Awards in Myanmar that we can do more to address the participation gaps of disadvantaged groups including people living with disability and applicants from ethnic minority and geographically remote areas. **The investment will scope whether a soft or hard target for the inclusion of people with disabilities is advisable, in the Australia Awards scholarships and/or short courses, to ensure the investment promotes disability inclusion.**

In Myanmar, people with disability face additional challenges to participating in education; around 50 per cent are excluded from primary school education, before they even face the possibility of moving into tertiary study. Only 2.2 per cent of people with a disability had completed tertiary qualifications, as compared with 12 per cent of the non-disabled population<sup>18</sup>. Australia already employs and partners with people with disabilities in its aid program, and so significant scope exists in the investment for Australia to promote inclusion; for instance, through specific outreach to people living with a disability and/or supporting short courses in Australia or in-country. Proactive consultation with people with disabilities will be key, to ensure that any offering is useful, non-segregating and non-stigmatising.

**The GEDSI strategy will review targeting of awards to respond to Myanmar's specific context and reflect requirements as part of annual planning process.** Working within the scope and modalities of the investment, the GEDSI strategy will draw on the Myanmar context and disability-inclusive programming in other country programs to present recommendations to increase engagement, accessibility and positive change for people living with a disability.

## G. Budget and Resources (What will it cost?)

**The investment will provide primarily for the three core components of the Australia Awards: long-term study opportunities in Australia, short courses and enabling activities that support successful delivery, including English language training, on-award support and alumni engagement. Under the flexible funding mechanism new initiatives will also be piloted as required.**

Delivery and management will be via an initial three-year contract from February 2020 to February 2023 (this will include a 3 year extension option).

Based on a mix of 40 long term scholarships per year, one to three short awards per year, enabling activities, pilot initiatives (supported through the flexible funding mechanism) and associated management costs, it is estimated that the budget over three years will be up to AUD 24 million (inclusive of approx. AUD 18 million for long-term scholarships). **The estimated total contract value to outsource implementation is up to AUD 6 million over the first three years (2020 – 2023).**

The total budget of the investment will be determined by the annual planning cycle and DFAT's priorities, and in the context of the overall allocations of the aid budget. The split of budget across all components and initiatives may vary over time. Budget will continue to be drawn from the Myanmar bilateral base allocations, and as available cost-shared with the Scholarships and Alumni Branch.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and The Leprosy Mission International, Myanmar National Disability Survey, 2010, Nay Pyi Taw, cited in the Situational Analysis of Children in Myanmar (2012), Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development - UNICEF (2012), p 37



In the first year of implementation (2020) the Contractor will be required to deliver up to 40 Australia Awards Scholarships and pilot two to three Short Courses (with a maximum of 20 participants per course). Potential may exist to combine resources with regional Posts in the delivery of one of these Short Courses.

The three year contract (2020 – 2023) is intended to be an exploratory phase – to build on the strong foundation and reputation that the Australia Awards enjoy in Myanmar, strengthen engagement with government and alignment with broader Australian Government interests and pilot new, agile and cost-efficient modalities for service delivery. The emphasis on adaptability is to ensure the delivery model remains relevant to Myanmar’s rapidly changing context. It is also an opportunity to pilot new initiatives to challenge and help strengthen delivery of Australia Awards in a region that is also undergoing significant socio-economic and political change.

## F. Risks

The fundamental risk that the program faces is that the individuals whose skills and knowledge are developed through the Australia Awards will not have the opportunities to make a positive contribution upon return to Myanmar due to personal, institutional and cultural barriers. The Australia Awards, especially the long-term scholarships, are a significant investment in an individual. Achievement of the investment’s outcomes will depend on the effective utilisation and contribution of these individuals within their organisations, sectors and communities.

The second critical risk is ensuring that awardees build and maintain links with Australia and have a positive perception of Australia when they return to Myanmar. This is dependent on having the ‘right’ experience in Australia, where they are provided with opportunities to build links within a culturally supportive and academically relevant environment. As well as having available supports when scholars return to Myanmar to maintain these links established in Australia.

The Australia Awards and Global Alumni investment modalities – operationalised through activities outlined during the inception phase and evaluated through the M&E mechanisms – seek to address these risks through improved awardee and study course selection. **A more strategic and integrated approach to identifying priorities, engaging with stakeholders and sectors and offering a more appropriate suite of short and long term Award options to better meet the study and training needs of Myanmar is the plan.** Furthermore, enriching the experience of awardees in Australia, the strong focus on post-award initiatives and synergies with other Australian Government programs will further strengthen the links established and support for reintegration into the workforce - all contributing to minimising the occurrence of risks.

**Fraud and corruption** – Myanmar is a developing country emerging from decades of conflict. Financial management and accounting principles are not well applied and there may be instances of fraud and corruption. The Australia Awards secretariat has measures in place to reduce the instances of awardee and managing contractor fraud, in line with DFAT’s zero tolerance approach to fraud. Managing contractors will be selected based on appropriate checks and balances to identify and address fraud. DFAT will build periodic reviews, as per normal practice, into the Statement of Requirements.

## H. Annexes

- Annex A:** Australia Awards Global Strategy 2016-2018
- Annex B:** Australia Awards Global M&E Framework 2017
- Annex C:** Australia Awards Myanmar Country Profile 2020