

Australian Red Cross-Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Partnership 2019-2024

Mid-term Review: Management Response

Focusing on Asia and the Pacific, Australian Red Cross' international program works with Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies to strengthen the resilience of local communities and increase their capacity to prepare for, anticipate, respond to and recover from disasters and crises. The program focuses on National Society institutional strengthening; on resourcing National Societies to work with public authorities, communities, and other relevant stakeholders to better understand and manage disaster risk; and on supporting National Society engagement in humanitarian diplomacy¹ at local, national and regional levels.

The primary delivery mechanism for the program is a series of long-term partnerships between Australian Red Cross and nine National Societies in Fiji, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu. The program also contributes to and draws on global and regional learning and exchange through the partnership, and the brokering and technical assistance and influencing role played by Australian Red Cross. The 2019-2024 program is the foundation of the current AUD50 million Partnership between Australian Red Cross and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

As part of the ongoing process of program learning and review, Australian Red Cross and DFAT commissioned a mid-term review of the Partnership program from November 2022 – August 2023. The review engaged local consultants to undertake mid-term reviews of the in-country collaboration with each of the above partner National Societies and with key national and local stakeholders. These reviews provided 'snapshots' of the current programs, identifying program strengths and areas for improvement. A synthesis report was then developed, capturing the perspectives of selected stakeholders at this point in the program and drawing out emerging themes. The synthesis report is not a comprehensive analysis of everything that is happening at country level through the program, nor of every component of the program at its different levels. The synthesis report complements other reports and assessments and captures and analyses a point in time reflection by the selected stakeholders.

The review also explored the level of satisfaction among the nine National Society partners with Australian Red Cross' partnership approach and program model. And finally, DFAT and Australian Red Cross revisited the principles that underpin the Partnership to ensure they remain relevant and to agree any necessary adjustments.

¹ 'Humanitarian diplomacy is persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles.' (International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy)

The mid-term review found the Partnership program to be progressing well overall. It also identified several areas for improvement over the remaining program period and any potential future Partnership program. The review’s recommendations are listed below alongside Australian Red Cross’ and DFAT’s responses.

The recommendations are intentionally not directed to individual National Societies. The intent of the synthesis report is to stimulate consideration by Australian Red Cross, DFAT and partner National Societies of the relevance of all recommendations to all the country programs, and to maximise opportunities for learning, change and improvement through this comprehensive approach.

No.	Recommendation	Australian Red Cross Response	DFAT Response
	Overarching	<p>Australian Red Cross respects the overarching nature of the recommendations and the consultant’s decision to not direct them to particular National Societies.</p> <p>We will continue to tailor support to partner National Societies based on their specific contexts, priorities, and needs, through the final year of the current Partnership and the design of the next phase.</p>	<p>DFAT supports the recommendations. We note that while overarching, these recommendations should be implemented by National Societies within their available resourcing and capacities. DFAT will support Australian Red Cross and its partner National Societies, within the scope of the Partnership, to implement recommendations for this phase of the program. Where recommendations relate to a future phase of the Partnership, they will be considered through a new Partnership design.</p>
1	Australian Red Cross engages with partner National Societies to develop relevant and appropriate strategies for establishing and clearly communicating partner National Society identity to their stakeholders. Trust and Identity are inextricably linked.	Agree – focusing on where relevant and appropriate and aligned with National Societies’ own strategies and existing relationships.	Agree. DFAT supports this recommendation and engagement by National Societies with stakeholders on their identity, including through DFAT Posts and bilateral desks. Activities under the three Pillars of the current partnership are enabling action on this recommendation.
2	Australian Red Cross works with interested partner National Societies to identify and leverage marketing and	Agree – aligned with partner National Societies’ own resource mobilisation plans	Agree, as enabled through our ongoing partnership.

	communications expertise from local specialist organisations, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement including Australian Red Cross, and other external sources to support exploration of how national promotion of the organisation may be a contributor to effective resource mobilisation and to financial sustainability.	and where external support is identified as needed.	
3	Australian Red Cross continues to engage with partner National Societies to identify and support sustainable and locally appropriate opportunities for decentralisation and increased capacity, leadership, and autonomy at branch levels.	Agree - Australian Red Cross is supporting its nine National Society partners to operationalise their own organisational strengthening strategies. This is an ongoing element of the current Partnership program and will be a continued consideration in the design for the next phase of the Partnership, acknowledging the time it takes to achieve sustainable change.	Agree. Support for sustainable locally led humanitarian action is a core feature of our ongoing partnership.
4	Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to shift the emphasis from measuring 'capacity strengthening' activities to measuring 'observable action', possibly engaging local specialist organisations to independently assess and report on National Society progress.	Agree – noting engagement of local specialist organisations will be led by the National Societies themselves, with support from Australian Red Cross, ensuring the focus is on learning and not seen as compliance driven.	Partially agree. DFAT notes that while observable action is important, DFAT would also like to understand longer-term effects leading to sustainability, both financially and operationally.
5	Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to strengthen their volunteer recruitment and management systems and approaches, including with enhanced staff capacity and with technical support drawing on Australian Red Cross' own volunteer management journey, and through partnerships with other local actors.	Agree – with National Societies in the lead.	Agree. DFAT will support Australian Red Cross' actions outlined in the management response through the activities under Pillar One of the current partnership.

6	<p>Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to track the extent to which improvements in their policies and processes are contributing to inclusive disaster management, including in protection, gender and inclusion.</p>	<p>Agree – with National Societies in the lead.</p>	<p>Agree. In the design for the new Partnership, DFAT will include improved monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), particularly related to the efficiency and effectiveness of responses by National Societies participating in the new Partnership.</p>
7	<p>Australian Red Cross considers approaches to supporting partner National Society senior management teams to include a member who has inclusion and diversity as a significant part of their portfolio of responsibilities.</p>	<p>Partially agree – Australian Red Cross is committed to continuing its advocacy on diversity and inclusion at all levels in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, including through ongoing focus on the issue at relevant regional and global Statutory and Movement meetings.</p> <p>However, as a peer or 'sister' National Society, we see our role as one of sharing expertise, promoting principles of diversity and inclusion, and recognising the impact of clear senior management buy-in. We do not believe it is our role to define the roles and responsibilities of a sister National Society's leadership team, but we are committed to sharing experiences at all levels of our respective Societies (from branches to Board level).</p> <p>Partnership underpins the current program. The design for the next phase of the Partnership will build on this through the development of a set of core partnership principles between Australian Red Cross and its partner National Societies. These principles will provide a framework for mutual</p>	<p>Partially agree. DFAT notes that National Societies are autonomous organisations. DFAT will encourage Australian Red Cross and its National Society partners to improve focus on inclusion and diversity, led by the ambition of the National Society and in ways that are contextually relevant.</p> <p>DFAT will provide information about the availability of gender and disability technical assistance to Australian Red Cross's Protection Gender and Inclusion lead.</p>

		accountability between Australian Red Cross and its partners, with regular joint assessments conducted.	
8	Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to continuously assess the efficacy of their disaster preparedness planning processes and their disaster preparedness plans.	Agree – already part of the program and will continue.	Agree. DFAT supports this recommendation and will encourage annual meetings with Australian Red Cross and relevant Posts to ensure National Society preparedness plans inform DFAT response planning.
9	Australian Red Cross subject matter experts encourage partner National Societies, wherever possible, to seek advice and training from and collaborate with local subject matter specialists and their organisations.	Agree	Agree. DFAT supports this recommendation.
10	Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to ensure stocks of household items more appropriately meet the needs of target communities through developing and utilising current, accurate and better disaggregated data sets and facilitating community feedback on the appropriateness of supplied items.	Agree Australian Red Cross is currently undertaking a review of our logistics and supply chain strategy and capacity including relief items most typically bound for National Societies in the Pacific, including Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga.	Agree. DFAT supports this recommendation and has connected Australian Red Cross with DFAT's Humanitarian Logistics Capability to review non-food items stocks stored in Brisbane. This will improve the appropriateness of Red Cross stocks delivered to the Pacific.
11	Australian Red Cross supports partner National Societies to leverage their auxiliary status and work with their governments, clusters and other stakeholders to develop an agreed range of household item packages that meet the needs of all members of disaster affected communities.	Agree – acknowledging this is part of a National Society's overall approach to strengthening the disaster management system in their respective contexts; and further acknowledging the time it takes to achieve change at a national level.	Agree. DFAT supports this recommendation and has connected Australian Red Cross with DFAT's Humanitarian Logistics Capability to review non-food items stocks stored in Brisbane. This will improve the appropriateness of Red Cross stocks delivered to affected communities.
12	Australian Red Cross continues to work with the IFRC, other	Agree – recognising that some partners already have	Agree. DFAT will support opportunities and support

	participating ('global north') National Societies and other stakeholders in national, regional and international forums to 'ensure space' for local participants, and to ensure that National Societies are sufficiently resourced to take proper advantage of that space.	good space in domestic, regional and international fora. Australian Red Cross will continue to identify appropriate opportunities for partner National Societies to contribute to regional and international fora. We will also collaborate with DFAT to influence increased partner National Society representation at relevant donor and multi-lateral meetings.	inclusion of partner National Societies in fora such as IFRC Donor Advisory Group and as part of Grand Bargain negotiations to demonstrate their capacity and priorities.
13	Australian Red Cross creates opportunities for dialogue with National Societies and their stakeholders, for example an annual conference, to discuss how Australian Red Cross Society can best engage and provide strategic support on external trends, policy engagement and organisational positioning at national, regional and international levels.	Agree – noting Australian Red Cross' role in support of National Societies' own agendas. Consultation with partner National Societies is underway to inform the next phase of the Partnership program and the role our partners seek to play in its governance and implementation.	Agree. DFAT welcomes ARC's agreement to this recommendation and will support implementation as appropriate. DFAT notes that implementing this recommendation may be considered within the context of a new phase of the partnership by DFAT and Australian Red Cross.
14	Australian Red Cross engages with partner National Societies to develop a better understanding of mutual expectations under End of Program Outcome Three, and how best to manage associated accountabilities.	Agree and already underway through planning for the final year of the current Partnership and consultations on the design of the next phase.	Agree. DFAT sought an update at the quarterly Partnership meeting (Nov 2023) on how these expectations and accountabilities are articulated and implemented.
15	Australian Red Cross uses adapted disaster response quality indicators to inform its measurement of success in the disaster preparedness work it is supporting its partner National Societies to undertake.	Agree and already in development.	Agree. DFAT is supporting Australian Red Cross to implement this recommendation through investment in response reporting for partner National Societies.

In addition to the recommendations from the synthesis report, DFAT reviewers also raised some additional points in their feedback, which we want to capture in this management response document.

	Observation	Australian Red Cross Response	DFAT Response
	<p>What has been Australian Red Cross' key focal areas for supporting national partners since 2019 - strengths and areas of improvement?</p>	<p>Following the mid-term review, Australian Red Cross plans to undertake a separate piece of work on partnerships to explore the topic more deeply, acknowledging the importance of partnerships in this program and the fact it did not get examined in sufficient depth in the mid-term review.</p> <p>This partnerships analysis will also explore partners' perspectives on Australian Red Cross' approach to supporting local capacity.</p> <p>This piece of work is a key component of the design for the next phase of the Partnership program. It will be completed by Australian Red Cross in consultation with key stakeholders by June 2024.</p>	<p>DFAT will circulate this paper to relevant posts once it is finalised.</p>
	<p>Strongly support the recommendations to include Australian Red Cross in the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) and to link the institutional strengthening to evidence of effective, efficient, and inclusive disaster recovery work.</p>	<p>This suggestion is being taken forward by an internal working group who are reviewing the PAF based on the mid-term review findings and experience to date.</p> <p>Australian Red Cross will trial a small number of indicators focused on</p>	<p>DFAT will seek updates on this review at the Quarterly Partnership Meetings. Once completed, results in reporting will reflect the revised PAF.</p>

		<p>assessing the contribution of Australian Red Cross toward achievement of program outcomes over the remainder of the current program (through to Dec 2024).</p>	
	<p>Suggest that including specific outcomes and indicators related to gender equality work and disability inclusion be included, so that the work underway in these spaces can be adequately captured, reported, and recognised ahead of the Final IMR next year. For example, at intermediate outcome, amending it to include specific reference to addressing the needs of diverse genders/women and girls, and people with disability.</p>	<p>This suggestion will be considered as part of the internal PAF review mentioned above.</p> <p>Intermediate outcome 1.3 in the PAF has been adjusted to explicitly mention the diverse groups the program is seeking to involve and benefit:</p> <p>Intermediate Outcome 1.3: National Societies' policies and actions safeguard the dignity, access, participation and safety of all persons with a focus on women and girls, people of diverse gender identities and expressions, and persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>DFAT will seek updates on this review at the Quarterly Partnership Meetings. Once completed, results in reporting will reflect the revised PAF.</p> <p>This recommendation will be incorporated in the design for a new Australian Red Cross-DFAT Humanitarian Partnership from 2025.</p>