

DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Independent Strategic Review of DFAT Support to the Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) in Cambodia, Phase 3

1. Overview

IDPoor was established to address the urgent need for an accurate, accessible, and standardised mechanism to identify Cambodia's most vulnerable households and connect them with critical social services, including healthcare subsidies through the Health Equity Fund (HEF).¹ Since its inception in 2010, IDPoor has been central to Cambodia's social protection framework.

The **Identification of Poor Households Program (IDPoor) Phase 3** was an AUD 7,338,000 investment implemented by the German Development Agency (GIZ) (2016–2022). This investment supported the program's national expansion and refinement of data processes to enhance the accuracy and reach of poverty alleviation efforts. DFAT's commitment also enabled IDPoor to introduce real-time digital data collection and further its role as the primary national database used by Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) entities, NGOs and development partners to target support to vulnerable populations.

Phase 3 of our investment in IDPoor coincided with a transformative period for social protection in Cambodia, with the RGC rapidly scaling up support during the COVID-19 pandemic. IDPoor's shift to an on-demand registration model enabled the Ministry of Planning (MoP) to reach a record number of households with cash transfers and other social protection interventions. The IDPoor data provided the critical foundation to support over USD 1 billion in social assistance being provided by RGC to over 5 million beneficiaries in Cambodia.

DFAT commissioned an Independent Strategic Review (ISR) of IDPoor Phase 3 in 2023.

The purpose of the ISR was twofold:

1. To assess the performance of the IDPoor investment delivered by GIZ against its End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPO) and DFAT's evaluation criteria, and to provide the evidence required for the Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR), including filling gaps in performance data that had not been collected and/or reported on by GIZ over the life of the investment.
2. To provide a forward-looking assessment of social protection priorities for Cambodia to inform DFAT's future social protection policy engagement and programming in this space.

The ISR found this investment met, and significantly exceeded, the expected outputs and outcomes. Overall, the ISR concludes DFAT's support in this modest technical program has enabled broader change, and future investments can build on this success to act as a catalyst to support transformative reforms to Cambodia's social protection system. The review also identified several areas for improvement for future DFAT investment in social protection efforts.

¹ Supported by the Cambodia Health Equity and Quality Improvement Project (H-EQUIP) investment.

2. Recommendations and DFAT Responses

The review's recommendations and DFAT's responses are listed below.

Recommendation	DFAT Response
<p>1. Though IDPoor is at a point now where it could sustain without donor support, ongoing input from DFAT is important to add value and to leverage complementarity with other donor interventions (including in the areas of accountability and GEDSI). Ongoing support to build upon momentum and strengthen the system now will leverage off existing relationships and trust to embed change. Only once these changes have been affected would it be the time to reconsider DFAT support.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to support IDPoor through the Improving Social Protection Program Phase 2 (ISPH II) 2024-2027. In ISPH II, technical support will be provided to the IDPoor department of the Ministry of Planning to support the transformation of the IDPoor system into a social protection registry.</p>
<p>2. There is an expressed need for capacity building around social protection in Cambodia and DFAT can support it by the recent study tour to Australia by senior Cambodian social protection staff to foster longer-term professional linkages between Australian and Cambodian institutions.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of social protection operators to consider gender equity, inclusion and resilience to shocks, at the national and subnational level is one of the Intermediate Outcomes of ISPH II.</p>
<p>3. That DFAT prioritises the following three areas of engagement in social protection in Cambodia. The first is continued technical support to IDPoor to support the next stage of its development and system maturity, through a future phase of ISPH. The second is ensuring the inclusiveness of social protection. And the third is strengthened systems of social accountability.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>All three priorities are incorporated in the design of ISPH II.</p>
<p>4. To enhance the impact of DFAT's social protection programming on (1) women and (2) people with disabilities, the reviewer suggests using DFAT existing Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services (ACCESS) program. It is suggested that ACCESS II should advocate for a much broader coverage of the disability grant, at least to persons with disabilities in "at-risk" households, and ideally to all persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>ISPH II has an explicit focus on social protection benefits and services, delivery modalities and targeting mechanisms for national social protection programmes to be better aligned with the needs of poor and vulnerable people, women and persons with disabilities (PLWD).</p>

Recommendation	DFAT Response
<p>In addition, DFAT should support policy advocacy for increased coverage during a second phase of its social protection program, to expand reach, reduce exclusion and deepen impacts.</p>	<p>In addition, ACCESS II is working with UNICEF Cambodia to advocate for a much broader coverage of the disability grant and is also supporting the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC) in person with a disability (PWD) identification processes.</p> <p>DFAT will also use existing internal governance mechanisms to identify synergies and opportunities in each investment to advocate for policy support and change.</p>
<p>5. DFAT, with its development priority on climate change, should continue to support the expansion and strengthening of IDPoor as a key registry in the delivery of Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP). This would involve further expansion of its coverage, strengthening its systems and linkages so that it can be used for disaster response, ensuring its inclusivity (in partnership with ACCESS) and guaranteeing its integrity through improved social accountability (in partnership with ISAF).</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) is one of the core elements of ISPH II. The investment will specifically support the implementation of the Shock-Responsive Social Protection Framework in particular with regard to the capacity to respond to climate related risks.</p>
<p>6. To further strengthen the approach and outcomes of future social protection programs, the reviewer recommends that DFAT should continue to remain engaged with IDPoor through GIZ, building on the current ISPH partnership with GIZ.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to support IDPoor through the new social protection investment (ISPH II).</p>
<p>7. To improve consolidation, coordination and/or collaboration between its social protection programming and policy engagement (for example through IDPoor, ISPH, ACCESS, ISAF and the Resilience Fund), it is recommended that Post should establish formal internal channels for structured and deliberate exchange to maximise synergies that exist. This would include regular meetings in Post, involving the respective investment managers and the key program staff, to provide updates on progress, to share achievements and challenges, and to identify areas for collaboration.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT will use the existing Program Operations & Performance Meeting and the weekly human development team meeting as platforms to improve consolidation, coordination and collaboration between its social protection programming and policy engagement.</p>