

Water for Women Fund

Management Response to the Mid-Term Review of Progress (August 2020) and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mid-Term Review (March 2021)

Summary of Management Response

Independent Mid-Term Reviews of the Water for Women Fund were conducted in mid-2020 and early 2021 covering both general progress against its end of program outcomes and gender equality and social inclusion. Both reviews also commented on the program's response to COVID-19. The reviews concluded that the program is tracking well and both recommended that the program be extended.

The review processes were intensive and involved extensive consultations with all Fund stakeholders including through workshops, one to one interviews and small group sessions on top of analysis of progress and other reporting from the Fund.

DFAT has agreed to all the recommendations as detailed in the table below including to exercise the three-year extension option based on its performance to date and subject to delegate approval. While in most cases, the status is recorded as 'Ongoing', substantial actions have already been taken in response. The ongoing nature of the responses points more to the complexity of issues explored by the mid-term reviews and how actions are needed over a period of time.

Individual Management Response to the Recommendations

Mid-Term Review of Progress

Recommendation	Response	Action / Notes	Status
Recommendation 1 The FC should engage with the FPG and DFAT on management approvals to determine if CSO's and RO's can be given more flexibility to take adaptive management action. Any allowed changes in activity management and budget line variations would have to meet the FC	Agree	Under the existing contract, GHD is required to have effective management systems and manage fiduciary and integrity risks. The response to this recommendation is therefore to leverage the partnership arrangements in the Fund. The Fund Partnership Group (FPG) Purpose Statement and Action plan have been revised to better reflect the resources available to the FPG and its strategic intent. FPG processes then allow for detailed discussions to reach agreement on adaptive management approaches. Recent examples of adaptive	Ongoing

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<p>corporate requirements and DFAT contractual reporting and risk management obligations.</p>		<p>management are the agreement to shift resources from the WaterAid Myanmar project to their Timor-Leste project and the agreement with Habitat for Humanity to focus their project on realistic deliverables.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>Fund partners should finalise a K&L workplan and budget. This should provide adequate resources to complement FC led K&L activity with support for collaborative learning activity. CSO's and RO's identified as innovative and utilising best practice can share their knowledge and expertise across the Fund. COVID-19 travel restrictions will impact on delivery of a collaborative learning model but with new technology, including video conferencing and webinars, Fund Partners can address gaps in WASH systems strengthening and WASH access (hygiene behaviour change and disability inclusion).</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Learning Agenda and budget has been finalised and is now in operation with strong participation of Fund partners.</p> <p>The priority activities and resources for the Learning Agenda were endorsed by the FPG in mid-2021 and since then, numerous webinars such as the WASH & LEARN series, have been run and learning resources prepared and placed in the program website and internal Hub. The program has supported partners to run and give presentations in regional and international events such as World Water Week.</p> <p>This has allowed increased collaboration and focus on WASH approaches, hygiene, private sector WASH supply chains, and systems strengthening.</p> <p>The program's knowledge and learning processes see active participation of Fund partners but need to be balanced against implementation of WASH activities in the field</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The FC should strengthen efforts and direct resources to improve the flow of information to the FPG as outlined in the Learning Advisory Group TOR. This will allow the FPG to work more effectively as</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>FPG agendas allow for in depth discussion and partners are provided detailed information on issues and opportunities ahead of time. The Hub has now been established and is an active platform to share information and make announcements on learning events including those by other DFAT programs and</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>a strategic advisory mechanism. Actions will require allocation of FC management and specialist resources and facilitating early issue of documents. The FC should explore how The Hub can be used to improve flow of K&L information from learning events and how CSO's and RO's can share stories of transformation and relevant information and learnings from projects.</p>		<p>by a wide range of organisations. The Fund Coordinator has increased resources to support FPG processes.</p> <p>The program ran 'sense making' workshops with partners from February to April 2021 that has allowed open discussion of Fund progress and to identify actions especially at the strategic level, moving forward.</p> <p>The implementation of the Learning Agenda is also encouraging ongoing sharing of information amongst Partners and to the FPG and expanding the amount of strategic information available to the FPG outside reporting processes. The Learning Agenda process also encourages more partner driven collaborative opportunities for sharing and engaging with each other beyond the FPG.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The FC should implement actions to better link M&E and K&L within the Fund. This can involve The Hub collecting and sharing transformational stories on projects and research. Sharing experiences closes the loop from evidence to practice, contributes to learning and exchange and supports the strategic advisory role of the FPG.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>In addition to documenting and sharing 'transformational stories' as a learning source, the sense-making processes (see Recommendation 3 above) are important to close the loop from evidence to practice.</p> <p>Various actions have been taken to improve how M&E and K&L can inform each other by identifying explicit 'touch' points. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making linkages between the Learning Agenda and the M&E Framework more explicit, for example by clarifying approaches to monitor unintended outcomes and social norms change by CSOs - Using K&L and research to address strategic M&E questions for the Fund such as whether WASH access alone results in its use 	<p>Ongoing</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the MEL of K&L to demonstrate achievements for EOPO4 (knowledge use in policy and practice) <p>The MEL Community of Practice comprising Fund partners and GHD is facilitated by the M&E Manager and its deliberations feed into FPG processes.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>Action is required by Fund partners to progress implementation of a collaborative learning facility which can provide resources and facilitate knowledge sharing for systems strengthening and WASH access. The Fund has provision for collaborative learning to utilise CSO and RO strengths through cross learning and technical support.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Actioning of the Learning Agenda responds directly to this recommendation.</p> <p>The Learning Agenda sets out the thematic areas in which the Fund partners will work progressively to generate and share knowledge through a series of events/webinars/workshops, product development, etc. These themes cover both WASH approaches and GSI. There is a dedicated theme for systems strengthening and another four themes that address WASH access issues (safely managed WASH, climate change, HCF and private sector).</p> <p>In addition, the Hub continues to function well (especially by providing an information and communication platform for in-country teams). It supports collaborative exchange between partners on a wide range of learning themes, including those identified in the Learning Agenda.</p> <p>Fund partners have collaborated around global events such as World Water Week, Water&WASH Futures COVID-19 Symposium, the 6th Faecal Sludge Management Conference and global e-learning events run by partners.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The Fund should work with CSO's to understand why beneficiary numbers are so low for people with a disability and work with the FPG on strategies to improve results over the remaining life of the Fund.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>GHD has investigated how project partners have arrived at beneficiary numbers especially in relation to people with a disability.</p> <p>It is concluded that the low beneficiary numbers for people with a disability is more about <i>counting and reporting, not with attention to or success of outcomes for people with a disability.</i></p> <p>GHD will continue to monitor this issue closely but progress reporting since the MTR are pointing to improved numbers of beneficiaries in this target group.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>This review was undertaken without the inclusion of sector specialists, including gender and social inclusion, in the review Team due to COVID-19 restrictions. A priority for DFAT is to follow up with in depth analysis by GSI specialists (gender, disability and SGM) to further assess how the Fund is progressing on GSI transformation and how M&E systems can better measure fund wide progress.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>GESI review conducted and review report presented to DFAT in March 2021. Responses to the recommendations from the GESI review are outlined below.</p>	<p>Done</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>DFAT should consider managing the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 through a 2-3 year extension of the Water for Women Fund with a strengthened</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>WTR Section is currently seeking ACD endorsement of process to gain approval of extension. The next step would be to approach Deputy Secretary to approve approach to the Aid Governance Board for their endorsement of an extension. If the board endorses the extension, formal S23 approval will be sought from the Secretary.</p>	<p>In progress</p>

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<p>alignment to the Partnerships for Recovery strategy. Delivery of a new WASH program will take several years to progress from concept to implementation and in a post COVID-19 period new project commencement will be higher risk, due to travel and distancing restrictions and possible new waves of infection. DFAT support for the WASH sector over the next 3-5 years would be an effective development response in support of Partnerships for Recovery. This approach would harness existing partnerships, utilise proven and effective management and grant arrangements, harness knowledge and learning and research findings from the Fund and deliver early results compared to a new investment program. Any project extension will require a review and necessary adjustment of the design Theory of Change and be subject to satisfactory performance of the FC, CSO and RO's and continued alignment with DFAT policy and budget limitations.</p>			

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mid-Term Review

Recommendation	Response	Action	Status
<p>Recommendation – Sustainability and Scalability</p> <p>Continue to use entry points such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing investments and relationships of DFAT with governments • Capacity building of Rights Holder Organisations in WASH and GESI • Influencing norms at the community level 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>All these aspects are built into the Fund’s K&L and M&E processes and progress against them reported twice a year.</p> <p>WfW partners are highly focused on institutional capacity building especially the duty bearers and officials of government agencies and RHOs so that they can work to influence norms at the community level and in the private sector.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation – Working with other DFAT programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a community of practice within DFAT on GESI in WASH to ensure that all DFAT funded WASH programs are sending consistent messages. • Involve relevant staff at post beyond those engaged on WASH to identify other opportunities. • Hold periodic seminars or round tables at post for CSO and RO partners to share their experience. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Fund partners, for example in the PNG Consortium are working with ‘Pacific Women Lead’, another DFAT funded program to strengthen efforts to empower women, using WASH as an anchor.</p> <p>Strong efforts during global events such as Global Handwashing Day, World Toilet Day and Global Menstrual Hygiene Day to share knowledge with DFAT Posts and Desks. WfW also runs open seminars with invitations sent to Posts and Desks.</p> <p>Contact lists regularly updated for Post and Desk engagement.</p> <p>CSO and RO partners are encouraged and supported to enhance their Post engagement as well as share case studies and learning briefs. They also regularly invite Post participation for local events, for example, a recent visit to Bhubaneswar by DFAT Kolkata Consul-Genera.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Working with RHOs</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Working with traditional women’s organisations is done in a sensitive manner with full consultation. It is a two-way process and a do no harm approach is used so that entry points for WASH are mutually identified.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Response	Action	Status
<p>Explore various issues for potential future research topics, analysis or action by the Fund Coordinator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing traditional women’s organisations through training in inclusion and gender equality • Impact of engagement on operation and mandates of DPOs • Effect on inclusion of people with disabilities at the community level • Approaches to issues of intersectionality • Expansion of representation of women to include young and old women, women with disabilities, ethnic or religious minority women • Opportunities for contribution by progressive feminist organisations 		<p>DPOs tend to be male-centric and this is taken into account in capacity building. Their capacity development is done in a highly consultative manner. The Fund ran a disability / WASH workshop that examined all the issues identified by the reviewer and shared approaches among Fund partners.</p> <p>Washington Group short set questions are being used but are complemented by other qualitative approaches to broaden the scope of consultation and analysis and include issues such as barriers, barrier removal, participation and access.</p> <p>Projects work with a wide range of women’s organisations. Partners are encouraged and supported to engage with progressive feminist organisations. Where possible, issues of intersectionality are addressed such as in engagement with DPOs on gender equality.</p> <p>There is also a focus to encourage networking between RHOs, DPOs and women’s organisations (eg SNV Bhutan and ISF research project in Indonesia and Timor-Leste). This partly addresses issues of intersectionality.</p> <p>SNV Lao and IRC Pakistan and other projects work in areas with larger representation of ethnic and religious minority women.</p>	
<p>Social and gender norms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a gender and social norms framework for WASH • Provide guidance on strategies that can be used to influence norms • Adopt a monitoring system that can be used across WfW projects and that will help identify successful strategies (the WASH-GEM framework may be the basis of this). 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Fund Partnership Group has agreed to develop a gender and social norms framework and GHD will engage Gillian Brown to assist. This will include work on broad indicators that will help build the evidence and guidance on strategies that best influence norms.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Response	Action	Status
<p>Transformation and empowerment of people with disabilities</p> <p>Initiate a dialogue with CBM as to whether it would be useful to develop a framework similar to the WASH-GEM framework on transformation and empowerment of people with disabilities and how best to involve partners.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>This is being explored with CBM with the possibility that such a framework be developed in an extension phase.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Managing knowledge</p> <p>If not already scheduled, plan an in-depth review of the Stories of Transformation once enough have been collected to allow this.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Stories of Transformation have been collated and reviewed. Results have been reported in the annual progress report and will continue in future progress reports.</p> <p>Climate resilience will become more important as an area of interest in GESI work across the Fund.</p>	<p>Done</p>