

## **Attachment A: Malaysia and Thailand Reform Partnerships Evaluation Terms of Reference**

### **Background**

The Malaysia and Thailand Reform Partnerships is a program funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and implemented by The Asia Foundation (TAF). It provides a flexible, adaptive program for Australia to support progress on critical reforms in Malaysia and Thailand to help them achieve inclusive growth, stability and development. It is the flagship program of Australia's bilateral development re-engagement in the two countries.

The program aims to strengthen Australia's capacity to support reforms critical to future growth and stability in post-aid Advanced Middle Income Countries in ways that build Australia's reputation as an effective regional partner in reform efforts.

The end-of-program outcomes of the program are:

1. Australia's contribution supports meaningful progress on reforms in Malaysia and Thailand that are critical for maintaining inclusive growth and stability.
2. Australia's bilateral relationships with Malaysia and Thailand are strengthened by reinforcing Australia's track record as a pragmatic and resourceful partner.
3. Strategic analysis provides a foundation for long-term bilateral cooperation to advance critical reforms in the mutual benefit of Australia and Malaysia/Thailand.

The program commenced in August 2019. Its value is \$2.7 million over three financial years.

The Asia Foundation implements the program in close engagement with DFAT, in the spirit of a partnership approach. The program approach is informed by policy work on development engagement with Advanced Middle Income Countries conducted under the DFAT-TAF Strategic Partnership.

The Program applies an adaptive, politically-smart approach informed by six-monthly Strategy Testing. A Joint Working Group of senior staff from each office meets six-monthly to provide strategic oversight and guidance.

There are five reform initiatives underway:

- Thailand: Education Reform to Improve Thailand's Long-Term Competitiveness.
- Thailand: Reducing Market Structure Constraints to Unleash Competition and Innovation.
- Thailand: Technical Advisory Assistance to the Office of Trade and Competition Commission to Increase Market Competition
- Malaysia: Retaining High-Skilled Women in the Malaysian Workforce
- Malaysia: Capacity Building Towards TVET as a Career of Choice

Sector studies focused on gender equality, education and the civil service has been conducted for Malaysia and used to inform choice of the second Malaysian reform initiative. A more extensive diagnostics analysis examining Thailand's economy and political economy will be completed in late 2020.

## Contract Period

January 2021 to August 2022.

## Location

The evaluation will be primarily desk based at the contractor's location. Due to COVID-19, the mid-term review will be conducted virtually. The end of program review in 2022 will include a field visit to Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur (provided safe travel conditions have resumed).

## Input Days

Input days will be finalised based on agreement between DFAT and the successful consultant on the required scope of work. An estimate of days required are as follows:

Evaluation component	Maximum Inputs
Briefing and evaluation plan	3 days
Mid-term evaluation and report	7 days
End of program evaluation and report	10 days plus up to 2 x 0.5 days travel
DFAT senior staff briefing and webinar	0.5 days

## Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The program is an innovative style of work, and potentially a model for engagement with other Advanced Middle Income Countries (AMIC) or near-AMIC countries. Therefore, DFAT and TAF are seeking a learning-focused evaluation in a progressive, 'critical friend' style similar to that in use by the Coalitions for Change program in the Philippines.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

1. At the mid-term of the program:
  - (a) Provide independent feedback to DFAT and TAF to enhance implementation of the Malaysia and Thailand Reform Partnerships.
  - (b) Provide a preliminary assessment of the usefulness of the program approach for DFAT in Southeast Asia.
2. At the end of the program:
  - (a) Determine to what extent the goal and objectives of the program have been achieved, and what lessons can be learned for further work in Malaysia and Thailand.
  - (b) Identify opportunities for innovation to be applied in other Southeast Asia programs.
  - (c) Assess the usefulness of the program approach for broader use by DFAT in middle income Southeast-Asian countries.

Key evaluation questions will be developed by the consultant in consultation with DFAT and TAF as part of the initial briefing period.

## Scope of Work

The evaluation will involve three components:

### *Briefing and Evaluation Plan*

The initial period will familiarise the consultant with the program, and will include:

- Preliminary discussions with key personnel (DFAT Canberra, Kuala Lumpur Post, Bangkok Post, TAF San Francisco, TAF Thailand, TAF Bangkok).
- Review of key documents.
- Drafting of an evaluation plan.
- Finalisation of evaluation plan following DFAT and TAF feedback.

Output: Evaluation Plan consistent with DFAT Monitoring & Evaluation Standards. Specific requirements for the Evaluation Plan will be determined by the consultant and DFAT in the initial briefing period.

Due: By end February 2021.

### *Mid-term review*

The mid-term review will review progress against the end-of-program objectives, provide recommendations for improvements, and an initial assessment of the value of the program model in the middle-income context.

DFAT and TAF will facilitate contact with key stakeholders in Malaysia and Thailand.

Due to travel restrictions this will be a virtual review.

### Output:

Mid-Term Review Report, consistent with DFAT Monitoring & Evaluation Standards. Specific requirements for the Mid-Term Review Report will be determined by the consultant and DFAT in the initial briefing period.

Briefing to the Joint Working Group (via videoconference).

Due: By end March 2021.

### *End-of-program review*

The end-of-program review will assess to what extent the end-of-program outcomes have been achieved, lessons learned, and an assessment of the value of the program model for broader use in Southeast Asia.

Output: End-of-program review report, consistent with DFAT Monitoring & Evaluation Standards.

Briefing to the Joint Working Group (via videoconference).

DFAT Webinar on learnings from the program and value of the program model.

Due: By end August 2022.

### **Personnel Requirements**

The consultant will:

- be experienced in strategic evaluation
- be experienced in politically-smart, adaptive development programming

- have expertise in Southeast Asian middle income development trajectories
- have demonstrated understanding of Australia's strategic and development priorities in Southeast Asia.

### **DFAT and TAF Support**

The evaluation will be managed by DFAT in consultation with TAF. The DFAT grant manager will be the main coordination point for the consultant throughout the evaluation. TAF country offices and DFAT Posts will provide lists of contacts for the consultant to speak to, and provide support for the consultant when in-country.

### **Key Documents**

- William Cole, 'Advanced Middle Income Countries in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead', The Asia Foundation, May 2017.
- Saku Akmeemana and William Cole, 'Transitioning from Aid to Partnership in AMICs', DFAT and The Asia Foundation, August 2019.
- The Asia Foundation, 'Reflections on Implementing Politically Informed, Searching Programs: Lessons for Aid Practitioners and Policy Makers', April 2016.
- The Asia Foundation, 'Strategy Testing: An Innovative Approach to Monitoring Highly Flexible Aid Programs', September 2015.
- MTRP Investment Design Summary – August 2019
- Proposal: Support for Australian Engagement in Malaysia and Thailand June 2019
- Australia-Thailand Middle Income Initiative: Quarterly Reports (multiple)
- MTPR Monitoring & Evaluation Plan
- DFAT-TAF Ways of Working for the Malaysia and Thailand Reform Partnership September 2019
- Working Theories of Change for MTPR reform initiatives (at start of program)
- MTPR Semi-Annual Progress Update March 2020 (including strategy testing results)
- MTRP Annual Report August 2020 (includes strategy testing results)
- Joint Working Group meeting records
- Malaysia Sectoral Study for Reform Initiatives – February 2020
- Thailand diagnostics reports

## **Attachment B: MTRP Evaluation Plan**

### **Introduction**

The Malaysia and Thailand Reform Partnerships is a program funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and implemented by The Asia Foundation (TAF). It provides a flexible, adaptive program for Australia to support progress on critical reforms in Malaysia and Thailand to help them achieve inclusive growth, stability and development. It is the flagship program of Australia's bilateral development re-engagement in the two countries.

The program aims to strengthen Australia's capacity to support reforms critical to future growth and stability in post-aid Advanced Middle Income Countries in ways that build Australia's reputation as an effective regional partner in reform efforts.

The end-of-program outcomes of the program are:

4. Australia's contribution supports meaningful progress on reforms in Malaysia and Thailand that are critical for maintaining inclusive growth and stability.
5. Australia's bilateral relationships with Malaysia and Thailand are strengthened by reinforcing Australia's track record as a pragmatic and resourceful partner.
6. Strategic analysis provides a foundation for long-term bilateral cooperation to advance critical reforms in the mutual benefit of Australia and Malaysia/Thailand.

The program commenced in August 2019. Its value is \$2.7 million over three financial years.

The Asia Foundation implements the program in close engagement with DFAT, in the spirit of a partnership approach. The program approach is informed by policy work on development engagement with Advanced Middle Income Countries conducted under the DFAT-TAF Strategic Partnership.

The Program applies an adaptive, politically-smart approach informed by six-monthly Strategy Testing. A Joint Working Group of senior staff from each office meets six-monthly to provide strategic oversight and guidance.

There are five reform initiatives underway:

- Thailand: Education Reform to Improve Thailand's Long-Term Competitiveness.
- Thailand: Increasing market competition through assistance to the Office of Trade and Competition Commission
- Thailand: Expand Access to High-Skilled Labor to Improve Innovation and Competitiveness
- Malaysia: Retaining High-Skilled Women in the Malaysian Workforce
- Malaysia: Supporting the Growth and Improvement of Malaysia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Sector studies focused on gender equality, education and the civil service have been conducted for Malaysia and used to inform choice of the second Malaysian reform initiative. A more extensive diagnostics analysis examining Thailand's economy and political economy will be completed in early 2021.

## Scope

The evaluation has two distinct, but related components, the first being a mid-term assessment conducted in quarter 1, 2021 and the second, an end of program evaluation to be finalised early in quarter 3, 2022. In both phases, principal purposes will include learning and accountability, as well as future applicability of the model being used. As befits a relatively small, short-duration program (albeit one with strategic intent) the evaluation will be proportionally modest, with approximately 10 days allocated in total for each part.

In Part I, the evaluation will seek to reach tentative conclusions on the basis of early evidence, to be retested in more detail and with greater performance information at the program's conclusion. As such, this mid-term progress report will also potentially alert partners to issues that might benefit from additional consideration or management responses. It will also include a preliminary assessment of the broader usefulness of the program approach for DFAT in South East Asia.

Part II, the end of program evaluation, will determine the extent to which the program goal and objectives have been met. It will consider in greater depth whether the knowledge, skills and technologies developed under the program have broader utility for DFAT, both in terms of Australia's bilateral relationships with Malaysia and Thailand but also whether the model being used, or alternatives that might be developed, should be deployed more widely in South East Asia.

The evaluation will seek to come to judgement about whether the program as a whole represents value for money as a means of advancing Australia's strategic diplomatic and development goals in Malaysia and Thailand. It will not undertake detailed financial analysis of inputs and outputs, but will review the program budget and reflect on resource usage. It will apply a high-level, cost-benefit approach to assessing cost effectiveness. In doing so, the evaluation will consider what has been achieved in each of the five reform areas currently being progressed, but with an emphasis on identifying performance patterns running across the reform work streams, rather than seeking to critique each in detail. The evaluation will also consider the extent to which the reform initiatives have provided new and improved platforms for DFAT to engage with senior counterparts and an enhanced reputation, facilitating greater access to high-level decision makers in each country.

The evaluator has been engaged to conduct both parts and will continue to monitor program performance in the interim, both to ensure continuity of assessment and also to contribute to maximising real time learning and translating it into improved effectiveness while the program is running.

## Methodology

The evaluation will seek to draw on multiple sources of evidence, test assessments and triangulate data. The evaluator will develop hypotheses which will be similarly tested and will be put to senior partners to obtain their views, potentially being reformulated, abandoned or confirmed.

The following methodologies, consultations and evaluation questions are proposed for Phase I. They will be refined and amended on the basis of experience, prior to the commencement of Phase II.

### ***Document review***

The evaluation will commence with a review of program documentation. This will include, but not be limited to:

- Pre-design analysis of the development context, existing forms of cooperation and alternative approaches

- Design documents, setting out the business case for the program and its essential features
- Partnering processes and management arrangements
- Reports on the evolving shape of the program, its key components and performance against program objectives
- Partner progress assessments, both formal and informal, including records of strategy testing meetings and of the program's Joint Working Group

### ***Management meeting observation***

The evaluator will observe a number of management processes, including strategy testing and meetings of the Joint Working Group to familiarise with their operations, consider whether any changes could make them even more effective and derive additional performance information from the discussions.

### ***Differentiated, phased consultations***

Consultations for the mid-term evaluation will be conducted in three phases, with an emphasis on prioritising the insights, observations and needs of senior partner officials.

In Phase 1, the evaluator will seek to gain clear strategic feedback from business owners in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, apex program managers in the Asia Foundation and, where possible, senior counterparts in Malaysia and Thailand.

In Phase 2 of the consultations, the evaluator will seek to engage with operational managers and staff to obtain assessments from the coalface.

In Phase 3, a number of senior individuals who were previously, but no longer, associated with the program will be contacted to obtain arms-length perspectives.

The evaluation will pursue each of the key evaluation questions with different interlocutors, but will select the appropriate subsidiary questions to pursue, based on the roles and experiences of the groups and individuals being consulted.

Gathering and assessing the views of national counterparts are critical tasks, but the individuals concerned may be difficult to access. Therefore, it may be necessary to develop a separate flexible plan for rolling consultations later in the evaluation process to ensure access to the right people who have had sufficient exposure to the program and its achievements to be confident of accurately capturing their assessments and the consequences for achievement of program goals.

### ***Management and performance system data***

The program performance framework and the data it collects, reports and makes sense of will be a critical source of information. As the program itself and its management and performance arrangements are deliberately different, the evaluator will pay significant attention to how they are working in practice.

An early hypothesis is that these arrangements are critical to achievement of program goals and therefore a potential source both performance enhancement and possible problems. Consistent with this focus, there will be specific attention given to risk recognition and management, given that this is an innovative program that cannot draw on extensive experience elsewhere. The evaluator will want to test thoroughly that systems result in partners coming to the same judgements about program progress, both at critical points in its life and at the end of the activity.

### ***Evaluation Questions***

Key evaluation questions (see attached table) derive from the Terms of Reference and include assessing the overall progress of the program against its objectives, but also invite consideration of the mechanics of the model and its future applicability.

These high-level questions have been supplemented through preliminary documentary review and strategy testing observation. The questions will be further refined following Phase 1 Consultations with senior partner officials and observation of the February, 2021, Joint Working Group meeting.

As indicated, each question can be broken down into a series of subsidiary questions. Not all questions will be put to all interlocutors. Questions will relate primarily to the respondent's areas of responsibility. Greatest weight will be given to high level strategic questions, though a more granular understanding of what is driving particular outcomes may come from operational insights that in turn may allow for problem resolution and for maximising program impact.

### **Reports**

Reports, consistent with DFAT's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards, will be produced for each of the two stages of the evaluation. The reports will be published on DFAT's website as will Management responses to the reports.

The Mid Term Review Report will provide an assessment of progress to date against objectives; recommendations designed to maximise achievement of those objective during the remainder of the program; and an initial assessment of the value of the program model in the middle-income context. It will be a succinct document of around 10 pages, written for senior decision makers. It will also have an executive summary of no more than two pages. Technical information and detailed analysis will be included in annexes, as required. The report will clearly identify sources of evidence and assess the strength of evidence, to reflect the strength of its conclusions.

The content, structure and scope of the final report will be determined in conjunction with DFAT prior to the commencement of the End of Program Review. It will focus on the extent to which end of program outcomes have been achieved, lessons learned and an assessment of the value of the program model for broader use in South East Asia.

### **Evaluator**

The evaluator is a Manila-based consultant, specialising in South East Asian development. He has extensive experience in the Mekong sub-region, Myanmar and the Philippines. Previously he had a 20-year career in government, managing Australia's development programs in Asia and the Pacific, as well as UN and multilateral programs. He sits on the boards of a major Australian NGO and the International Development Contractors' Community.

*Disclosure:* The evaluator was involved in the initial establishment of the partnership between The Asia Foundation and the Australian government (initially managed in AusAID and subsequently DFAT) in 2009. As that was more than a decade ago and the Malaysia Thailand Reform Partnership Program did not commence until 2019 – five years after the consultant left DFAT - it is not believed this past relationship represents a material conflict of interest.



## Evaluation Questions: Malaysia Thailand Reform Partnerships

Initial key Evaluation Questions	Subsidiary questions
<p>1. To what extent is the program achieving its 3 key objectives?</p>	<p><b>Viewed holistically and strategically, how well is the program delivering value for money, including when compared to alternative programs and approaches?</b></p> <p><b>A. Supporting ‘meaningful’ reforms</b></p> <p>A.1. What is the priority of each of the areas of focus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there partner agreement on the importance of these areas?</li> <li>• How were they selected?</li> <li>• To what extent and how well have contextual changes been accommodated?</li> </ul> <p>A.2. Do partners have the necessary skills, technologies and ways of working to add considerable value in all areas?</p> <p>A.3. What is the extent of progress to date?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there realistic prospects for success within program timeframes?</li> <li>• Do partner performance assessments converge or diverge?</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Building bilateral relationships</b></p> <p>B.1. How systematic is pursuit of this objective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a plan for how it will be accomplished?</li> <li>• How is the objective tracked and reported on?</li> </ul> <p>B.2. To what extent has the program been able to carve out a valuable niche?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What visibility, profile and reputation does it have with partner officials?</li> <li>• Is Australia’s role as a policy partner and program initiator understood and appreciated by local partners?</li> <li>• Have the program’s achievements been communicated beyond those directly involved? Have opportunities been created and taken to reach the highest levels of government?</li> </ul> <p>B.3. Is the program delivering the outcomes identified in program documentation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An extension of networks, linkages and access to strategic development intelligence?</li> <li>• Improved access to senior individuals and organisations?</li> <li>• New invitations to collaborate on issues of mutual importance to Australia and Malaysia or Thailand?</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Program-produced strategic analysis provides a foundation for long term, policy-based cooperation with Malaysia &amp; Thailand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the types, quality and quantity of analytical products produced to date?</li> <li>• How useful have partners found these products for purposes outside of advancement of immediate program goals?</li> <li>• Is there agreement on what partners need to do to meet this objective?</li> <li>• Is this objective being tracked and managed as a discrete goal?</li> <li>• Is there systematic, whole of activity consideration of how program learning might inform future cooperation, including potentially in ways that are different from those currently envisaged?</li> </ul>

Initial key Evaluation Questions	Subsidiary questions
<p>2. To what extent have program design features &amp; management mechanisms been validated as effective?</p>	<p><b>A. Has the macro-level ‘theory of change’ been confirmed?</b>  A.1. How well-placed is the partnership model to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy outcomes in high priority areas?</li> <li>• Significant reputational benefit?</li> <li>• Analytical products that have a wider, long term value to Australia in designing future cooperation?</li> </ul> <p>A.2. Have pre-requisites for success been clearly identified and delivered?</p> <p><b>B. How well are the envisaged ‘ways of working’ working?</b>  B.1. How fully engaged are stakeholders in partnership management?  B.2. Have all partners been able to marshal the requisite skills, knowledge, relationships and high-level involvement?  B.3. What is the feasibility of program time frames and resourcing?  B.4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy testing process? How well does it facilitate strategic adaptation?  B.5. To what extent are there systematic approaches to tracking performance against objectives 2 and 3?  B.6. How are risks being recognised, catalogued and managed?</p> <p><b>C. Are program partners able to track and manage program performance easily, accurately and consistently?</b>  C.1. Are program performance indicators and benchmarks evolving to be sufficiently sharp and informative?  C.2. Is performance information integrated, interrogated and triangulated, resulting in a single set of agreed indicators and shared judgements about program performance?  C.3. What is the status of the program’s M&amp;E plan?  C.4. Have partners responded effectively to performance signals and feedback?  C.5. What is the extent of follow-through once issues requiring management action have been identified?</p>
<p>3. Overall, what is working in and what is not?</p>	<p><b>A. Entirely open question to gather widest possible range of insights and ideas</b></p>
<p>4. What might drive the highest possible performance in the second half of the program?</p>	<p><b>A. Are there changes to strategy/ways of working/or management that might increase the chances of success?</b>  <b>B. Within the confines of the program budget, are there systems, skills or resource changes that could increase program performance?</b>  <b>C. Are there other ‘performance accelerators’ that could maximise achievement of program objectives?</b></p>
<p>5. What broader lessons are being learned about how to organise cooperation with post-aid countries such as Malaysia and Thailand?</p>	<p><b>A. How prospective does this model seem for structuring cooperation with other middle-income countries in the Indo-Pacific?</b>  <b>A. What alternatives models or approaches exist?</b>  <b>B. Who is doing what and what is working?</b>  <b>C. What would the key features of new models need to exhibit to meet Australian objectives and advance Australian interests?</b></p>

## **Attachment C: Individuals and Organisations Consulted**

### **Counterparts**

#### **Thailand**

##### **Office of Trade Competition Commission**

Commissioner Krisda Piampongsant

Vice Chairman and Commissioner

Dr Akarapon Houbcharaun

Director, Foreign Affairs Division, OTCC  
Roundtable of senior officials

##### **Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA)**

Khun Suporn Kumvong

District Officer, Jomthong

### **DFAT**

#### **Canberra**

Mr Ray Marcello

Assistant Secretary, Southeast Asia Regional Engagement  
Branch

Dr Emily Rudland

Assistant Director, Southeast Asia Development Section

##### **Bangkok Australian Mission**

Mr Paul Stephens

Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Embassy

Mr Hugh Robilliard

Counsellor

Mr Julian Bowen

First Secretary

Mr Alex Wills

Second Secretary

##### **Kuala Lumpur Australian Mission**

Ms Hannah Birdsey

Deputy Head of Mission, Australian High Commission

Ms Nicola Campion

Counsellor

Ms Fiona Morris

Counsellor

Mr Luke McGreevy

Second Secretary

## **The Asia Foundation**

### **San Francisco (HQ)**

Dr William Cole Senior Advisor, Program Strategy

### **Bangkok**

Mr Thomas Parks Country Representative

Dr Rattana Lao Senior Program Officer

Dr Nalitra Thairasert Senior Program Officer

### **Kuala Lumpur**

Mr Herizal Hazri Former Country Representative

Ms Sharifah Shahirah Idid Senior Program Manager

Ms Sunita Anandarajah Senior Program Manager

## **Additional participants in management processes attended by the evaluator**

### **Joint Working Group**

Mr Simon Fellows Incoming Counsellor, Kuala Lumpur

Ms Carly Main Acting Director, Southeast Development Section

### **Strategy testing meetings**

#### **Bangkok**

Mr Benjamin Zawacki Senior Program Specialist

#### **Kuala Lumpur**

Ms Nadya Subramaniam TAF Consultant

Mr Ibrahim ("Ben") Suffian Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

Mr Fadhil Rahman Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

Dr Sharifah Mariam Mohammed Al-Habshi International Institute for Public Policy and Management