



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In March 2022, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned an evaluation of Australia’s funding support to the Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan (EERRP). The evaluation assessed the overall effectiveness of the EERRP in supporting the National Department of Education (NDoE) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation provided recommendations relevant to the ongoing implementation of the EERRP, as well as efforts to strengthen the resilience of the education system more broadly. The evaluation covered the implementation period of May 2020 to October 2022.

The EERRP was not a traditional emergency response, which tends to focus on immediate needs and time-critical outputs. Instead, the EERRP was primarily a comprehensive, socio-economic response that maintained a longer-term “line of sight” that sought not only to respond to immediate needs but to build and strengthen approaches that could be utilised in the future. The evaluation found that the EERRP was highly relevant and appropriate for mapping, planning, and developing a context-specific approach to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector.

The design of the EERRP was locally led, promoted strong engagement and dialogue, and was comprehensive in responding to current and emerging needs and priorities. The EERRP was aligned with existing NDoE and Government of PNG policies and priorities.

The evaluation highlights the successes as well as the challenges in planning and implementing the emergency response plan. DFAT welcomes the review findings and provides a response to the recommendations for the remaining period of implementation.

Recommendations

| No. | SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS | RECOMMENDATIONS | RESPONSE (AGREE/PARTIALLY AGREE/DISAGREE) | ACTION PLAN AND TIMEFRAME |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | <i>National Department of Education (NDoE) to strengthen coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).</i> | NDoE, through the education in emergencies (EiE) Technical Working Committee (TWC) to ensure that strategies and plans are prepared to ensure that home learning packs) and teacher booster kits are mainstreamed and supported in schools. NDoE should also coordinate with UNICEF to make sure all relevant training is provided to principals and teachers. NDoE should also confirm that educational tools and approaches continue to be utilised in future emergency response or for student absences and where remote learning is required. | Agree | To be referred to NDoE for consideration. |
| 2 | <i>NDoE to strengthen its communication and engagement with provincial and district education authorities.</i> | NDoE to review current communication and engagement protocols with Provincial and District authorities to ensure there is a clear and consistent chain of command for future emergency responses. At present provincial authorities tend to be excluded from information sharing and are often not engaged in decision-making which leads to independent and ad hoc decisions and approaches being applied that often contradict national guidance | Agree | To be referred to NDoE for consideration. |

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| 3 | <i>UNICEF to strengthen oversight and quality assurance in program implementation.</i> | UNICEF to initiate a series of audits and spot-checks in coordination with sub-grantees to ensure that all resources have been procured and distributed according to agreed schedules and plans and to update the reporting of results to reflect an accurate picture of what has been achieved to date. | Agree | To be referred to UNICEF for consideration. |
| 4 | <i>In emergencies, basic resources should be provided to schools without delay while more targeted resourcing is planned and procured.</i> | NDoE and development partners, in response to future emergencies, should focus more on immediate resourcing needs of schools while other more longer-term resources are developed. | Agree | To be referred to NDoE and UNICEF for consideration. DFAT to consider in responding to future emergencies. |
| 5 | <i>National and provincial education budgets do not include provision for emergency funding.</i> | In response to the recommendation 4, NDoE and provincial education authorities should discuss and consider the allocation of emergency budget lines that could be mobilised at short notice to respond to all emergencies. | Agree | To be referred to NDoE for consideration. |
| 6 | <i>The provision of emergency support can come with a resourcing cost to the schools.</i> | DFAT, UNICEF and sub-grantee partners to carefully consider full cost implications for schools of participation in emergency response events and the provision of infrastructure (particularly WASH facilities). | Agree | To be referred to NDoE and UNICEF for consideration. DFAT to consider in responding to future emergencies. |

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| 7 | <i>Program implementation requires more time.</i> | DFAT and UNICEF to arrange a no-cost extension to enable non-government organisation partners to complete outstanding water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities | Agree | DFAT and UNICEF have agreed to a no-cost extension to 31 December 2023. UNICEF will extend arrangements with their NGO partners and ensure reporting compliance. |
| 8 | <i>PNG teachers will benefit from professional development in psychosocial support and disaster risk management.</i> | DFAT to consider options and strategies to integrate teacher professional development (psychosocial support and disaster risk management support) into broader bi-lateral education programs. | Agree | To be considered and integrated where appropriate in future DFAT programs. |