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**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

# REVIEW OF USE OF DFAT DEVELOPMENT EVALUATIONS COMPLETED IN 2022

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## OVERVIEW

DFAT conducts around 40 program evaluations each year, in line with the Development Evaluation Policy introduced in 2017 and updated in 2023.

This review was undertaken to assess how the evaluations completed in 2022 were used. The review is one of the measures in the Performance and Delivery Framework for Australia's International Development Policy:

*Tier 3 indicator: Our development cooperation is informed by monitoring, evaluation and learning*

*Measure: Conduct an annual review of the quality and use of evaluations and publicly report on the findings*

A separate review has been undertaken to assess the quality of the evaluations completed in 2022.

## KEY FINDINGS

- DFAT accepted 74 per cent of evaluation recommendations. This was less than the proportion of recommendations accepted in 2021 but more than in 2017 and 2014. With most already or currently being implemented, DFAT is using evaluation findings and recommendations to improve its work.
- The majority of DFAT evaluations were used to inform the design of the next phase of existing investments, related investments, or to inform new policies and strategies and for continuous improvement and to improve existing investments.
- The most common areas evaluations have been used to contribute to improving are gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). There were three times the number of examples of evaluations being used to contribute to improvements in GEDSI in 2022 than in 2021.
- Just over half the evaluations identified barriers to implementing some recommendations, with the main reason being that they would be implemented in a new phase or program, or by another team.
- Common delays to implementing recommendations were capacity and resourcing constraints (in DFAT, the partner or partner government), and that they will be addressed through another mechanism (such as high-level partnership consultations, other committee/governance structures).

## BACKGROUND

DFAT conducts around 40 program evaluations each year, in line with the Development Evaluation Policy introduced in 2017 and updated in 2023. The policy highlights the importance of learning from evaluations and applying that learning to improve existing investments (ie projects/programs) and develop new ones:

*“use is the driving force behind our evaluations. All our evaluations should be commissioned and conducted to maximise the use of evaluation findings and recommendations to improve our work... we link design and evaluation. Our systems will ensure the design of our strategies, programs and investments takes into account findings from evaluations.”*

The Development Program Committee, the senior governance body within DFAT charged with overseeing the development program, has a role in ensuring evaluation findings are used to inform the development strategies and investments it approves.

Reviews of the use of program evaluations were completed in 2014, 2017 and 2021. The findings have informed DFAT’s evaluation work.

A new three-tiered performance indicator framework was introduced in 2023 to support implementation of the Australian Government’s new International Development Policy, released in August 2023. It includes a strengthened approach to evaluation and emphasises that:

*“the quality and use of evaluations is at the centre of our strengthened approach to evaluation. Evaluation is a key source of information to guide decisions on development programming”<sup>1</sup>. Performance will be assessed using the indicator “Our development cooperation is informed by monitoring, evaluation and learning”. One of the measures for the indicator is to “Conduct an annual review of the quality and use of evaluations and publicly report on the findings”.*

## PURPOSE

The objective of this desk review is to:

- assess how evaluations are used, particularly to inform designs and program improvements;
- track the use of evaluation over time and inform DFAT’s evaluation policy and practice; and
- provide evidence to measure progress against the Tier 3 indicator *Our development cooperation is informed by monitoring, evaluation and learning* in Australia’s International Development Policy and Delivery Framework.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2022 DFAT completed 40 and published 38 evaluations with management responses. All program areas (ie those units of DFAT both in Canberra and at our diplomatic missions overseas) that had completed an evaluation in 2022 were surveyed in June 2023. The review used the same methodology as previous reviews to enable comparison over time. Survey responses were received for all 40 evaluations (100%) of the 2022 evaluations.

The survey collected quantitative data on the number of recommendations accepted, partially accepted and not accepted for each evaluation. Where a recommendation was “noted” it has been categorised in the review as “partially accepted”.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia’s International Development Policy and Delivery Framework, August 2023 [Australia’s development policy - performance and delivery framework](https://www.dfat.gov.au/development-policy-delivery-framework) | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (dfat.gov.au)

The review also collected qualitative data from responses to two questions:

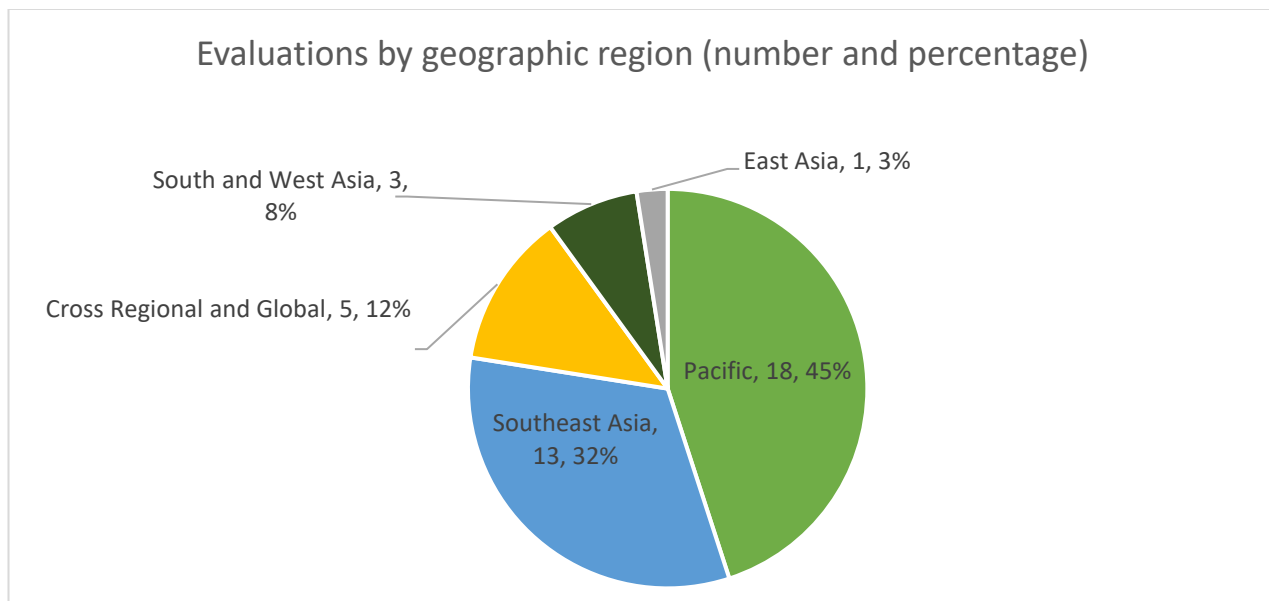
1. How have agreed recommendations been used to improve programs or inform future programming (for example, to inform a policy decision or new design, use in performance reporting, continuous improvement, improving existing programs, thematic learning)?
2. If any agreed recommendations haven't yet been implemented, identify the factors that have hindered the uptake of the recommendations.

The responses to these questions and the examples provided were coded and analysed for common themes. Management responses to the evaluations were also drawn on where necessary to provide additional context and more details background on specific recommendations and DFAT's action plan.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF 2022 EVALUATIONS

### Evaluations by geographic region

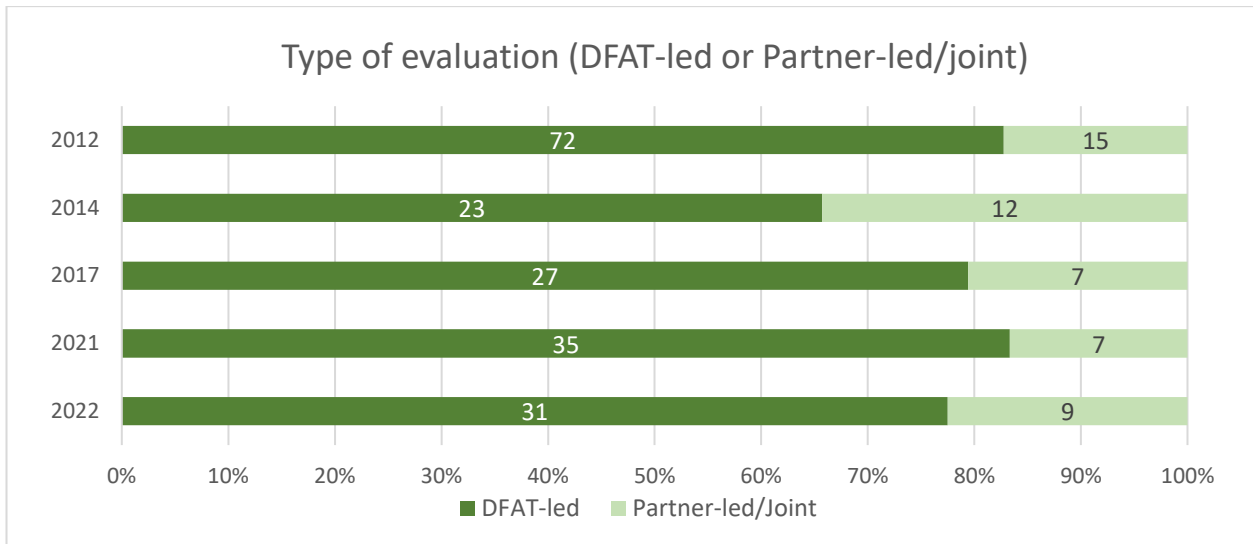
The coverage of evaluations in 2022 broadly reflects the geographic, cross regional and global and funding allocations of DFAT's development programs<sup>2</sup>. This is similar to the 2021 and 2017 reviews which found coverage of evaluations by region reflected geographic priorities at the time. The 2017 review did not include the strategic evaluations completed by the former Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE), which were global/thematic/sectoral evaluations. This type of evaluation is now led by the relevant program area and included in this review.



### Type

- 78 per cent of evaluations in 2022 were DFAT-led
  - this is similar to 2021 (83 per cent) and 2017 (79 per cent).
- Half were mid-term or progress evaluations
- Half were undertaken at the investment's completion

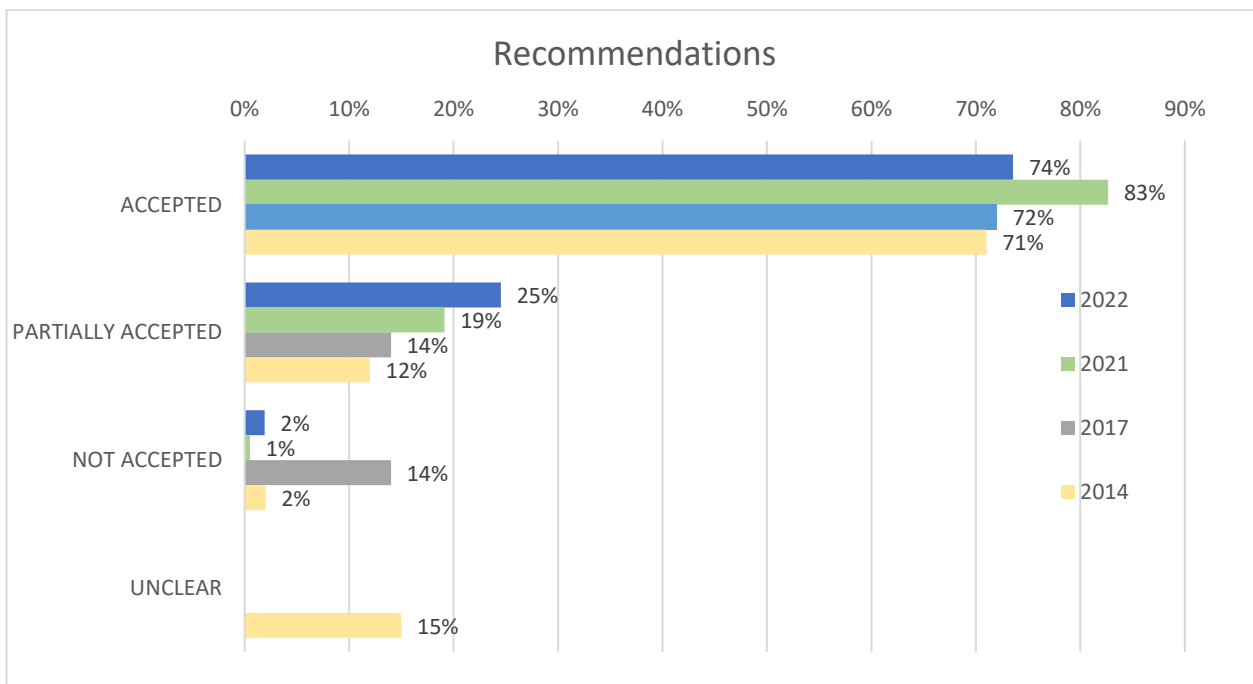
<sup>2</sup> Table 1: Australian ODA allocations by country, regional and global programs (2022-23 Budget Estimates), *Australia's Official Development Assistance Development budget Summary 2023-24*



## REVIEW FINDINGS

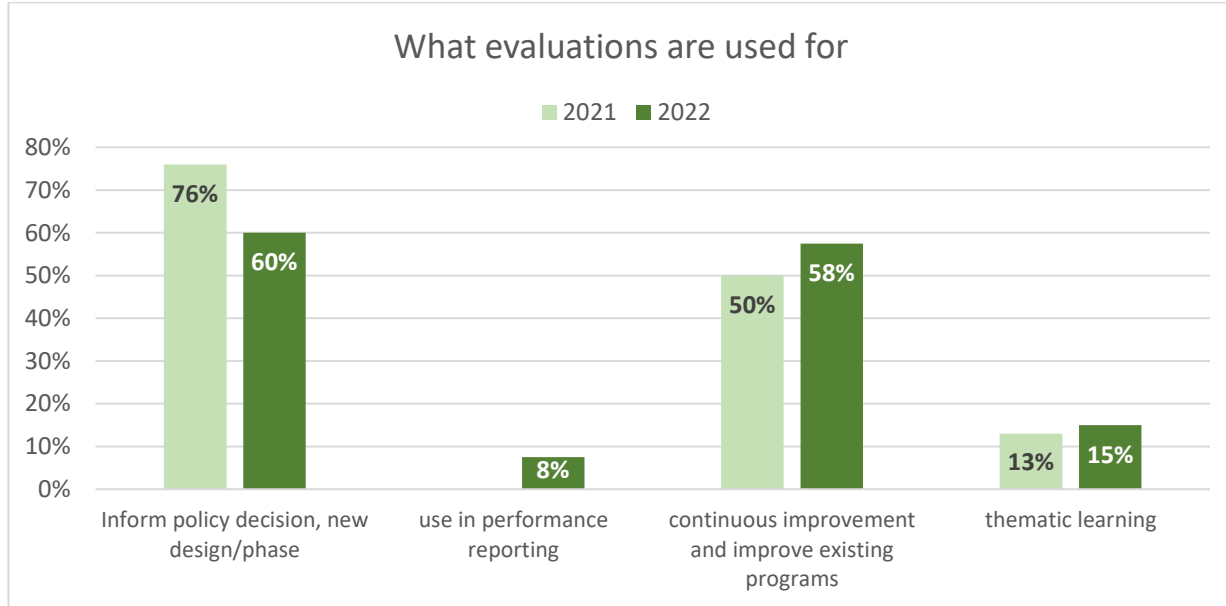
### Are evaluations useful?

- DFAT accepted 74 per cent of evaluation recommendations, less than in 2021 but more than in 2017 and 2014.
  - With most already or currently being implemented at the time of the review, it can be concluded that DFAT is using evaluation findings and recommendations to improve its work.
- Only two per cent (8 of 416) of recommendations were not accepted.
  - This is a small increase from 2021 but significantly less than 2017
- 25 per cent of recommendations were partially accepted, an increase from 19 per cent in 2021



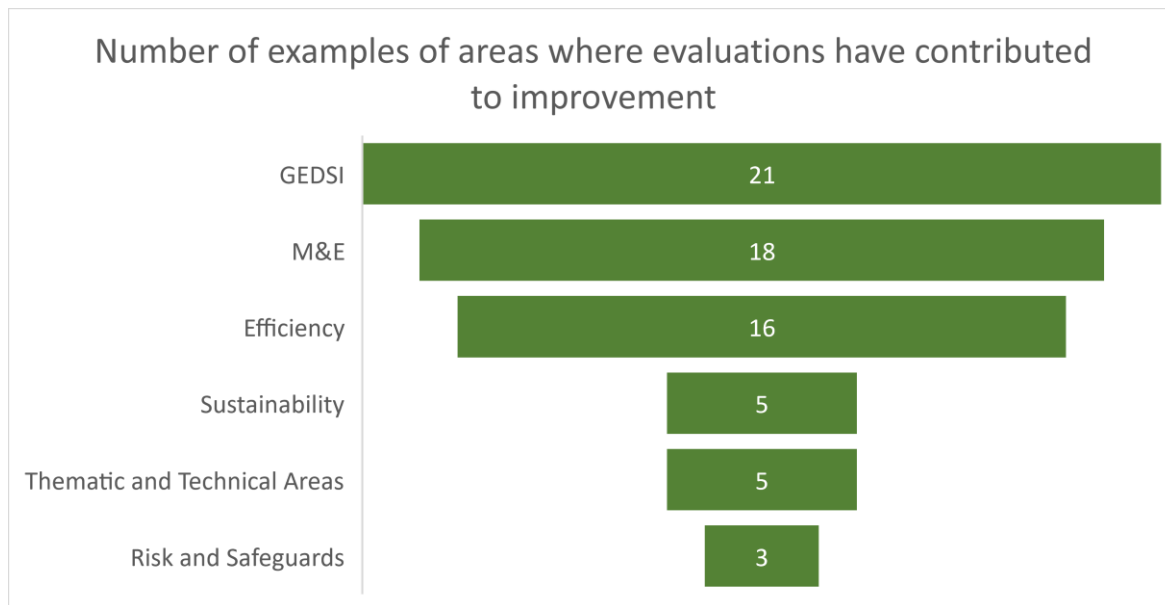
## How have evaluations been used?

- The majority of DFAT evaluations were used for two purposes:
  - to inform the design of the next phase of existing investments or related investments, or to inform new policies and strategies (60 per cent)
  - for continuous improvement and to improve existing investments (58 per cent)
- Four of the six evaluations that have been used for **thematic, sectoral and cross-program learning** were of investments that were completed or near completion. These evaluations have been used for learning beyond just the investment that was evaluated, for example:
  - sharing findings, collaborating and establishing ongoing exchange of lessons across similar programs with other teams
  - informing thematic or sectoral policy and strategic frameworks
  - informing new designs being undertaken by a different program area
- Findings and recommendations from **evaluations of sectoral, thematic and global programs** are being used to inform new investments and improve current investments in these areas.
  - All five have contributed to continuous improvement (50 per cent in 2021)
  - Two (40 per cent) have been used to inform a new phase, design or policy (76 per cent in 2021)
  - One (20 per cent) was reported being used for thematic or cross-program learning (13 per cent in 2021)



## What areas have evaluations contributed to improving?

- The most common areas evaluations have been used to contribute to improving are gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
  - There were three times the number of examples of evaluations being used to contribute to improvements in GEDSI in 2022 (21) compared to 2021 (7)
- Other areas that evaluations have contributed to improving are efficiency (including budget and funding decisions, governance, resourcing and expertise), sustainability, technical and thematic areas and risk and safeguards.



## What have been the barriers to implementing recommendations from evaluations?

- Most recommendations from the 2022 evaluations had already been implemented or were being implemented at the time of the review. There were twenty-two evaluations that identified factors that had delayed the implementation of some recommendations:
  - The main reason that recommendations had not yet been implemented was that they would be implemented in a new phase or program, or by another team (41 per cent).
  - Common factors that delayed implementation of recommendations were:
    - capacity and resourcing constraints (in DFAT, the partner or partner government) (27 per cent)
    - recommendations would be addressed through another mechanism (such as high level partnership consultations, other committee/governance structures) (23 per cent)
  - A small number of recommendations had not yet been implemented because:
    - they were not in line with DFAT or Australian government policies and requirements
    - the program was waiting for the new International Development Policy to provide direction, or
    - they were no longer relevant (insufficient time remaining in the program to implement, a significantly changed context, or the program not continuing).

## ANNEX 1: LIST OF 2022 EVALUATIONS

In 2022, 40 evaluations were completed and 38 published on the DFAT website with a management response. All 40 are included in the review.

### PACIFIC

Country/Region	Evaluation
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Final Review of PNG-Australia Governance Partnership</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Final Review of PNG-Australia Governance Partnership</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan Independent Evaluation</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Independent Review of South Fly Resilience Plan</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Review of the Markets, Economic Recovery, and Inclusion Program (Phase One)</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Review of the PNG-Australia Transport Sector Support Program Phase 2 (TSSP2)</a>
Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Australia, New Zealand, International Finance Corporation: Papua New Guinea Partnership Midterm Evaluation</a>
	<a href="#">Australia-SPC Partnership Evaluation</a>
Pacific Regional	<a href="#">Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific Two-Year System-Wide Review</a>
Pacific Regional	<a href="#">Australia's COVID-19 Response Package for the Pacific and Timor-Leste Independent Review 2020-2022</a>
Pacific Regional	<a href="#">Mid-Term Review Report of the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme</a>
Pacific Regional	<a href="#">End of Investment Evaluation: Pacific IUU Fishing</a>
Pacific Regional	<a href="#">Pacific Digital Economy Programme Mid-Term Review</a>
Solomon Islands	<a href="#">Ombudsman Twinning Support Independent Review</a>
Solomon Islands	<a href="#">Review and Evaluation of the Performance of Sustainable Transport Infrastructure Improvement Program (STIIP) and the National Transport Fund (NTF) in the Solomon Islands</a>
Fiji	<a href="#">Strategic Review of the Fiji Health Program</a>
Nauru	<a href="#">Every Life Matters: Review of DFAT Health Investments to Nauru</a>

### SOUTH EAST ASIA

Country/Region	Evaluation
Indonesia	<a href="#">Independent Strategic Review of Innovation for Indonesia's School Children Phase 2 and Rural and Remote Education Initiative for Papua Provinces Phase 3</a>
Indonesia	<a href="#">Penyediaan Air Minum dan Sanitasi Berbasis Masyarakat (PAMSIMAS) Final Independent Evaluation</a>
Indonesia	<a href="#">Australia-World Bank Indonesia Partnership Independent Mid-Term Review</a>
Timor-Leste	<a href="#">Joint Independent Evaluation - Timor-Leste Police Development Program</a>
Timor-Leste	<a href="#">Partnership for Human Development Mid-Term Review</a>
Vietnam	<a href="#">Aus4Reform Review</a>
Vietnam	<a href="#">Aus4Innovation Mid-term Review</a>
Cambodia	<a href="#">Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services (ACCESS) End of program evaluation</a>
Cambodia	<a href="#">Ponlok Chomnes Independent Strategic Review</a>
Laos	<a href="#">BEQUAL Phase 1 Independent End of Program Review</a>
ASEAN and Mekong	<a href="#">ASEAN-Australia Digital Trade Standards Initiative Mid-Term Review</a>
ASEAN and Mekong	<a href="#">Mid-Term Review: ASEAN Australia Smart Cities Trust Fund (AASCTF)</a>
ASEAN and Mekong	<a href="#">ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking Program Mid-Term Review (MTR)</a>



## SOUTH AND WEST ASIA

Country/Region	Evaluation
Bangladesh	<a href="#">Program Completion Review of the Strategic Partnership Arrangement (SPA) Phase 2 in Bangladesh between DFAT, FCDO and BRAC</a>
Sri Lanka	<a href="#">Independent Evaluation of Women in Work (WIW) Program, Sri Lanka</a>

## EAST ASIA

Country/Region	Evaluation
Mongolia	<a href="#">Australia Mongolia Extractives Program (AMEP) II Mid - Term Review</a>

## CROSS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL

Country/Region	Evaluation
Humanitarian	<a href="#">Australia Assists End of Program Evaluation</a>
Humanitarian	<a href="#">Review of the Humanitarian Logistics Capability</a>
Australia-NGO Cooperation Program	<a href="#">Independent Evaluation of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)</a>
Health	<a href="#">Evaluation and Forward Scoping for the Therapeutic Goods Administration's Regulatory Strengthening Program and the Australian Expert Technical Assistance Program- Regulatory Support and Safety Monitoring</a>
Education	<a href="#">Mid-term evaluation of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Centre Phase 3</a>