



EVALUATION OF THE SYRIA HUMANITARIAN AND RESILIENCE PACKAGE (2017-2019)

DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Program Overview

Announced in 2016 and commencing in 2017, the \$220 million Syria Crisis Humanitarian and Resilience Package (2017-2019) was Australia's first multiyear response to a protracted humanitarian crisis. The adoption of a multiyear approach as an alternative to the provision of annual funding allocations was a recommendation of the 2014 Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) evaluation of Australia's response to the Syria conflict. A multiyear package was considered a better vehicle for the Australian Government's policy, sectoral, funding and relationship priorities. Transitioning to a multiyear package also supported Australia's reform commitments following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, including by addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of the affected population.

The Syria Package is part of Australia's contribution of more than \$433 million in response to the Syrian conflict and resulting refugee crisis since 2011. Australia's contribution is commensurate with our status as a mid-sized donor with an aid program primarily focused on the Indo-Pacific.

Evaluation Purpose

Through the evaluation, DFAT sought to:

- assess whether DFAT's humanitarian and resilience-building investments under the multi-year Syria Humanitarian and Resilience Package (2017-19) were effective, efficient and appropriate;
- assess to what extent the objectives set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the package were met; and
- compile lessons and recommendations to inform DFAT's future policy and programming in protracted crises.

Key Findings

The evaluation found that the Syria Package **was well designed and appropriate**, with regard to the scale of funding, geographic focus and sectors, to address humanitarian needs and build resilience. The mix of funding modalities, including softly earmarked allocations to multilateral agencies and targeted activities with NGOs under **multiyear funding agreements, increased program efficiency and effectiveness**. In some cases, the multi-year funding approach improved value for money, reducing administratively-burdensome contracting processes, promoting more collaborative partnerships with local actors, and supporting innovative and research-based solutions to more effectively address the needs of affected populations, including **improving the rights of people with disability** and their access to assistance.

A formalised design for Australia's assistance improved program implementation, but **timely development of a monitoring and evaluation framework** would have supported better data collection, analysis and assessment of the overall impact of the response. The package delivered **good results under the humanitarian assistance and protection components** (1 and 2) of the package, but **mixed results with resilience-building activities**. While education programs achieved good outcomes, a more contextually-grounded approach to livelihoods programming is required to realise maximum impact as well as **greater integration between humanitarian and resilience-building activities**.

Reflections on the Evaluation Report

DFAT thanks the evaluation team for the professionalism and expertise they brought to this evaluation. DFAT acknowledges and thanks all those who participated in consultations and supported this evaluation.

The evaluation provides informed findings and well-considered recommendations for DFAT's response to the Syrian conflict and other protracted crises. The evaluation provides valuable evidence and captures lessons that will inform Australia's policy and programmatic approach in response to protracted crises and support our global humanitarian reform commitments.

The report provides a good evidence base to demonstrate Australia's leadership in realising the commitments to humanitarian system reform made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 under the **Agenda for Humanity and Grand Bargain**, particularly progress at the field level. The qualitative and quantitative evidence provided on the benefits of multiyear and multi-sectoral programming is valuable in guiding advocacy efforts with other donors and key partners. The report confirms the beneficial effects of **multiyear funding** on program efficiency and effectiveness, as well as highlighting the positive impact on progressing Australia's key thematic priorities of gender equality and disability inclusion and supporting partners to harness innovative practice in delivering assistance to affected communities. DFAT acknowledges the benefits of collective action between donors, partners, host governments and communities to better address needs. Australia's support to the Jordan Compact Education Fund to channel funding from multiple donors to the Jordanian Ministry of Education is evidence of this.

In addressing the **humanitarian-development divide**, Australia seeks to reduce vulnerability by addressing the needs and building the resilience of crisis-affected communities. While not referenced as a key finding, the report provides evidence that multiyear funding across the humanitarian-development divide supported longer-term outcomes that were not envisaged during the design of the Syria Package. Most notably, the institutional strengthening of the education system and shifting social norms in both Jordan and Lebanon realised improved disability inclusion, including access to education. Longer-term resilience-focused programming also challenged traditional norms and promoted gender equality, such as through increased women's participation in employment resulting from livelihoods investments in Jordan. DFAT recognises the need to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks that provide better data on the collective impact of a multiyear, multi-sectoral humanitarian response.

In supporting **localised humanitarian action**, DFAT seeks to promote responses that are as local as possible and as international as necessary. The evaluation report highlights the valuable role of multiyear funding in promoting a more localised response to the Syria crisis, and provides strong evidence of improved partnerships with local actors and government. Longer implementation timelines have enabled the establishment of direct partnerships local organisations, including the Jordanian Ministry of Education and Lebanese NGO, LebRelief. International partner organisations also leveraged multiyear funding to improve collaboration with local implementing partners and adopt more adaptive programming approaches that improved alignment with local priorities. Leveraging local partnerships, DFAT has promoted improved capacity and programming with regard to gender equality, disability inclusion and protection. DFAT will continue to encourage collective and localised approaches in response to protracted crises.

DFAT's Action Plan

DFAT agrees with the evaluation's 10 key recommendations in full or in part. Justifications for our responses are summarised in the following table. In developing the action plan, consideration was given to the application of recommendations across programming in response to protracted crises beyond the Syria conflict. DFAT has focused on efforts to progress humanitarian system reform, Australia's strategic interests and leadership, as well as human and financial resourcing constraints.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1: Future multiyear packages: retain successful design elements, including funding at scale; close alignment with respective UN-led HRP priorities and host government needs; and balance of humanitarian and resilience-building funding allocations.</p>	Agree	<p>Following recommendations from an independent evaluation of Australia's Syria response in 2014 and commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, DFAT has increasingly shifted to multiyear and multi-sectoral responses that aim to address the needs of affected populations and align with the priorities set out by humanitarian actors, affected governments (where appropriate) and likemindeds. In accordance with DFAT's adoption of the DAC recommendation on humanitarian-development-peace nexus coherence, DFAT recognises the importance of addressing immediate needs as well as longer-term vulnerabilities by promoting self-reliance and sustainability.</p>	<p>DFAT will leverage learnings and consider the appropriate scale of funding, alignment with local priorities and balance of addressing immediate and longer-term needs during the concept and design phase of future Australian responses to protracted crises, including the suitability of a multiyear and multi-sectoral approach, informed by context analysis.</p>	Ongoing / December 2019
<p>Recommendation 2: Future multiyear packages should include a mix of funding modalities that are softly earmarked and promote flexibility. Objectives and indicators to measure intended benefits of multiyear funding should be identified with partners and included in monitoring.</p>	Agree	<p>Australia is eager to see a more effective and efficient humanitarian system and will (where possible) seek to provide flexible and predictable funding to partners to adapt operations in response to changing contexts and needs in protracted crisis situations. Where appropriate this will be complemented by more tightly earmarked funding to priority sectors and activities. Activity based funding provides greater visibility of the impact of Australian funding and can be communicated with domestic and international audiences.</p> <p>DFAT notes the value of robust design, monitoring and evaluation processes that articulate clear objectives and indicators to measure the benefits of multiyear funding.</p>	<p>DFAT will explore a range of funding modalities for future multiyear packages, to ensure that strategic priorities and needs of affected communities are being addressed, prioritising predictability and flexibility where appropriate. During the design phase of future responses to protracted crises, DFAT will develop clear program logics, clearly articulate expectations of partners, and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems and practices to measure the effectiveness and efficiency dividends of multiyear funding.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 3: 3.1 Syria crisis: further increase the proportion of funding to national organisations and international organisations with strong local partnerships. The total number of partnerships should not be significantly</p>	Agree in part	<p>In line with Grand Bargain commitments, DFAT supports principled humanitarian action that is as local as possible and as international as necessary, calibrated to achieve the best outcome for affected populations. This includes identifying opportunities to provide funding directly to local partners and</p>	<p>During the design and implementation of responses to protracted crises, DFAT will seek opportunities to work directly with local partners and/or international organisations that partner with local actors and build local capacity, as appropriate.</p>	Ongoing

<p>increased unless additional financial or staff resources are available.</p> <p>3.2 Future multiyear packages: include some funding targeted to local organisations while ensuring the total number of partnerships is proportionate to the level of funding and DFAT's staffing levels.</p>		<p>international organisations with strong local partnerships and promote local leadership and the voice of affected populations. DFAT notes that direct partnerships with local organisations are not always appropriate, particularly inside Syria, where risks are high and DFAT has limited capacity to undertake appropriate due diligence and monitoring.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>Future multiyear packages: ensure MEFs are developed during the design phase. The frameworks should a) include a structured methodology to iteratively gather and use data; and b) enable performance-based funding by aligning partner reporting cycles with DFAT's annual funding cycles.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT recognises the importance of clearly defining program logics and the need for well integrated monitoring and evaluation approaches in multiyear packages at the whole-of-program, sector and partnership levels to collect and analyse data to inform funding decisions, support adaption to emerging priorities and measure and communicate the impact of Australia's support.</p>	<p>DFAT will develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks or performance assessment frameworks linked to clear program logics during the design phase of future multiyear packages. DFAT will integrate a framework into the design of future humanitarian packages that supports a structured methodology to gather and use data. DFAT will align funding and reporting cycles to support performance-based funding to the best extent possible.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>5.1 Syria crisis: increasingly allocate a greater proportion of funding to protection, including niche protection programs (e.g. gender-based violence prevention and/or mine action).</p> <p>5.2 Future multiyear packages: retain a focus on both humanitarian assistance and protection.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT recognises the extreme vulnerability of crisis-affected populations and their critical need for protection.</p> <p>DFAT acknowledges the centrality of protection in crisis contexts, as emphasised by DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy and Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework, and will seek to identify appropriate protection investments in protracted crisis contexts.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to strengthen and prioritise the protection focus of its humanitarian investments in responding to protracted crises. During any future design processes, specific protection investments will be considered alongside humanitarian assistance, to ensuring appropriate coverage of protection issues.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>6.1. Future multiyear packages: in countries where Australia does not have a development program, engage in no more than two sectors that seek to bridge the humanitarian-development nexus.</p> <p>6.2 Syria crisis: build on knowledge gained and work to date by continuing to focus on education and livelihoods without expanding into any new sectors. Support for livelihoods</p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>DFAT supports responses that bridge the humanitarian-development divide to better respond to immediate needs and build resilience in protracted crises. DFAT acknowledges that targeted action in specific sectors is most effective, particularly without the foundation provided by an existing development program.</p> <p>The mix of sectors and thematic priorities should be considered depending on the context and needs rather than the application of arbitrary limits.</p>	<p>DFAT will seek to address immediate vulnerability as well as longer-term needs, selecting an appropriate range of sectors based on the context, needs of affected populations and the scope and scale of the investment.</p> <p>DFAT will leverage learnings to engage more strategically in the livelihoods and education sectors in Jordan and Lebanon, including greater integration with other activities and more clearly articulated objectives.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<p>should be more strategic, build on a nuanced understanding of context and partners, and include clearly articulated intended outcomes.</p>		<p>DFAT recognises that expertise and learning has been gained through its investments in education and livelihoods in response to the Syria crisis, providing a valuable foundation for more strategic future investments.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7: Future multiyear packages: create and track more intentional linkages between different package components. This could include approaches to achieve outcomes that bridge themes and sectors.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT acknowledges the value of greater integration between individual components and investments under multiyear packages in order to maximise whole-of-package impacts.</p>	<p>DFAT will leverage learnings to strengthen linkages and integration between its multiyear package investments that bridge sectors and themes. DFAT will utilise monitoring and evaluation tools to assemble cross-sectoral data.</p> <p>Ongoing / June 2020</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Future multiyear packages: ensure there is sufficient staffing at relevant posts and desks to provide quality management and maximise the outcomes from Australian assistance.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT acknowledges the importance of dedicated expertise at posts and in Canberra to effectively design, implement and monitor multiyear packages, and enable adaptive management that responds to emerging priorities and opportunities. These staff are essential to leverage multiyear funding to increase DFAT's influence.</p>	<p>DFAT will retain experienced staff at posts and in Canberra able to provide quality management of DFAT's multiyear packages in response to protracted crises.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Future multiyear packages and Syria crisis: continue to support and encourage innovative and research-based approaches to improve value for money.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT acknowledges the value of evidence-based research and innovation in addressing the growing and protracted challenges in complex crisis contexts.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to support innovative approaches, providing partners with operational flexibility in protracted crises. Where possible, DFAT will support and share research that better equips the humanitarian community and seeks to assess its impact, particularly in priority areas such as disability inclusion and women's empowerment.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Future multiyear packages and Syria crisis: posts delivering multiyear packages should be supported to strengthen their capacity to advocate for disability inclusion. Australian advocacy for disability inclusion should emphasise the rights-based approach and the need for people with disabilities to play active and meaningful roles.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Disability inclusion informed by a human rights approach is a policy priority for DFAT. It is essential DFAT's staff and partners are adequately equipped to support this objective. DFAT also supports gender equality and other forms of social inclusion.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to advocate for rights-based disability-inclusive humanitarian action and encourage partners to strengthen their policies and practices accordingly. DFAT will also continue to promote gender equality and other forms of social inclusion.</p> <p>DFAT will provide training to staff and partners to support disability inclusive programming, including those responding to the Syria crisis.</p> <p>Ongoing / June 2020</p>