

JSCFADT Inquiry into the Strategic Effectiveness of the Australian Aid Program

Public Hearing, 15 November 2018

DFAT Appearance

Answers to written questions received from the Committee Secretariat

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| 1. | What do you think is the main reason why public confidence in Australia's aid program has not been strong, or hasn't been as strong as it has in the past? Is it related to views around the sustainability of Australia's aid program or the outcomes we are getting from the aid program? What are the main reasons impacting that confidence and where are the major areas, that we can improve? |
| <p>Recent surveys have shown mixed levels of public support for the Australian aid program. We believe that there are several reasons for this. Many Australians are unsure what the aid program does, how it operates or how much the Government spends on it. Some Australians clearly believe that the Government should focus first and foremost on addressing problems within Australia. Others are unsure whether our aid budget is being spent effectively or whether our assistance is reaching those who need it.</p> <p>We assess that the key to building public confidence in the aid program is to tell stories about the successes it has delivered and the many lives it has changed. This is challenging, for several reasons. The aid program is delivered overseas, out of sight of the vast majority of Australians. While in some cases, the impact of the program is highly tangible and relatively easy to demonstrate (for example, humanitarian relief operations, some of our health and education programs) in other cases, the impact is less immediate and tangible (for example our work on governance or taxation reform). Nonetheless we are working to improve our capacity to tell positive stories about the impact of the aid program, including through our lead spokespeople on the aid program, namely our ministers.</p> | |
| 2. | With the intersection between health and DFAT, we have heard that DFAT doesn't have programs for things like cervical cancer, what is it that prevents DFAT from funding such critical programs? |
| <p>DFAT funds activities that address cervical cancer. Through the Australian aid program, DFAT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provides core funding to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (\$250 million, 2016–2020). Gavi works to support countries to introduce human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine programs to prevent cervical cancer. Gavi reports indicate by the end of 2017, 30 countries have been assisted to conduct HPV vaccine demonstration programs, with six countries introducing HPV vaccine into their national immunisation programs. Gavi also works to improve affordability and availability of vaccines, including HPV- Supports regional cervical screening in the Pacific. The Australian funded Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Program is boosting cervical screening services in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (\$4.5 million, 2015–2019)- Provides core and specific project funding to both United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (including \$30 million 2018–2022 for the 'Transformative Agenda for Women, Youth and Adolescents' to expand access to vital sexual and reproductive health services in the Pacific) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as well as project funding to Marie Stopes International (MSI). These investments support comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information including cervical cancer initiatives as determined by local context. <p>Between 2008 and 2013, DFAT supported the commencement of a national HPV vaccination program in Fiji through Australia's bilateral health program. The Government of Fiji has absorbed</p> | |

the costs of HPV vaccination since 2016. Between 2013 and 2016, the coverage rate for Fijian girls in their final year of primary school ranged from 95 to 98 per cent.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is preparing to implement a new initiative to introduce vaccines and early detection as part of a regional response to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer in four Pacific countries (Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). DFAT is a core donor to the ADB, and is working with the ADB on this initiative.

3. What's the percentage of funding at the moment that goes into longer term programs such as the Indonesia Infrastructure facility (called KIAT)?

Over the last three financial years (2016-17 to 2018-19), on average an estimated 99 per cent of the Indonesia bilateral aid budget went to longer-term programs such as KIAT. The remaining funds are used for emerging priorities, including humanitarian emergencies.

4. In terms of Australia's efforts towards climate change finance for adaptation and mitigation (such as in Kiribati), and strengthening that element of the overseas development assistance budget, what is the current situation with on-the-ground work with very basic infrastructure projects; what kinds of materials are being used and how is maintenance managed? Also how do you work with the embassy and locally with communities about the best way to respond to what they identify as their needs?

Australia is working to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction considerations into the design and construction of Australian-funded infrastructure projects in the Pacific. Materials and maintenance will vary depending on the circumstances. Programs are usually designed and managed by relevant Embassies/High Commissions, based on discussion and agreement with partner governments and in line with national development plans or strategies and local communities. Priorities are identified through Aid Investment Plans and agreed with partner countries through Aid Partnership Agreements.

Through the Kiribati Education Improvement Program (KEIP), Australia is working with the Ministry of Education to provide school facilities that are constructed from locally sourced and sustainable materials, using design and technology to provide natural cooling and self-sufficiency in clean water supply and sanitation services. KEIP goes to considerable efforts to source concrete and other materials from sources that don't involve reef destruction (for limestone) as well as sustainability sources timbers.

5. In relation to evaluation of the Australia Awards: Women Trading Globally program, what are the outcomes of the program and how do you assess them? How do you know whether it's fantastic or there's room for improvement for the next module? Are there opportunities to form alumni groups or other ways the women might keep in touch with each other? How are the participants followed-up?

A monitoring and evaluation framework was developed for the program prior to its commencement, which is the basis for assessment. The program was piloted in November 2017, so it is too early to determine long-term outcomes. However, outcomes to date include:

- a participant reported that her export business has grown – from five per cent of revenue to 25 per cent, and the number of her export markets has increased, since participating in the course;
- a participant was subsequently named Solomon Islands Business Woman of the Year in 2018. In accepting her award, the participant acknowledged the role Women Trading Globally has played in helping to grow her business.

The course convenors seek feedback from participants and presenters at the end of the course, which helps determine whether there's room for improvement for the next module. To date, feedback has been positive.

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| | <p>Participants are eligible to join the Australia Global Alumni. In addition, a Women Trading Globally network is maintained, which participants use to seek ongoing advice, support and mentoring. For example, through the network developed from the 2017 pilot, some participants have started trading with each other - a participant from Samoa who grows vanilla is supplying her product to a participant from Vanuatu who manufactures ice cream.</p> |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Staying with the Australia Awards; the University of the Sunshine Coast runs regular programs with women in the Pacific and also with women in Indonesia on entrepreneurship and business development using DFAT funding, with a curriculum available, which has been evaluated and is very successful; is there any crossover with any of the participants or other sharing of information?</p> |
| | <p>DFAT posts fund short courses as part of the Australia Awards. The short courses are short-term professional development opportunities, developed in collaboration with course providers such as universities. They focus on a range of sectors that align with Australia's foreign, trade and aid interests, and can include women's empowerment, governance, business development and entrepreneurship. DFAT posts report on course outcomes and share learnings as appropriate. Programs may include participants from different countries.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>In relation to debt to health agreements and noting that the six-year period of our agreement with Indonesia has now passed, what have been the benefits of that initiative? What analysis work has been done there? Where is it up to? Is it worth exploring further options? Are there other opportunities for such programs with other nations down that track?</p> |
| | <p>The debt to health swap agreement (2010-2016) saw the Government of Indonesia invest an additional AUD37.5 million through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to combat tuberculosis (TB).</p> <p>TB is one of the most serious health issues facing Indonesians. In 2010, the year the Debt for Health swap was signed, Indonesia had the third highest rate of tuberculosis in the world, with more than 90,000 Indonesians dying from the disease every year. Establishing more effective TB prevention and treatment procedures is fundamental to improving the lives and promoting development in one of our closest neighbours.</p> <p>The Global Fund is an international financing institution with an excellent track record in reducing the threat of the three diseases globally. In Indonesia, the Global Fund estimates that its TB programs have helped save 1.5 million lives and averted 624,000 new cases since 2012. No specific analysis has been done on the SWAP since its completion in 2016. DFAT is not currently considering other debt to health swap arrangements.</p> |
| <p>8.</p> | <p>In terms of data and transparency, what are they the best ways of obtaining data and what's useful on the agenda? Has thought been given to being able to go in and key in an issue and see how much expenditure goes to that area, be it sexual, family and reproductive health, hepatitis or cervical cancer? What plans do you have in this area?</p> |
| | <p>DFAT has a transparency policy which guides the online publication of global program level, country program level, and project level documentation and information as appropriate.</p> <p>DFAT is also a member of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), the global initiative that publishes data about the volume, allocation and results of development activities for over 800 organisations. Australia's score for transparency in its aid program has continued to rise since joining.</p> <p>Our website includes a range of publications related to the aid program including: Aid Investment Plans, Aid Program Performance Reports, Aid Fact sheets for country, regional and sector/thematic programs, and the Performance of Australian Aid Report. We also publish</p> |

independent evaluation reports with management responses, and as of 2017 an annual plan of upcoming evaluations. Under the *Aid Budget and Statistical Section* of the website there is also extensive information on our expenditure by sector. At the moment it is not possible to break this expenditure down to the level suggested in the question, such as for the funding spent specifically on hepatitis.

DFAT is considering how we can make additional statistical information available on the aid program.

9. **We have heard evidence that at the subnational level there can be deep pockets of entrenched disadvantage that are masked by national averages and that there is currently a lack of transparency around the subnational allocation of aid. What can the department do to reach those who are not being reached at the moment? How can we better leverage the full impact of our aid in the context of the contracted aid budget and by sector, to make sure it's targeted to the areas of greatest need and also done in a way that maximises returns?**

DFAT does not agree that there is a lack of transparency around the subnational allocation of aid. Analysis on the geographic distribution of poverty and DFAT's programs are available in public documents like Aid Investment Plans, and assessed annually in Aid Program Performance Reports. Relevant project documentation for subnational-level activities are made available on the DFAT website in accordance with DFAT's transparency policy.

DFAT-funded programs are designed and implemented in full consultation with the partner government/s concerned. Depending on the context, this can also happen at the subnational level with provincial and/or local authorities. For instance, our aid program in the Philippines is increasing its focus on programming in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where the development needs are by far the greatest in the country. This is being done in consultation with national-level planning authorities whose involvement remains important, and also in conjunction with local authorities and community groups in ARMM, with the aim of extending Australia's education and peacebuilding support to those who are not being reached.

10. **The Centre for Strategic Studies in Pacific Island Nations at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies has supported a Papua New Guinea study with a very practical way of getting views through face to face contact and talking with people. Does DFAT have any interest in this kind of research in the long term?**

DFAT is interested in any research that takes into account direct views about the effectiveness of Australia's aid in the region.

11. **Has DFAT considered legal need in terms of international development, and is it something that's on the agenda?**

DFAT-funded programs are implemented in full consultation with the partner government/s concerned. Significant or wholesale reform of national legal systems has not been raised by a partner government, and DFAT pursuing such action without that imprimatur would raise questions of sovereign interference.

12. **The committee has heard about a Bougainville project, originally generously funded by the World Bank and then enhanced by Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which uses a different kind of model to partner with the Department of Community Development to offer funding to women in community groups to pitch, develop, drive, plan and lead a small community development project. Can you describe the support now being provided to this project and is it significant enough to emulate the project model and continue the good results?**

The *Inclusive Development in Post-Conflict Bougainville Project* continues to be supported by DFAT through the broader *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program.

A mid-term review of the PNG country plan was completed in August 2017 and the report is available on DFAT's *Pacific Women* website at https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Pacific-Women-PNG-MTR-Report_FINAL.pdf.

