
Independent Evaluation of Australian Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme (ACCESS) Phase II MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Aid Activity Objective

The Australian Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme (ACCESS) Phase II aims to contribute to changes which will empower citizens and their organisations to engage with local governments on improving local development impacts in 20 districts in four provinces of NTB (West Lombok, East Lombok, North Lombok, Dompu and Bima), NTT (West Sumba, East Sumba, Central Sumba, South West Sumba, Kupang, Timor Tengah Selatan), South Sulawesi (Gowa, Takalar, Jeneponto, Bantaeng, Selayar island) and Southeast Sulawesi (Muna, Buton, North Buton and Bau-Bau city). The program commenced in May 2008 with a total value of \$29 million over five years.

The ACCESS approach of strengthening CSOs, building the capacity of locally-based facilitators and strengthening community and village organisations to critically engage with local government and technical units (SKPD) at district and provincial level is being recognised as good practice in improving service delivery and supporting poverty alleviation effort.

Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	Australia Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme (ACCESS) Phase II		
AidWorks initiative number	ING 429		
Commencement date	1 May 2008	Completion date	30 April 2013
Total Australian \$	\$29 million		
Total other \$	N/A		
Delivery organisation(s)	IDSS Pty Ltd		
Implementing Partner(s)	Ministry of Home Affairs, Local Government and civil society organisations including communities in the target districts.		
Country/Region	Indonesia		
Primary Sector	Governance		

Independent Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Objective: The review was commissioned to 1) assess the ACCESS program performance against objectives to date and 2) to build coherence across the Indonesia program and in light of the AusAID sub-national level engagement framework and the AIPD Delivery Strategy, make recommendations on how the ACCESS program could support the progress of the AIPD demand side outputs.

Evaluation Completion Date: In-country mission completed in January 2010. Final report submitted on 31 March 2010.

Evaluation Team:

- Dr. Paul Crawford, Team Leader and M&E Specialist
- Suhirman, Local Governance Consultant
- Joana Ebbinghaus, Community Participation Consultant

- Christine van Hooft, Independent AusAID Team Member
- Chandra Bakti, a representative from Directorate General of Rural Empowerment, Ministry of Home Affairs

Management Response

Overall, the report is comprehensive. Issues are properly analysed and supported by references to information sources and evidence. The review team has the appropriate knowledge and skills in understanding the program design and approaches used.

AusAID agrees with all the recommendations, including expansion into additional districts. Apart from the two districts mentioned in the report, subsequently AusAID has received request from another two district governments to be supported by the ACCESS program. With the additional budget in FY 2010/11 and 2011/12 the program will work in total in 20 districts. This expansion demonstrates that the program is replicable and can generate government resources to fund it. Additional resources for program implementation were provided to overcome the high workload of the current staffing structure, including resources for the additional target districts. Several of the recommendations put forward in the Independent Progress Report (IPR) confirming the appropriateness of activities and approaches that are implementing by the program towards achieving its objectives.

AusAID agrees with the recommendation for the program M&E system need to capture evidence of impact in terms of improved service delivery and reduced poverty to the beneficiaries. Whilst it is acknowledged that the program is not directed as poverty reduction but rather at strengthening empowerment, participation and engagement – the program will not only reporting on what has been achieved but also what has worked well and why. Revision to the M&E system has accommodated this recommendation.

The full IPR Team recommendations and Business Unit responses are as follows:

Recommendation: The ACCESS Phase II team should encourage partners to reflect on whether or not appreciative and consensus-seeking approaches encourage avoidance of controversial issues.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: The ACCESS Phase II team should provide guidance to District Stakeholder Committees (DSCs) concerning the range of logical scenarios for their future role, structure and purpose; including the relative strengths and weaknesses of each scenario.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: Boundary Partners¹ should consider engaging with village and district level financial issues (e.g. budget monitoring, budget advocacy, public expenditure tracking) to extend and consolidate the effort invested in strengthening participatory and inclusive planning.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: Boundary Partners should develop and implement strategies to proactively engage with all levels of local government and parliament, to ensure an appreciation for the program's purpose and approach.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: Boundary Partners should explore ways to simplify the Musrenbang (Government's development planning and budgeting workshop) mechanism to better reflect local needs; and to directly link the poor to SKPD's (sectoral ministry working unit at sub national level) program and budget formulation process.

Response: Agree

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¹ A Boundary Partner is an organisation that is directly influenced by the program's activities through input controlled by the ACCESS phase II.

Recommendation: Boundary Partners should facilitate direct relationships between SKPD and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) to promote pro-poor public service delivery.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID should approve the ACCESS Phase II submission to replicate the program in Sumba Tengah and Sumba Barat Daya districts.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: MoHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) should facilitate the implementation of a pilot and review process to explore the merit of scaling up ACCESS approaches to village planning, with possible integration with PNPM (Government national community empowerment program).

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID should explore, define and resource its role in relation to replication and scale-up.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: The ACCESS Phase II team and partners should guard against creating unrealistic expectations about what beneficiary communities can achieve in the short-term.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: The ACCESS Phase II team should review the program's M&E arrangements to ensure that adequate methods are in place to capture evidence of impact in terms of improved services and reduced poverty; and their inter-relatedness.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: The ACCESS Phase II team should succinctly communicate evidence of how the program is contributing to improved local service delivery.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID to lead a process to explore the merit of standardisation or integration of the M&E arrangements for all sub-national programs.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: ACCESS should consider preparing some case studies that articulate the financial value of the local democratic processes adopted by communities

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID should approve additional technical support for the Indonesian Short Term Advisers (STAs).

Response: Agree

Recommendation: ACCESS Phase II should explore ways to support the 'budget side' of public financial management

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID should identify mechanism to draw on the experience and knowledge accrued through ACCESS concerning civil society strengthening and capacity building in Indonesia.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: ACCESS should succinctly communicate evidence of results emerging from the program processes.

Response: Agree

Recommendation: AusAID should establish internal processes to exploit the learning potential for future designs arising from the 'ACCESS experiment' with a 'process orientation'.

Response: Agree