

**VIETNAM PROGRAM REPORT
JOINT REVIEW OF ADVISER POSITIONS FUNDED BY THE AUSTRALIAN AID
PROGRAM**

Overview

[A Joint Adviser Review Report](#) was released on 15 February 2011, which provided a synthesis of the findings and key recommendations from individual country reviews, including country specific adviser figures and narrative.

Australia worked bilaterally with a large number of partner country governments to review each adviser position. While the underlying Review methodology and the core content of country-specific reports is consistent across programs, in each case the final country-specific Review Report reflects decisions made by the joint Review teams as appropriate for the specific cultural and language context. As a result there are some presentational differences between reports.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the joint Review process undertaken between the Governments of Vietnam and Australia.

It is important to note that the Review process involved an assessment of the value and effectiveness of each adviser position – not the performance of individuals in those positions. The Review focused on the role of each position in meeting agreed country program objectives and development outcomes. On the basis of this assessment, the continued funding of adviser positions by AusAID was jointly considered and agreed with partner governments.

1. Executive Summary

In May 2010, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that AusAID would work with partner governments to jointly 'confirm the priority attached to each adviser position¹ and whether it is an effective response to mutually agreed development needs and priorities.'

The use of advisers in the Vietnam program has decreased in recent years as an increasing proportion of the program has been delivered through activities implemented by the Government of Vietnam (GoV), multilateral organisations and delegated cooperation arrangements.

The review confirmed that the five current long-term adviser positions in the Vietnam program were of a high priority.

The review agreed a mechanism for managing future requests for advisers. The review confirmed that where adviser positions were identified as part of project/program detailed design processes, agreement by both governments to the detailed design also represented agreement to individual adviser positions. For ad-hoc advisor requests, the review agreed that a joint assessment of such requests would be carried out by AusAID and the Ministry of Planning and Investment with a joint decision reached whether to proceed with the position.

2. Background

Vietnam is transitioning to lower middle-income status and is characterised by strong leadership and ownership of the development agenda. The Ministry of Planning and Implementation is the ODA coordinating agency within the GoV. Vietnam is a signatory to the Paris Declaration and localised this commitment in the "Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness".

Identification of advisory positions supported through the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Program ("the Program") occurs primarily through the detailed design of projects and programs. These detailed designs are prepared jointly with the GoV and are agreed by GoV prior to any implementation and/or procurement action. Ad-hoc requests for long-term adviser positions are not common and there is no on-going facility within the Program to procure ad-hoc advisers.

The use of advisers in the Program has decreased in recent years as an increasing proportion of the Program has been delivered through activities implemented by the GoV, multilateral organisations and delegated cooperation arrangements.

¹ For the purposes of this review an 'adviser' provides advice – to one or more interlocutors – on the strategic direction **and/or** implementation of the Australian aid program. See Annex 1 for a detailed definition of 'advisers' as used in this review.

This review was conducted by Counsellor (Development), AusAID Vietnam in consultation with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (Foreign Economic Relations Department). The methodology for the review was a combination of data collection, document review and stakeholder consultations.

Following initial data collection, TORs for individual adviser positions and program documentation – in particular monitoring and evaluation data – were reviewed to make an initial assessment of the effectiveness of individual adviser positions. Discussions were then undertaken with sector/program teams to seek the views of relevant stakeholders. These discussions focused on:

- an assessment of the effectiveness of the adviser position
- confirmation of the priority attached to each adviser position
- recommendations on a future course of action for each adviser position.

The review considered and assessed advisory positions, not the individuals in those positions. Terms of Reference for the review are at Annex 1.

3. Review Findings

3.1 Current use of Advisers in the Vietnam Program

There are currently five adviser positions supported under the Program. Key statistics are:

- 60 per cent of advisers are international and 40 per cent are Vietnamese nationals
- 80 per cent of advisers are men and 20 percent are women
- The overall average adviser fee rate for the Vietnam program is \$11,689 per month. On average, international advisers are paid \$17,515 while nationals are paid \$2,950 per month.
- The total cost of these five advisers in 2010-11 is less than 1 per cent of the bilateral program budget.

Sectors supported are Human Resource Development – Scholarships (HRD); Rural Development; and Natural Disasters Risk Management (NDRM). These sectors are priority sectors of the current country strategy with HRD and NDRM also priorities under the draft 2010-15 Australia-Vietnam Statement of Commitment.

The adviser positions play a mix of specialist advice and management support. No positions are in-line positions or outside of a project or program framework. The five positions are distributed across three projects:

Australian Development Scholarships Project : (i) Team Leader – international position; (ii) Deputy Team Leader – national position; (iii) Human Resource Development Adviser – national position

The team leader position is responsible for ensuring the professional management of the selection, pre-departure preparation and re-integration of scholarship awardees; and oversees monitoring and evaluation requirements. The position reports to both AusAID and the Ministry of Education and Training. The Deputy Team Leader position assists the Team Leader to manage and administer the 225 annual scholarships program. The HRD Adviser assists Vietnamese institutions with HRD planning to ensure scholarship awards are focused on fields relevant to country strategy priorities.

Quang Ngai Program 135 Implementation Support Program: (iv) Chief Technical Adviser - international position

Program 135 is a national program of the GoV. This position works in an advisory capacity to the provincial government and assists with building capacity of the provincial government to implement planning, budgeting and coordination systems to improve the implementation of Program 135 at the provincial level. The position also recruits and manages short-term technical assistance inputs. The position reports directly to the Director of the Provincial CEM.

World Bank Natural Disaster Risk Mitigation Program: (v) Chief Technical Adviser – international position

This position provides both technical advice as well as supporting the management of the overall project by the Director of the Central Project Management Office (CPMO) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The position reports directly to the Director of the CPMO.

Annex 2 provides more detailed information on the individual adviser positions.

3.2 *Key effectiveness issues*

Evidence from monitoring and evaluation reports and sector teams confirm that the advisory positions are largely achieving position outcomes. Discussion identified the following issues as relevant to the effective use of advisers:

- Ownership of project and program designs, and advisory positions identified within those designs, by AusAID and implementing agencies is essential. Ownership can be facilitated by implementing agencies being voting members of Technical Assessment Panels for tenders and being represented on interview panels for individual adviser positions. This is currently occurring in the Vietnam program.
- Restructuring of implementing agencies after mobilisation of positions can lead to delays in achieving outcomes. It is important that when a restructure

occurs, reporting lines for advisers and the timeframe and objectives of the adviser TORs are confirmed. Restructures can be time consuming to implement and can change the context in which an advisory position is operating.

- Active management of advisory positions by implementing agencies is important. This should involve regular review and updating of adviser TORs and workplans.
- There is a risk that project designs may opt for advisory positions unless the design TORs explicitly require design teams to investigate alternatives to advisory positions. This may reflect limited understanding by design teams or counterpart agencies of the range of alternatives that can be supported by the Australian aid program. Detailed briefing of design teams and counterparts about alternative approaches that can be supported by the aid program should be undertaken.
- The costs of funding international advisory positions can be perceived as high relative to the standard costs of locally filling positions in Australia or partner countries. It is important that the costs of advisory positions, compared to other technical assistance options, be documented as part of the design process when assessing alternatives to advisory positions.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Commitment to adviser positions

The review's assessment is that all five adviser positions are of a high priority and should continue. Two of the five positions will cease in 2011 and will not be replaced.

A mid-term review of the Australian Development Scholarships project will be undertaken in March 2011 at which time the appropriateness of the current project design, including the three advisory positions, will be reviewed. The GoV will participate in the mid-term review.

The review notes that the World Bank Natural Disaster Risk Mitigation Program Chief Technical Adviser position will conclude in June 2011.

The review notes that the Quang Ngai Program 135 Implementation Support Program Chief Technical Adviser position will conclude as a long-term position in December 2011.

4.2 Agreed process/mechanism for discussing and managing future requests for advisers

The review notes that four of the five adviser positions were identified as part of detailed project/program design processes. These designs were jointly agreed by AusAID and the Government of Vietnam. It is recommended that joint agreement by the Government of Vietnam and AusAID to project/program designs be continued and that this joint agreement covers any adviser positions identified in project/program designs. TORs for design teams will emphasise the need for alternatives to adviser positions to be considered and justification for proposed adviser positions be fully elaborated.

Where requests for adviser positions are identified directly with AusAID outside of project/ program design processes (e.g ad-hoc requests by ministries or provinces for adviser positions), an assessment of the priority of each position, and alternatives to advisory positions, will be undertaken by AusAID. This assessment will be jointly reviewed by AusAID and the Ministry of Planning and Investment with a joint decision reached whether to proceed with the position. A record of all such requests will be maintained by AusAID.

The use of adviser positions will be reviewed as part of regular High Level Consultations on the Vietnam-Australia development cooperation program

5. Next Steps

The agreed process for discussing and managing future requests for advisers will be implemented immediately.

As no current adviser positions have been identified as low priority, next steps for these five positions are:

Australian Development Scholarships Project: mid-term review in March 2011

Quang Ngai Program 135 Implementation Support Program: completion of current long-term adviser position in December 2011

World Bank Natural Disaster Risk Mitigation Program: completion of current long-term adviser position on 30 June 2011.

Vietnam: Joint Review of Adviser Positions

Terms of Reference

Background

In the 2010/11 Budget Statement in May 2010, Minister Smith announced that AusAID will work with partner governments to jointly review all adviser positions in all bilateral programs to “confirm the priority attached to each adviser position and whether it is an effective response to mutually agreed development needs and priorities”. The review will be implemented in two phases:

Phase 1 – Priority of Adviser Positions

Phase 2 – Alternative or more cost effective ways of achieving outcomes for lower priority positions

The Vietnam program is a second tier country program undertaking this review, following Papua New Guinea and East Timor who have already completed the task. The program has already completed a stocktake of long term advisors, with this review analysing the data, prioritising positions and developing a strategy for regularly assessing the use of advisors.

Resources

The review will be led by Mark Palu (Counsellor), AusAID Vietnam with the findings presented in the Adviser country report.

Government of Vietnam will be invited to participate in the review.

Objectives

The main objectives of this review are:

1. Assess how effective each adviser position is in meeting agreed program objectives and outcomes.
2. Confirm the priority attached to each adviser position.
3. Agree a future course of action for each adviser position (end, phase out, continue), including consideration of timeframes and implications of agreed actions.

The review has two further ancillary objectives:

4. To provide key statistical information regarding the use of advisers in the aid program (eg. Numbers, sectors, nationals v internationals, key trends in use of advisers)
5. To agree a process for assessing future requests for advisers.

Scope

Phase 1 of the review will consider:

- 'adviser positions' only, not the individuals in these positions or their performance, nor 'Technical Assistance' more broadly;
- 'long term' advisers – those providing at least 6 months input per year; and
- advisers in place as per Advisor Stocktake (31 July 2010), and others likely to be in place during the 2010/11 financial year and beyond (if known)

The review will not capture:

- Short term adviser positions (those providing less than six months input per year)
- Adviser positions on programs being delivered by multilateral organisations or partner governments where procurement processes are those of the partner organisation
- WOG employees and AusAID staff whose primary role is the management of aid program activities
- Volunteers
- Head office staff and company representatives of managing contractors and other implementing partners

AusAID's definition of Advisers for the purposes of this review is at Attachment A.

The Review Team will utilise the Stocktake completed in August 2010 which provides the data for all long-term technical assistance positions as of 31 July 2010. This stocktake shows the Vietnam program has 5 long term Adviser across 3 programs.

Methodology

The review will be undertaken via a combination of data collection, document review and stakeholder consultations. This methodology takes into consideration that all current adviser positions are part of larger projects which have been agreed with the Government of Vietnam. It also reflects that two of the adviser positions are part of projects which will be completed in the second half of 2011.

- An initial data collection exercise will be undertaken
- A document review will look at the TORs for individual adviser positions and program documentation – in particular monitoring and evaluation data – to make an initial assessment of the effectiveness of individual adviser positions.

- Discussions will be undertaken with sector/program teams to seek the views of relevant stakeholders. These discussions will:
 - assess the effectiveness of the adviser position
 - confirm the priority attached to each adviser position
 - recommend a future course of action for each adviser position.

Approach

The approach proposed for achieving each review objective is outlined below.

Objective 1 – To assess how effective each adviser position is in meeting agreed program objectives and outcomes.

The terms of reference require that discussions be ‘grounded in the broader context of the country program and the shared strategy objectives [of] Australia and the Partner Government.’ Effectiveness will be assessed with reference to three of the key DAC quality measures:

Relevance: why are we using adviser positions?; testing of TORs for individual positions for their relevance to the particular program's goals, and then judging the program's relevance to the draft Vietnam-Australia Statement of Commitment 2010-15

Efficiency: is the adviser position going smoothly?

Effectiveness: are we achieving what we thought we would?

Objective 2 - Confirm the priority attached to each adviser position.

GoV and AusAID will be asked to attach priority to each adviser position based on the assessment of effectiveness undertaken under Objective 1. This will be done through sector/program discussions.

Objective 3 - Agree a future course of action for each adviser position (end, phase out, continue), including consideration of timeframes and implications of agreed actions.

Where adviser positions have been confirmed as low or medium priority in Sector/Program discussions, a future course of action for the adviser position will also be proposed. Follow up discussions will be undertaken with implementing partners and AusAID Activity Managers to determine the legal and contracting implications of decisions to amend, end or phase out positions.

Objective 4 - provide key statistical information regarding the use of advisers in the aid program (eg. numbers, sectors, nationals v internationals, key trends in use of advisers).

Key statistical information will be derived from a data collection exercise to be undertaken progressively throughout the review process.

Objective 5 – Agree a process for assessing future requests for advisers.

At the sector discussion phase, AusAID and GoV will discuss views on a proposed process for assessing future requests for advisers.

Review questions

Overarching, Program-wide Issues to Consider

- How are we currently using advisers in the (Country) Program?
 - discuss key findings from the preparation phase – how many advisers, what roles are they playing, who are they supporting, are they international or nationals, etc.
- How are advisers contributing to the shared development outcomes/country strategy objectives?
- What is the current mix of advisers, other types of technical assistance and other types of support? What are the drivers behind this?
- Are the quantity and type of advisory inputs appropriate to the partner's capacity to lead, manage and absorb support?
- Is the provision of the advisory inputs in-keeping with OECD DAC principles of coordinated technical cooperation – appropriate ownership, alignment and harmonisation?
- How are requests for advisers considered/prioritised within the Program? Is a record kept of these requests?
- What processes are undertaken to assess alternatives to advisory inputs (either in design stages or in response to ad hoc requests)?
- How are potential advisers identified, how are adviser TORs prepared and approved, how is value for money assured?
- How is the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, of advisory inputs currently assessed? What role does the partner government have in this process?

Position-specific considerations:

- What are the intended outcomes of the adviser position? Are they clearly articulated; is there evidence that these outcomes are being achieved?
- Are these outcomes aligned with broader activity, sector and strategy objectives?
- Are these advisory inputs 'fit for purpose'? – is this the most appropriate method of support in the context?
- Does the position provide any other benefits for the bilateral relationship?
- How was the Partner Government involved in the specification/scoping of the advisory position?
- Was the Partner Government involved in the recruitment of the adviser?
- Were alternatives to advisory inputs considered during scoping/design?
- What are the management arrangements and lines of accountability for the adviser position? What role does the Partner Government play in management of the adviser?

- Is the adviser implementing the TOR?
- If not why not? Are there external factors that need to be taken into account in assessing the effectiveness of this position (e.g. no counterpart, issues relating to organisational structure etc)?
- How is the effectiveness of the position currently assessed? By whom?
- What evidence is there that the adviser position is achieving the position outcomes?
- Is the adviser implementing the TOR?
- If the outcomes are not being achieved, what changes need to be made to the position so that the outcomes are more likely to be achieved?
- Are there any concerns regarding the use of the adviser position?

Attachment 1: AusAID Definition of Advisors

Adviser: An adviser provides advice – to one or more interlocutors – on the strategic direction and/or implementation of Australian aid. This includes personnel that perform one or more of the following functions:		
(1) Provide technical expertise and advice to counterpart governments and/or other in-country development partners such as NGOs, churches	(2) Provide technical expertise and advice to AusAID	(3) Engaged to provide leadership and oversight and/or technical inputs for the delivery of an AusAID activity
Methods of engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly by AusAID - Through a managing contractor or NGO - WofG deployees (including AusAID DPS) - Contracted by WofG agency using ODA funds 	Methods of engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly by AusAID on a commercial contract or a non-ongoing employment contract - Through a managing contractor 	Methods of engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through a managing contractor - Directly by AusAID
Eg: Technical project/program staff based in a counterpart office; WofG deployee or AusAID DPS based in a national or provincial govt office	Eg: Thematic adviser based in a Post	Eg: Team Leaders or Program Directors

Not included:

- Short term advisers (inputs of less than 6 months).
- Adviser positions on activities funded (entirely or in part) by AusAID which are being implemented by partner governments or multilateral organisations and where the advisers were procured using their procurement processes.
- Whole-of-government deployees and AusAID DPS staff whose primary role is the management of aid program activities (those that fall within category (1) above **will** be included).
- Volunteers.
- Personnel deployed under the Australian Civilian Core or the Emergency Rapid Response Team.
- Head office staff/company representatives of managing contractors, other implementing organisations or NGOs.

JOINT REVIEW OF LONG TERM ADVISER POSITIONS

Annex B

Please see the *Joint Adviser Review - Tasking for Country Programs* for a definition of advisers to be included in the Joint Review

#	PARTNER GOVERNMENT	POSITION DETAILS						RELEVANCE		
	Relevant counterpart agency or organisation	Sector	Program	Position title	Initiative	Position description and key objectives	ToR available	Function	How the position aligns with current priorities of the partner government/country strategy	Origin of the position
1	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	Rural Development	Vietnam - Program World Bank TA on Natural Disaster Mitigation	Chief Technical Adviser	ING929	The Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) position is aimed at delivering an efficient and technically high-quality outcome of the Natural Disaster Risk Management Project (NDRMP) through provision of high-level technical assessments and advice; assistance to the MARD's Central Project Management Office (CPMO) Director in overall implementation of the project; and provision of strategic guidance in order to support a conceptual shift from one focused on disaster response to comprehensive and integrated disaster risk management (IDRM).	Yes	The role includes and requires high-level advisory role on all aspects of NDRMP. While the CPMO will project manage NDRMP, the CTA also play important management role in supporting project implementation, ensuring quality of outcomes of works being proposed as sub-projects, and providing overall Project strategic directions.	The Adviser position support to the project has high relevance in disaster management for Vietnam and is in line with Vietnam Strategy for Disaster Mitigation and Management up to 2020 and contributed to one of the Strategic Objectives of the Australia – Vietnam Country Strategy. It has built on a successful bilateral project in natural disaster management (QNNDMP), it will build capacity to introduce IDRM both within MARD and at the provincial level, and it has very strong support from WB and MARD. All stakeholders including the WB has recognised the opportunity of an Adviser to assist NDRMP implementation while at the same time demonstrating the benefits of IDRM.	Requested by MARD and reflected in the Project Design Document

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	Relevant counterpart agency or organisation	Sector	Program	Position title	Initiative	Position description and key objectives	ToR available	Function	How the position aligns with current priorities of the partner government/country strategy	Origin of the position
2	Quang Ngai Department of Planning and Investment	Rural Development	Vietnam Program Implementation Support program to P135-2	Chief Technical Adviser	ING967	The Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) aims to strengthen capacity of Quang Ngai provincial agencies to implement and manage P135-II and ISP and to identify and follow-up opportunities for ISP to bring about more effective performance and outcomes for P135-II	Yes	CTA provides strategic advices to PCEM and DPI relating to ISP and P135-2 implementation in the following aspects: planning, implementation, M&E. CTA also takes the an important role in capacity building for implementing agencies in Quang Ngai in planning, procurement. CTA facilitates lesson-learning linkages between P135-II / ISP in Quang Ngai with national level agencies / forums and the broader program of donor support to P135-II.	The position is fully aligned with GOV's needs as it directly provides supports to GOV agencies who could better manage and implement their own program (P135-2).	AusAID request on management arrangement in the design process

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	Relevant counterpart agency or organisation	Sector	Program	Position title	Initiative	Position description and key objectives	ToR available	Function	How the position aligns with current priorities of the partner government/country strategy	Origin of the position
3	Ministry of Education and Training	Education	Vietnam Program ADS Preparation Project	Team Leader/ Scholarship Services Manager	INF523	Manages and administers all aspects of the AusAID Scholarship Manager's function, ensures professional management of the Australian scholarships for development in Vietnam(ASDiV) selection and re-integration activities, is responsible for achieving ASDiV program objectives and oversees the Monitoring and Evaluation requirements	Yes	Provides leadership and management of the project -Manages the locally-engaged support staff and international technical assistance to ensure quality and efficiency of work -Liaises with AusAID, GoV agencies and the training service contractor to support effective implementation -Manages a process of continuous improvement -Ensures efficiency and probity in financial management of the program	The current position holder has substantial experience in human resource development and project management in Vietnam and understanding of educational administration and scholarship management as well as successful experience in working cross-culturally and with government agencies. The position contributes to the achievements of the scholarships program to be aligned with Objective 1 of the country strategy on Human Resource Development	AusAID projectmanagement arrangement

#	PARTNER GOVERNMENT	POSITION DETAILS						RELEVANCE		
	Relevant counterpart agency or organisation	Sector	Program	Position title	Initiative	Position description and key objectives	ToR available	Function	How the position aligns with current priorities of the partner government/country strategy	Origin of the position
4	Ministry of Education and Training	Education	Vietnam Program ADS Preparation Project	Deputy Team Leader (local)	INF523	Assists the Team Leader to manage and administer all aspects of the scholarships program	Yes	Has an assisting function to the Team leader in all aspects as mentioned above. In addition, responsible for promotional activities of the scholarships program and trials for use of flexible programs with Vietnam universities	The current position holder has substantial experience in ODA project management in Vietnam and understanding of educational administration and scholarship management as well as successful experience in working cross-culturally. This enables the position holder to ensure the achievements of the program aligns with Objective 1 of the country strategy on Human Resource Development	Proposed by design team and agreed by Government of Vietnam and AusAID
8	Ministry of Education and Training	Education	Vietnam Program ADS Preparation Project	Local HRD Adviser (PPIs)	INF523	To provide strategic and operational management related to HRD aspects of the Priority Public Institutions (PPIs) program within the scholarships program	Yes	Provides day to day strategic and operation management of HRD assessments to PPIs, - Provides continuous HRD planning and capacity building assistance to PPIs to ensure the awards are focused on the fields relevant to AusAID development country strategy priorities - Advises on strategies to use feedback data from M&E processes	The current position has experience in HRD in public institutions through previous working with these agencies. The position contributes to the achievements of the scholarships program to be aligned with Objective 1 of the country strategy on Human Resource Development	As per the design of the new phase for the scholarships program (2009 - 2016)