

Management Response

Review of the Australia-Middle East NGO Cooperation Agreement (AMENCA) Phase Two (2009-2015)

February 2015

The Review of the Australia-Middle East NGO Cooperation Agreement Program Phase Two (AMENCA2) (2009-2015) was made up of two separate exercises. The first was a review of AMENCA2's risk management systems carried out by independent consultant Belinda Lucas and finalised in May 2014. The second was a quality and performance review of the AMENCA2 program conducted by independent consultant evaluator Scott Rankin and finalised in November 2014. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) thanks both consultants for delivering high quality reviews. DFAT has accepted their findings and is acting on their recommendations.

DFAT has welcomed the risk management review's conclusions that risk management systems within AMENCA2 (covering financial management, monitoring and reporting, and counter-terrorism) appear comprehensive and appropriate. Financial management systems of implementing partners (Australian NGOs and Palestinian NGOs working together in consortia) appear well documented, robust and heavily scrutinised. DFAT has also been able to achieve a comprehensive approach to the management of counter-terrorism risk in consultation with its partners. Counter-terrorism risk relates to the concern that AMENCA2 funding will be diverted to individuals or entities that are linked to terrorism. The review examined the counter-terrorism risk management arrangements of AMENCA2 partners from the Australian NGOs that contract with DFAT down to local NGOs that work with Palestinian community based organisations. It found them all compliant with DFAT counter-terrorism requirements.

The review found that some of the Australian NGOs implementing AMENCA2 appeared not to have undertaken child protection risk assessments nor incorporated mitigation strategies into their child-focussed activities. DFAT has accepted the review recommendation that AMENCA2 should work with Australian NGO partners to undertake a risk assessment related to child protection and increase capacity among implementing partners.

The second review of AMENCA2, covering the performance and quality of Phase 2 of the program to date (2009-14), found that AMENCA2 was highly regarded across the Palestinian Territories. In an environment where short-term, emergency programming is the norm, AMENCA2 stood out for its commitment to longer-term engagement with communities and its preparedness to revise its approaches based on the experience of working with those communities.

DFAT has welcomed the review's conclusion that AMENCA2 had increased agricultural production and strengthened the livelihoods of small farmers as well as facilitated the social and economic empowerment of women and youth. This has been the case in the very constrained operating environment of Gaza as well as the West Bank. AMENCA2 has reached over 80,000 direct beneficiaries, more than half of whom were women, compared with an initial target of 50,000. It has increased the incomes of nearly 11,700 farmers and small business

women by an average of 42.5 per cent and program beneficiaries produced food with a value of more than \$64 million at a cost to the program of \$8 million.

DFAT has also noted the finding that all of AMENCA2's implementing partners have contributed to its success in building resilience among vulnerable Palestinians. This includes: the four Australian NGOs which draw on different development approaches and facilitate consortia of different local partners; highly competent local NGOs; and community based organisations whose capacity to manage and monitor development activities has greatly increased through their involvement in AMENCA2.

DFAT has accepted the review recommendation that DFAT initiate a new five year program in the Palestinian Territories (both the West Bank and Gaza) building on lessons learned from AMENCA2 to be focussed on agriculture/resilience and promoting economic and social empowerment.

Recommendation		Management Response
1. AMENCA2 should work with Australian NGO partners to undertake a risk assessment related to child protection and increase capacity among implementing partners.	Agreed	The DFAT AMENCA2 program manager has asked the relevant Australian NGOs to undertake child protection risk assessments and arrange child protection training for their local partners. DFAT has requested that advice on action taken be included in final NGO program reports due in June 2015.
2. A new five year AMENCA Program be initiated by DFAT that continues to operate across BOTH West Bank and Gaza.....it is proposed that the new Program be ... agriculture/resilience focused and build on the strengths of AMENCA2 by focusing on the promotion of activities that facilitate economic and social empowerment.	Agreed	<p>DFAT is developing a new five-year program that will build on the strengths of AMENCA2 and focus on connecting small farmers to markets. The new program will aim to increase the income of vulnerable households through effective participation in agricultural value chains. It will enhance agricultural productivity and food security, empowering farmers, women and youth.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the new program will commence in the Palestinian Territories by August 2015.</p>