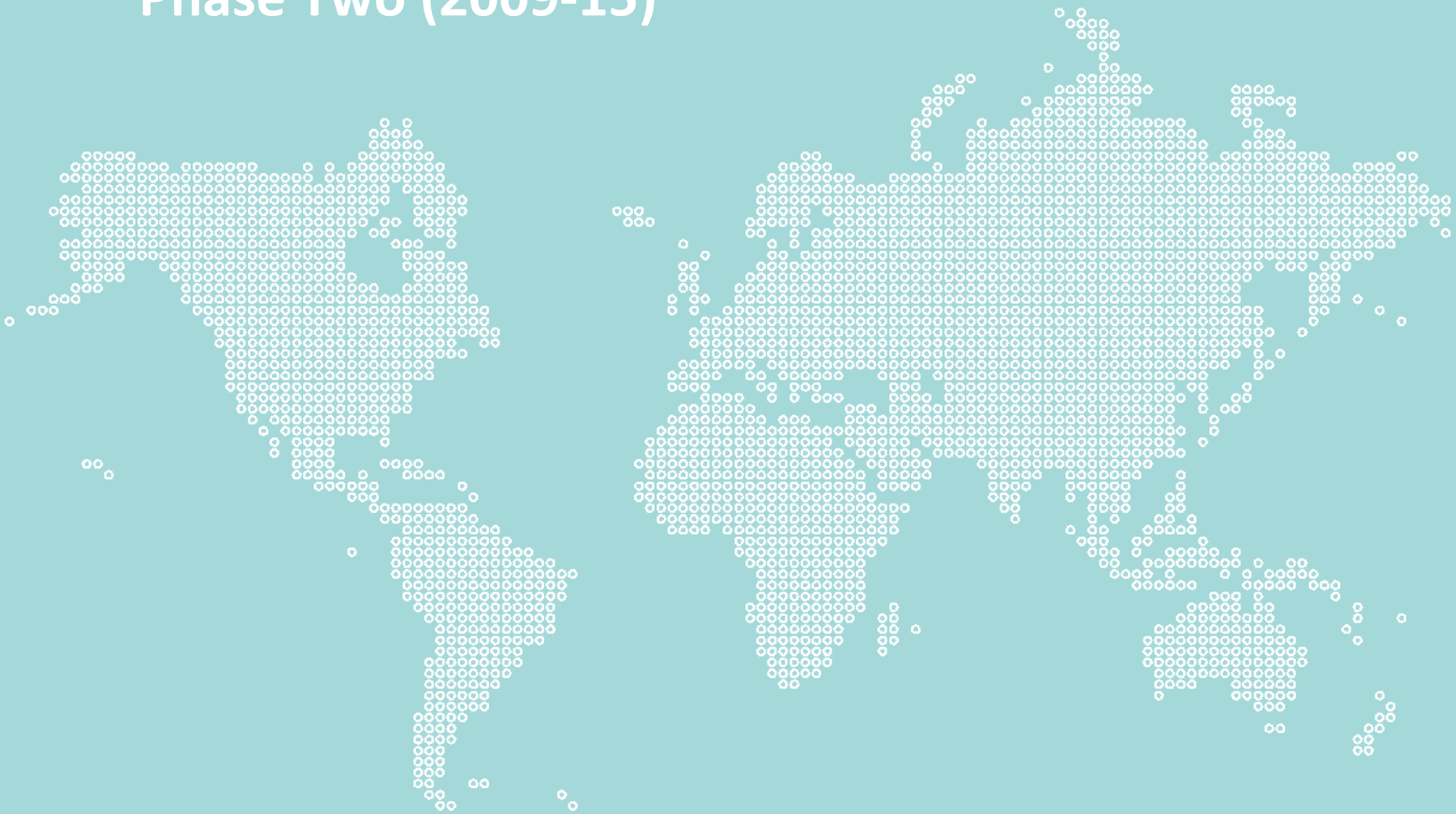


Program Review

Australia Middle-East NGO Cooperation Agreement (AMENCA) Phase Two (2009-15)



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Abbreviations

AMENCA2	Australia Middle-East NGO Cooperation Agreement (Phase 2)
APHEDA	Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad
ARIJ	Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CFS	Child Friendly Spaces
DFAT	(Australian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ESDC	Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine
GNI	Gross National Income
ICP	Institute for Community Partnership
LGU	Local Government Unit
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NDP	(Palestinian) National Development Plan 2014-16
NFC	New Farm Company
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFA	Psychological First Aid
PNGO	Palestinian Network of Non-Government Organisations
PT	Palestinian Territories
UAWC	Union of Agricultural Work Committees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WV	World Vision

Project Summary

Program Name	Australian Middle East NGO Cooperation Agreement Phase Two (AMENCA2)
Program Duration	October 2009 to April 2015
Program Location	West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian Territories
Total Program Budget	\$35,460,225
Implementing Agencies and Lead Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ActionAid Australia, in partnership with <i>Asala</i> (Palestinian Businesswomen's Association) and Institute for Community Partnership (ICP) • APHEDA/Union Aid Abroad, in partnership with Ma'an Development Centre • CARE, in partnership with the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine (ESDC), and New Farm Company (NFC) • World Vision, in partnership with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)
Program Structure	<p><u>Program Goal</u> To improve livelihoods to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of the Palestinian people with priority focus on women, youth and farmers</p> <p>Component 1: Reducing Vulnerability Objective: To improve livelihoods and/or access to basic services</p> <p>Component 2: Capacity Building Objective: To build the capacity of local Palestinian NGOs</p> <p>Component 3: Program Capacity Development Objective: To build and promote Program capacity</p> <p>Component 4: Program Management Objective: To support Palestinian civil society partners to manage their programs effectively.</p> <p>At a 2012 AMENCA Partners Workshop, the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Program was reviewed with a view to streamlining reporting. Two more tailored and relevant Outcome Statements were agreed on by all Partners:</p> <p>Component 1 – Reducing Vulnerability Increased resilience and well-being through improved livelihoods and empowered households.</p> <p>Component 2 – Capacity Building Strengthened CBOs and NGOs to serve their communities to improve self- reliance and resilience; drive social and economic change (through a rights based approach)</p> <p>Program partners also report annually against ten Outcome Themes and Program wide key performance indicators, grouped under the three components of Reducing Vulnerability; Capacity Building; and Program Capacity Development. A Table outlining this structure is included at Annex Four.</p>

Executive Summary

AMENCA2 has and continues to maintain an acute relevance to the development needs of the Palestinian territories, based on its ability to provide effective community and household level solutions to complex and critical higher level issues, and its alignment with community and national priorities (past and present). The Program is active across seven Governorates of the PTS – four in the West Bank and three in Gaza. This facilitates widespread exposure of the Program's innovative practices, and allows lessons learned to be easily extended. Significantly, the 'AMENCA brand' is now well known and highly respected in the PTs, in large part because it is seen as having very high credibility due to activities having been extensively trialled and allowed time to mature due to AMENCA being a longer term Program in an environment where short term, emergency programming is the norm.

AMENCA partners have succeeded in building resilience at both household and community levels by enhancing food security and by promoting production that supports availability of food and access to food. This is facilitated by AMENCA's two pronged approach to agricultural development which simultaneously targets poor households with the aim of directly supporting them in achieving food security and increased, sustainable income, while also targeting existing farmers to improve production in terms of both quality and quantity, to help build household incomes, and ensure food supply and affordability at market. This approach is symbiotic, and has proven an effective response to complex food security challenges that exist across the PTs.

The Program approach facilitates social and economic empowerment of women and youth through activities that promote their capacity and the benefits of their inclusion in development planning and implementation. A critical success of the Program has been demonstration that when approached strategically, even conservative communities will support and accept the more active participation of women in community affairs.

These achievements are even more impressive given that the Program operates within a context of ongoing political uncertainty, persistent conflict, a sustained slow down in economic growth, limited and reducing access to water, and complex and ever-changing restrictions on the movement of people, labour and produce. While a tragedy on multiple levels, the recent war in Gaza demonstrated the resilience developed within AMENCA supported communities, evidenced by their ability to support each other, and take immediate actions to rebuild from the devastation.

While intrinsically different in their development approaches and philosophies, each of the four Australian lead agencies have facilitated consortia that have worked tirelessly in a highly complex operating environment. Each consortia facilitates the knowledge and involvement of well established and highly competent Palestinian NGO partners, while also promoting the role and enhancing the capacity of CBOs as gender inclusive local development actors. Each consortia has achieved outcomes and learning through their activities that have been profound in their contribution to building resilience amongst the Program's target group of vulnerable Palestinians, while also extending learning, innovation and improved practice throughout the Palestinian development community.

The ActionAid consortia has worked in a deliberate and sustained manner to open opportunities for women and youth to more actively participate in resolving community issues, resulting in an enhanced capacity for women and youth to assert their rights to improved livelihoods. This included the important achievement of successfully campaigning

to assert women's inheritance rights in conservative Hebron, led by the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association Asala.

APHEDA, working hand in glove with the Ma'an Development Centre, is highly respected for its sophisticated ecological farming practices and highly nuanced agriculture program, which has both been a driver of agricultural innovation as well as successful in achieving very strong productivity gains for smallholder farms. Their approach is heavily evidence based, ensuring highly strategic investments that overcome restricted access to water, land and markets, and therefore have enjoyed high rates of success.

The CARE consortia has demonstrated the potential of larger, private sector focused interventions to support increased productivity of farming reliant households. Large scale seed banks and nurseries operating on a light industrial scale have helped farmers bypass several blockade related constraints to their trade, such as shortages and poor quality seed and the issue of seedlings dying as farmers wait to pass checkpoints, while a relationship with New Farm helps connect small farmers to markets.

World Vision is the only partner to only operate in Gaza where it implements a 'whole of family' development approach. This 'whole of family' approach is holistic and extremely well suited to the highly complex needs that exist within an average Gaza household. Efforts are made to carefully identify and support livelihood interventions most appropriate to that household, while integrating within those activities development of skills for better management of stress and psychosocial health, promoting opportunities for the economic participation of women, and facilitating child friendly spaces in one of the world's most crowded and conflict prone environments. WV partner, the Union Of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), is highly respected across Gaza for its professionalism and the validity of its approaches to the current needs of Gaza. In 2014, UAWC was awarded the prestigious UNDP Equator Award for its efforts in relation to sustainable agricultural practices.

These examples represent some of the better practice facilitated by AMENCA2, and also highlight the opportunities that exist for AMENCA to act as a knowledge base moving forward through which information sharing and cross fertilisation of approaches can occur. AMENCA supported activities collectively form a vitally important knowledge bank of experience in relation to building resilience in vulnerable Palestinian households. The 'AMENCA brand' is highly respected in the PTs, in large part because it carries credibility given activities have been extensively trialled and allowed time to mature due to AMENCA being a longer term Program in an environment where short term, emergency programming is the norm.

Collectively, the Program reports the following productive achievements:

- 80,702 direct beneficiaries, of which 44,317 are women, compared to an initial target of 50,000*
- an increase in incomes of nearly 11, 700 farmers and small business women by an average of 42.5% across the life of the Program - during a period of consistent economic decline for the PTs*
- 1,090 hectares of land opened to new agriculture through land rehabilitation, irrigation and/or building of access roads*
- 37,100 cubic metres of rain water harvesting capacity installed*
- More than 91,000 tonnes of food with a total value of over A\$64 million produced by program beneficiaries, at a cost to the Program of A\$8 million*

Equally important progress has been achieved in less easily quantified areas such as empowerment of women and youth, strengthening of community fabric and social capital, and strengthening of capacities for management of psychosocial health. Many of these approaches are trail-blazing, and are being replicated by organisations across the PTs. Importantly, key issues, challenges and better practice have been captured in case studies developed by partners aimed at information dissemination around complex subjects.

While multi-layered, AMENCA's implementation arrangements are no more complex than the environment that the Program operates within, and have resulted in impressive and cost effective bottomline results in terms of enhancing food production and incomes. All implementation layers have contributed to the overall result, yet there remains room for further refinement and greater efficiency of implementation approaches, by ensuring that the contribution (value add) of each level is clearly justified, clearly articulated and measurable. APHEDA's successful program, while having only a very light touch staffing complement is noteworthy, and suggests opportunities exist in the future for even greater levels of responsibility being assumed by strong PNGO partners such as APHEDA partner, the Ma'an Development Centre.

During its remaining period, the Program (and Partners) would benefit from deeper analysis of the causal factors underpinning these results given that most successes involve multiple inputs. While significant data exists across the Program, it would be useful to examine specific successes, such as home gardens, agricultural investment or apiary to determine which of the various financial, technical and backstopping inputs were most effective. This would allow greater appreciation and understanding of 'value for money' within the AMENCA context, and greatly inform future planning. This process has in many respects already commenced through preparation of case studies around key issues, but further investigation will bring richer meaning to the vast database held by the Program.

*Despite predating Australia's new aid policy, **Making Performance Count**, the Program closely reflects the majority of its high level targets, notably by having:*

- enhanced prosperity and contributed to reduced poverty in target areas*
- effectively engaged the private sector (at both micro and macro levels)*
- directly empowered women and girls by enabling their active participation in community life and decision making*

Given the above. it is recommended that a new five year Program for the PTs (both Gaza and West Bank) be initiated by DFAT that builds on the best practice and lessons learned through AMENCA 2 implementation. This Program should be positioned along the resilience < > food security < > community strengthening < > women's empowerment spectrum, allowing sufficient flexibility for partners to identify niche areas, and also to address the very different needs that exist in the two territories post the 2014 Gaza conflict.

Decision making around a future phase should be based on the strength of the proposed theory of change, and the degree to which it is persuasive in presenting a compelling logic of relevance to the current day needs of the people of the PTs.

If a new phase cannot be commenced quickly, bridge funding for existing partners should be considered in order to maintain Program momentum, and minimise close down-start up costs.

1. Introduction

This Review occurs in the sixth year of implementation of the second phase of AMENCA2. The program is due to close end April 2015. The Program is implemented by four Australian NGOs (ANGOs) working in close collaboration with leading Palestinian NGOs (PNGOs), the Palestinian private sector and Palestinian social enterprises in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The AMENCA2 program goal is to improve livelihoods in order to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of the Palestinian people with priority focus on women, youth and farmers. Activities focus on providing rural livelihoods and building the capacity of community based organisations (CBOs) to address development needs in their communities.

The purpose of this Review is to perform an overall quality and performance check of AMENCA2, through a process of data review and field visits aimed at validating key aspects of the progress reported through the Program's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The review will also be formative in the sense that its findings will form the basis for a small number of recommendations to be made in relation to the shape and form of a possible future DFAT civil society focused program for the Palestinian Territories (PTs).

The Review's Terms of Reference (ToR) ask for investigation of the Program's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as well as consideration of Program efforts in relation to gender and disability. An additional Review component related to risk management and financial accountability was undertaken earlier, and informs this document. The TOR are attached at Annex One.

A primary question needing to be answered by this Review is whether or not DFAT's approach of working through a network of Australian NGOs, local Palestinian NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) is appropriate to the current operating context, and effective in helping DFAT achieve its development assistance objectives in the PTs?

2. Program Operating Context

To fully appreciate AMENCA's relevance and effectiveness, it is vital to understand the current development context of the PTs. Ongoing political uncertainty, conflict, a blockade related slow down in economic growth, limited and reducing access to water, and complex and ever-changing restrictions on the movement of people, labour and produce make the PTs a highly complex operating environment for development programming. Complicating matters further, the characteristics and factors affecting development in West Bank and Gaza Strip are relatively unique and significantly different to each other.

During the course of AMENCA2 implementation, three wars have occurred in Gaza, with the most recent in July 2014 causing the loss of more than 2,200 lives, the overwhelming majority of them Gazans. The estimated cost of rebuilding is thought to be in excess of \$5 billion. Other legacies include the psychological impact on children having lived through three wars in six years, and household's loss of productive assets such as greenhouses, olive groves and orchards.

The 2014 UNDP Human Development Index ranks the PTs 107th out of 187 countries. Gross National Income per capita is US\$5,168. When gender disaggregated, this figure is US\$1,651 for females and US\$8,580 for men. Generally speaking, women are significantly under-represented at all levels of governance and workforce participation, despite enjoying similar levels of educational achievement to men. Palestinian men and women are well educated, having on average 8.9 years of schooling (females 8.5 years/males 9.3 years), putting them

well ahead of both the average for both Arab States (6.3 years) and comparable middle ranking human development index countries (5.5 years). ***¹AMENCA2 partners have invested heavily in enhancing opportunities for women's social and economic empowerment, and for women to be more active in community affairs and the local economy.***

The Palestine economy suffers from significant fluctuations in economic growth. Economic growth of 12.2% in 2010 shrunk to 5.9% in 2012 and 1.5% in 2013. Forecasts have economic growth sitting no higher than two per cent for the forward estimates. Central to the PT's economic uncertainty is heavy over reliance on external financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA), and a hesitant foreign investment climate given ongoing uncertainty. ***Sitting at AMENCA2's core is a portfolio of different and often innovative strategies for increasing resilience through improved livelihoods, including the provision of loans, grants and training to help lay the foundations for sustainable enterprises.***

The 2014 -16 Palestinian National Development Plan (NDP)² cites a poverty rate across the PTs of 25.8%, with a substantial discrepancy between the West Bank and Gaza – 17.8% and 38.8% respectively. Worsening poverty and slowing economic growth have contributed to dropping living standards, fuelled by worsening unemployment and under employment. Poverty and unemployment are inextricably linked, and in Q4 of 2013, the unemployment rate across the labour force was 25.2%, with the following characteristics:

- Geographic disparity – 38.5% in Gaza and 18.2% in West Bank are unemployed
- Gendered impact – 23.1% of men and 33.5% of women are unemployed
- Youth most vulnerable – 43.9% of youth aged 20-24 are unemployed (39.4% of men and 62.1% of women)

AMENCA2 aims to facilitate employment, training and internship opportunities for women and youth, in order to facilitate an important first step towards lasting employment.

Collectively, conflict, poverty, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, and stresses related to uncertainty and threats that arise from the lack of political progress have undermined the mental and psychosocial health of Palestinians. This is particularly true in Gaza where the frequency of serious conflict, including loss of life, has children and younger people having lived much of their lives in a constant cycle of violence. ***AMENCA2 is active in addressing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) issues in Gaza, through mainstreaming awareness raising and capacity building within livelihoods activities.***

Within this overall context, Palestinians see significant opportunity in bringing greater focus to agriculture, which has declined from 12% of GDP in 1995 to just 4.9% in 2012.³ This decline has contributed to a situation whereby the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported for 2013 that 33% of Palestinian households are food insecure – with, according to some measures, 57% of all households in Gaza and 19% in the West Bank not having reliable access to 'sufficient, safe and nutritious food'⁴. While food insecurity is significantly affected by 'large scale shocks' such as military operations and/or the destruction of productive infrastructure, FAO highlights that 'low to medium scale shocks' such as weather events, animal and plant diseases, and unreliable access to high quality inputs also have a significant impact on food security. ***Enhancing food production, agricultural innovation and household food security are core approaches of partners.***

¹ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/PSE.pdf

² State of Palestine, National Development Plan 2014-16, p.32

³ The World Bank 2013 *Fiscal Challenges and Long Term Economic Costs – Economic Reporting to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, Washington DC. USA

⁴ FAO 2014-16 Programme Framework – West Bank and Gaza, p. 10

FAO reports that ‘the vast majority of producers having witnessed a partial or total (for extreme cases) erosion of their agricultural assets’⁵. Farmers have lost land, water and trees. Herders have lost grazing land, access to water and have tended to de-capitalise their stock in the face of various economic, environmental and political constraints (e.g. restrictions on movement affecting grazing). And fishers have lost significant access to sea and fishing assets owing to Gaza’s fishing limit being reduced from 20 to just three nautical miles today. Central to the overall decline in agriculture has been the lack of capacity within many households to cope with shocks, and an inability to adapt accordingly. This manifests itself in farmers choosing low risk- low yielding farming options, given risks involved with investing to modernise agricultural production.

Despite this, Palestinians have a rich history of making extremely marginal land productive. It is also the case that many of those who are now unemployed in the PTs were previously laboring on Israeli farms where cutting edge agricultural techniques are practiced, suggesting a potential pool of skilled labour being available for innovation if constraints of capital and water can be addressed. ***AMENCA2 has invested heavily in building (and rebuilding) the necessary infrastructure for agricultural enhancement and innovation.***

Certain population sub groups are disproportionately impacted by shocks. Food insecurity is particularly present in ‘low resilience’ households, with almost 86% of such households reliant on ‘aid’ in 2011. ***Small scale integrated home gardens have been established for poor women, enhancing both their productive and economic capacity.***

Agriculture has been given greater prominence in the NDP for 2014-16. That prominence is operationalized in a National Agriculture Sector Strategy for 2014-16 focused on ‘Resilience and Development’. Within that Strategy is an ambition to increase employment opportunities within the agricultural sector, add greater value to agricultural produce, and to support innovation in the face of a series of complex constraints. ***AMENCA partners work to reduce costs and add value to agricultural produce.***

Given current political uncertainty and lack of progress on ‘final status negotiations’, greater recognition is being placed on the efficacy of local level interventions such as AMENCA that focus on improving livelihoods and food security; capacity building; local employment; strengthening of local institutions; and supporting innovations around production, value adding and value chain, since these offer some of the few opportunities for meaningful and effective ‘development’ at this point in time given the current political impasse.

PNGOs have long been a uniquely important development partner given their high capacity, and on again-off again restrictions in relation to working with the PA. Frequent use of Palestinian NGOs as service delivery agents has contributed to the emergence of several large, very capable and highly organized PNGOs, many of which are active in AMENCA2. ***AMENCA2 ensures Palestinian civil society partners access to multi year resources and allows for their further strengthening through targeted capacity building.***

Australia’s aid program in the PTs⁶ responds to much of the above by placing priority on:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The current Australian strategy - “Australia’s strategic approach to aid in the Palestinian Territories” – was prepared in December 2010. A new strategy is currently under development but is expected in principle to maintain a similar multi-pronged approach, albeit with a stronger focus on development of Palestine’s agriculture sector.

- Provision of basic services and humanitarian and emergency assistance to refugees and other vulnerable groups
- state-building and support for the peace process, with a focus on improving the governance and capacity of the Palestinian Authority
- developing civil society, with a focus on reducing vulnerability, particularly for Palestinian women, children and youth

These priorities are progressed through actions clustered under the related objectives of:

- Supporting sustainable economic growth including helping rural communities and vulnerable groups overcome poverty
- Supporting state building and the peace process

3. Constraints

Various constraints affected this Review. AMENCA2 is a complex and diverse program now in its sixth year of implementation, operating across the very different environments of West Bank and Gaza. It is implemented by four different organisations, each with their own program logic and theory of change. Each of the four work in collaboration with and enter into contracts with multiple partners at both PNGO and CBO levels. Inevitably, a program of such scale has initiated an extraordinarily broad array of activities and approaches over its six years, including important achievements that cannot easily be quantified. Setbacks to program progress caused by conflict present another complex area of enquiry.

For various reasons, the Review was significantly constrained for time with only eleven days available for in-country consultations, including meetings with Palestinian authorities and other important development actors. This presented several challenges for the Review, given the breadth of the overall program and the sheer number of activities commenced during it. Time also severely restricted opportunities for direct interaction with program beneficiaries, beyond the few identified by the implementing partners. Security issues (and public holidays) were also constraints on the Review, restricting access to Gaza based activities to just three visits of just three hours each (meaning that WV's activities were observed for only six hours in total).

Given these constraints, this Review is designed to reflect only on Program level achievements, and should not be read as any form of detailed, analysis of the individual projects. Program resources exist for independent evaluations of each of the four projects.

4. Methodology

The Review methodology was largely dictated by the constraints described above. These demanded an overall approach aimed at achieving as clear as possible an overview of the contribution of partners' approaches to the Program's objectives, utilising the lens of the lead evaluation questions related to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The Review commenced with a review of the vast database of reporting and case studies that have been generated at project and program levels. This was followed by meetings with Australian based staff of the participating NGOs to attain a 'head office' perspective. In Canberra, a half day briefing was organised by DFAT's Middle East and North Africa Programs team, including meetings with other DFAT staff interested in AMENCA2.

In Ramallah, initial meetings were held with the DFAT team followed by meetings with a range of key development actors capable of providing their perspectives on the 'bigger

picture' development situation of the PTs. These included representatives of the PA, Office of The Quartet Representative, UN agencies and the Steering Committee of PNGO Network.

Consortia were asked to prepare field visits that best reflected their approach given the key questions posed by the evaluation TOR. The core approach of the evaluation was to validate currently documented results through semi-structured interviews with key informants with the aim of gaining insight into the actual on the ground reality of different activities. This was agreed to be the best approach given that time constraints prevented this from being a detailed, participatory assessment where sampling could have been effectively applied. Semi structured interviews allowed for triangulation of findings, as well as eliciting perspectives regarding future programming options. The findings of Case Studies generated through the Program (often presented as 'best practice') were also investigated during these interviews.

5. Assessment of Program Performance

5.1 Introduction

AMENCA2's own reporting procedures have evolved considerably over the journey of the Program in an effort to balance Program level reporting needs with 1/ existing monitoring approaches already used by different implementing partners, and 2/ challenges posed by the diverse areas of focus and theories of change of the different projects. In order to cater to these differences, ten 'outcome themes' were agreed upon at Program commencement to help group, link and track different activities back to the AMENCA2 Program goal.⁷ Each NGO selected outcome themes relevant to their project from the list of ten, and were expected to report against their themes using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The following section will overview performance at Program level, through the lens of the quality criteria set out in the ToR and the ten outcome themes mentioned above. Focus will be on determining higher level Program level progress towards the complex development challenges detailed in the Program logic.

5.2 Program Level Performance

AMENCA2 is a highly regarded and greatly appreciated program within Palestinian development circles, based on its ability to deliver a cross section of relevant outcomes using a diversity of innovative strategies. It is particularly appreciated for the opportunities provided by it being a longer term program within an environment where short term programming is the norm. Implementing partners, consortium members and beneficiaries all spoke of significant momentum gained over the course of the Program, as consortia consolidated their understanding of their context and identified solutions accordingly. Longevity was also seen as having an 'efficiency dividend' with all consortia reporting that their Programs were able to work far more effectively and efficiently over later years, and mostly achieve beyond the original targets they set for themselves. Time was also seen to enhance opportunities for deeper levels of learning over the implementation journey, contributing to considerable adaptation and understanding of causal factors.

PNGO partners stated that the Program's high expectations in terms of planning, monitoring and reporting has contributed to their increased capacity for management of longer term programs. Particular reference was made of significantly improved M&E capacity, and the

⁷ The term 'Outcome Themes' was changed in April 2012 to Program-Level Key Results, which are now more commonly referred to as Key Result Areas

contribution made by the Program's M&E Advisor to supporting local partners to develop robust monitoring systems for complex, multi-year programs.

As an indication of the capacity of the PNGOs active in AMENCA, UAWC was recently awarded UNDP's Equator Award for 2014, for its leadership and capacity to address development challenges through conservation and sustainable use of nature. UAWC acknowledges the key role played by AMENCA in developing their capacity in Gaza, where they are an important delivery mechanism for multiple donors.

5.2.1 Program Relevance

"AMENCA2 has and continues to maintain an acute relevance to the development needs of the Palestinian territories, based on its alignment with community and national priorities and ability to provide effective community and household level solutions to complex and critical higher level issues."

The goal of AMENCA2 is to improve livelihoods to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of the Palestinian people with priority focus on women, youth and farmers. To ensure flexibility for Projects to tailor their approaches to their own unique strengths and the specific needs of their local communities, a list of ten relevant outcome themes (now known as 'key result areas') were agreed upon for the various partners to report against. The table below details these key result areas; which organisations are working under which themes; and the relevance (or not) of the themes to development needs in Palestine; and the degree to which they align with and support Australia's strategy for the PTs.

An important observation coming from the Review (and of particular relevance to Outcome Ten above) was that while some NGOs chose not to directly link themselves to some key result areas, they have often still achieved progress in these outcome areas. For example, WV could rightfully claim to be active in area three, given its investments in integrated home gardening, composting and water savings. Similarly, ActionAid is clearly having a significant impact on the psychosocial health of young women through providing opportunities that allow them to move beyond the confines of the home and participate in community affairs. APHEDA/Ma'an, through their establishment of a farmer field school/permaculture centre could lay claim to contributing to area five – ensuring locally accessible expertise.

Furthermore, the relevance of the Program approach and the capacities it has fostered were brought into sharp focus during and following the recent conflict in Gaza, when it was demonstrated that APHEDA/Ma'an and WV/UAWC had very strong systems in place and the capacity to quickly initiate effective emergency and early recovery activities. And households themselves were able to quickly initiate their own recovery efforts, including replanting of crops during the short, mid conflict ceasefire period. These actions helped minimize the impact of the conflict on AMENCA2 project beneficiaries through technical and grant support to affected families and activities. Both organisations were also able to quickly initiate new activities in response to the conflict and provide valuable partners for DFAT in its response. For example, both organisations expanded the reach of their network of Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in order to allow as many children as possible the opportunity to be supported during the crisis.

Table One – Program Key Results Areas, Relevance

Key Result Areas	Partners active in KRA	1/ Relevance to current Palestinian development needs and policies 2/ Relevance and alignment with Australian aid objectives and strategy for the PTs
Component 1: Reducing Vulnerability		
1. Improved psycho-social wellbeing of children and women in Gaza	APHEDA WV	1/ The PNDP reports that 28% of West Bank residents and 38% of Gazans suffer from worsening psychological health problems, and sets a target of ‘developing and integrating psychological and community health with primary healthcare delivery, with a focus on a family health approach’. ⁸ While MHPSS issues exist in West Bank, these are far more acute in Gaza, given recent wars 2/ Consistent with Australia-Palestine Strategy priority of 1/ providing basic services and humanitarian and emergency assistance to refugees and other vulnerable people, and 2/ to reduce vulnerability for women and youth.
2. Improved food security at the household level through increased production	APHEDA CARE WV	1/ In 2012, food insecurity was reported at 34% overall (57% in Gaza and 20% in West Bank), Causes include low levels of production, issues related to water access, and supply chain issues. Agriculture Sector Strategy vision is for a sustainable agriculture sector that can “compete domestically and externally; can effectively contribute to enhancing food security and connection between the Palestinian people and their land, while enhancing state-building efforts through resource sovereignty.” ⁹ 2/ Consistent with Australian objective of supporting sustainable economic growth amongst rural communities and vulnerable groups. Support to small and medium enterprises consistent with new strategy to better engage private sector.
3. Effective and ecologically sustainable agricultural practices	APHEDA CARE	1/ The Palestinian agriculture sector has been in significant decline for several years declining from 12% of GDP in 1995 to just 4.9% in 2012. ¹⁰ Central to this decline is restricted and unreliable access to critically important inputs such as water, fertiliser, seeds and fodder, further exacerbated by climate change. 2/ Consistent with Australian objective of supporting sustainable economic growth including helping rural communities and vulnerable groups overcome poverty. AMENCA stakeholders participate in the Agriculture Sector Working Group.
4. Enhanced potential for women to increase livelihoods and income.	All	1/ Target six of the NDP’s “Social Protection and Development” subset is ‘an empowered Palestinian woman who enjoys more protection and better participation in the labour and market and public life, with easier access to all basic services and with equitable opportunities without discrimination.’ ¹¹ Currently a huge discrepancy exists between the per capita gross national income of women and men (US\$1,651 and US\$8,580 respectively). Women are also twice as likely to be unemployed as men. Major impediments to women’s economic participation are related to conservative cultural norms, and capacity/confidence to succeed in the market. Fear of harassment by security forces or settlers is a growing factor restricting women’s mobility. 2/ Program aligns with Australian Government commitment to ‘empower women economically and improving their livelihood security’. It is also of relevance to Australia’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-18)

⁸ State of Palestine, National Development Plan 2014-16, p64

⁹ State of Palestine, National Agriculture Sector Strategy, p. 11

¹⁰ The World Bank 2013 *Fiscal Challenges and Long Term Economic Costs – Economic Reporting to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*, Washington DC. USA

¹¹ State of Palestine, National Development Plan 2014-16, p69

Key Result Areas	Partners active in KRA	1/ Relevance to current Palestinian development needs and policies 2/ Relevance and alignment with Australian aid objectives and strategy for the PTs
5. Improved access to local services/ skills.	ActionAid CARE	1/ Palestinian communities have trouble accessing high quality services and skills, exacerbated by restrictions on people's movement posed by the blockade. Being able to access services locally is therefore an important driver of the local economy. 2/ Relates directly to Australian strategy PTs priority of developing civil society
6. Strengthened employment opportunities	ActionAid CARE WV	1/ Promoting economic growth and a prosperous local economy is a cross-cutting issue of relevance to all outcome themes listed in this table, and is with the NDP's 'Economic Development and Employment Sector' Strategic Objectives set out in the NDP. ¹² 2/ Directly relevant to Australian strategy for PTs to reduce vulnerability. Also of direct relevance to the Australian Government's new development policy <i>Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability</i>
Component 2: Capacity Building of Palestinian NGOs and CBOs		
7. Strengthen capacity of civil society to better support community priorities	All	1/ PNGOs and CBOs have long been an important provider of services at community level, aiming to provide a safety net when the 'system' fails local community members. More recently, governance reforms have placed greater emphasis and responsibility on local government units (LGUs). The NDP states that it aims to 'consolidate the role and capacity of LGUs to take on greater responsibilities and powers to be more responsive to citizens' needs'. ¹³ 2/ Relates directly to Australian strategy PTs priority of developing civil society, with a focus on reducing vulnerability, particularly for Palestinian women, children and youth. Australia is a strong supporter of decentralized governance.
8. Strengthen the responsibilities, role and status of Palestinian women in CS	ActionAid APHEDA CARE	1/ While PNGOs are at the forefront of promotion of gender issues, many Palestinian CBOs fail to adequately challenge cultural practices that reinforce gender stereotypes and inequality, and provide little opportunity for women's participation 2/ Clear alignment with Australian Government and UN agencies commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. It specifically supports Australian gender strategy of 'empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security. It is also of relevance to Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-18)
9. Strengthen governance of CBOs	All	1/ Palestinian CBOs play a unique role in Palestine, given the myriad challenges faced by the PA in delivering services. However, many of these CBOs lack the skills for participatory planning, democratic governance and sound financial management. 2/ Relates directly to Australian strategy PTs priority of developing civil society, with a focus on reducing vulnerability
Component 3: Capacity Development via AMENCA2		
10. Strengthening collaboration amongst partners	All	1/ Knowledge, information sharing and improved collaboration are important in consolidating the Palestinian development effort. The Program structure aims to promote learning and knowledge sharing to allow for successes to be duplicated and new strategies adopted, particularly through its 'Case Study' methodology for capturing lessons learned and better practice. The overwhelming majority of partners speak of vastly improved capacity for M&E fostered at Program level.

¹² Ibid, p. 135

¹³ Ibid. p.97

5.2.2 Program Effectiveness

“AMENCA2 has utilised a diverse array of effective strategies to make strong progress (both quantitatively and qualitatively) against all of the four Program components and will significantly exceed performance targets set at inception.”

At the end of Year Five, the Program has increased farming and livelihoods opportunities and provided access to basic services and training for 80,702 persons, their families and communities. This is well above the target of 50,000 included in the original design document. On average, the 11,700 income generating investments have been able to achieve a sustained increase in their income of 42.5% during a period of consistent economic decline. Of the 80,702 beneficiaries, 44,317 are women.¹⁴

Other notable statistics over the Program life include:

- 1,090 hectares of land opened to new agriculture through land rehabilitation, irrigation and/or building of access roads
- 37,100 cubic metres of rain water harvesting capacity installed
- More than 91,000 tonnes of food with a total value of over A\$64 million produced by program beneficiaries, at a cost to the Program of A\$8 million
- APHEDA and WV greenhouse beneficiaries are estimated to have collectively produced more than 12% of Gaza’s total production each of tomatoes and peppers in 2013-14 season¹⁵
- Partnering with the Palestinian private sector have facilitated export opportunities to Europe, UK and Saudi Arabia – including strawberries, freekeh (green wheat) and zataar (thyme)

These impressive quantitative achievements are backstopped by significant achievements of a more qualitative nature. Within the Program goal is an ambition to ‘reduce the socio-economic vulnerability’ of particularly Palestinian women, youth and farmers.

Resilience, wellbeing, and empowerment are concepts not easily quantified. Observations from the Review related to progressing these concepts within the cohort (measured against the ten Key Results) include:

- WV’s primary health care type psychosocial interventions such as Psychological First Aid and Child Friendly Spaces have been effective in building family and community capacity for action and referral around **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support** (MHPSS) issues. These skills have helped improve psychosocial health, while also providing a model relevant to achievement of NDP targets. Importantly, sustainability issues are addressed by mainstreaming psychosocial work through UAWC’s livelihood interventions, including the skilling up of UAWC technical workers in strategies such as PFA. Improved psychosocial health is therefore an important aspect of WV’s livelihoods and women’s empowerment objectives. An innovative WV ‘Quality of Life’ review of its MHPSS work suggests that AMENCA2 supported beneficiaries experienced higher ‘quality of life’ than those supported by similar livelihoods interventions where there is no integrated psychosocial support. The provision of CFS in the current context is an important frontline response to the current Gazan context, allowing children access to support and hope within an otherwise bleak environment. WV and APHEDA’s MHPSS efforts are child focused and integrated within the Gaza based MHPSS Cluster group chaired by UNICEF,

¹⁴ All figures drawn from latest summary of Key Results, provided by M&E Advisor on 27th October 2014

¹⁵ Based on data provided by Ministry of Agriculture statistical data, 2013-14

allowing extension of lessons learned to other providers of MHPSS services.

- The Program pursues a two pronged approach to food production, working with landholders (or renters, as is often the case) capable of significant production (i.e. people with land, water access, existing crops and capacity) in order to **boost production, ensure food security and keep prices down**. At the same time, partners use vulnerability criteria to identify poor and vulnerable families for inclusion, with the aim of increasing household food production and reducing financial stress. This appears to be an appropriate balance, allowing for food production potential to be maximized, while also addressing the needs of people vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty. A strength of the Program is that different partners apply different approaches, tailored to the unique constraints and opportunities of specific social, political, and eco systems.

APHEDA, CARE and WV are all active in improving food production, utilizing strategies of land rehabilitation, agricultural infrastructure investments, support to cooperatives and improved marketing. While each approach has proven effective, the common theme to the most effective activities was the degree to which they were evidence based and highly responsive to local constraints. APHEDA's work appears particularly strong in that its investments in agricultural infrastructure come with a very clear justification for action, and strong monitoring captures impact clearly. In this model, significant infrastructure investments become feasible, based on a strong likelihood of success. Greenhouse rehabilitation of WV and APHEDA has been highly effective in facilitating large scale production. CARE's investment in Seed Banks and Nurseries has ensured reliable supply of high quality inputs to farmers, effectively addressing risks associated with the blockade. CARE's work is further strengthened by upstream processing and value adding activities.

- **Improved agricultural practices** have been achieved by both complementing and enhancing existing agricultural practice, as well as introducing a wide range of agricultural innovations relevant to reducing reliance on expensive inputs and overcoming constraints posed by the political situation. APHEDA partner Ma'an Development Centre has recently opened a permaculture centre in Jenin, as a facility to educate Palestinians on integrated and ecological farming techniques. Integrated home gardening schemes implemented by APHEDA and WV are a common form of support to female headed households. They reduce the need for bought inputs and promote the use of green manures and composting, while offering multiple benefits to a household in terms of improved food security, nutrition and household incomes and savings. Bee-keeping, introduced by APHEDA and CARE, has been a very successful livelihood intervention for women, and supports pollination. Seed banks and nurseries established through the CARE program ensure reliable, high quality and affordable supply of these critical inputs.
- Efforts have been made by all consortia to **increase livelihoods and incomes of women**, utilising a range of different strategies. A key Program finding across the various different interventions is the clear link that exists between economic and social empowerment of women. This has increased women's mobility and ability to contribute to community life, as well as their status within their family.

Both grants and loans have been used to support increased livelihoods for women. Grants have proven very effective in the complex Gaza environment where

significantly higher poverty rates exist than is the case in the West Bank. Grants provided to vulnerable women by APHEDA and WV have proven very effective in establishing reliable income flows around home gardening and livestock. ActionAid and Asala have overseen a mix of loans and grants to poor women in Hebron, with the Program's initial \$800,000 investment having now facilitated close to \$1.3 million being distributed (utilizing resources coming available from repayments. Of the 440 loans made, 173 are now repaid in full. Loan recipients met through the review spoke of the empowerment enjoyed through the work they have commenced through their loan. However, it appeared that some loan recipients had only limited capacity to initiate any cost-benefit analysis of their enterprise. Whether loans or grants, a key success indicator appears to be access to ongoing support and guidance in enterprise development from people experienced in micro enterprise development.

- While the terms '**value chain**' and '**value adding**' are in common use throughout the Program, they are not done holistically. Opportunities exist for more thorough consideration of value adding and the potential of utilizing value chain approaches to increasing incomes. This appears particularly true in terms of backstopping agricultural investments by improving farmer understanding of marketing issues, pricing and considering opportunities in relation to cooperatives.
- The strategy of **improving access to locally available quality services and skills** has been applied to great effect across the Program, including establishment of seed banks and nurseries (CARE), the availability of credit for women and community based social services (ActionAid), MHPSS services and CFS made available to communities in Gaza (APHEDA and WV), and support for high end value adding and marketing of agricultural produce (CARE). Each of these interventions has been tailored to the needs, capacity and potential of individual communities.
- A range of approaches to **providing employment opportunities for youth** have been trialled through the Program. This addresses a core issue in Palestine of many students entering university with little thought given to their employability. Characteristics of the most successful employment interventions have been where skilled workforce facilitators have been on hand to identify and support appropriate candidates and provide follow up and support as required. ICP, through the ActionAid consortium, seeks a 50% co-contribution from would-be employers to ensure strong commitment, who in turn value the efficacy of the approach in identifying appropriate and reliable candidates. WV demands applicants present a business plan ahead of receiving business start up grants, contributing to an overall success rate of 87 % (success being defined as an ongoing business capable of providing a liveable wage. WV's employment program has specifically targeted people living with a disability, where the success rate is 100%. This achievement carries the added benefit of reducing stigma and promoting better understanding of disability within Gaza.
- A **strengthened capacity to better advocate for and respond to community priorities and needs** has been fostered primarily through efforts at strengthening CBOs and helping them better position themselves as agents of change for their community. Historically, Palestinian CBOs have been male dominated, welfare focused and unlikely to consult or seek participation from communities in setting their agendas. All projects have been successful in promoting greater levels of

participation of women and youth in CBOs, including at Board of Directors level. This has helped many supported CBOs better *respond* to community needs, however it has not always contributed to a willingness or capacity within CBOs to advocate with local authorities *for* communities. It is also the case that enhanced participation within a CBO does not necessarily result in meaningful change. Some supported CBOs are still very conservative, male dominated and authoritarian in their approaches. It is observed that meaningful change in CBO culture requires considered and deliberative action in building meaningful roles for the participation of women and youth - beyond the token. The ActionAid consortia has invested more heavily in CBO development than other partners, including construction of facilities. While labour and cost intensive, their approach of supporting communities to see themselves as facilitators of their own development has led to CBOs drawing in new partners, while also building constructive relationships with local authorities. This contributes to a collective approach to addressing the needs of the vulnerable in their local area, through activities such as advocacy to reduce electricity tariffs being charged by local authorities. Another example of effective advocacy has been ActionAid partner Asala's program to promote women's inheritance rights. Working in partnership with the Department of Religious Affairs, this advocacy has successfully brought significant practical and meaningful change to the very conservative governorate of Hebron where previously women had commonly been denied their inheritance rights. In Tubas, the Ministry of Agriculture has provided CARE's nursery extra land in response to CBO requests and recognition of the quality of their performance.

- The Program has been highly effective in **promoting the role and status of Palestinian women** in NGOs, CBOs and in the broader community. Throughout the Review, women spoke of the Program being catalytic in shifting long entrenched opinions regarding the role and capacity of women to contribute to community affairs and production. A by product of this shift has been an increase in women's mobility, with greater acceptance of their presence in public life – resulting in a greater sense of wellbeing (psychosocial health). It was observed that greater progress has been made in communities where a structured and sustained and deliberative process has been undertaken to raise awareness, win trust and build confidence that the *whole* community stands to benefit from an enhanced role for women in local decision-making.

These efforts have contributed to a range of important outcomes for women, such as greater mobility within and beyond their community, improved educational access for girls (and women), and opportunities for active economic participation. Importantly, men's attitudes towards women have also been positively affected, with realisation amongst male community leaders of the potential contribution that women can make to building resilience and wellbeing within their community. This progress cannot be understated, with women frequently mentioning during the Review of the profound and life changing impact that AMENCA2 efforts has had on both their lives today, tomorrow and into the future.

- AMENCA2 has been effective in **strengthening governance and management of CBOs**, leading to greater levels of inclusiveness of women and youth, more constructive engagement of local authorities, and greater capacity for CBOs to be proactive in initiating actions that respond to community needs. Across several face to face interviews, CBO Board Members spoke of AMENCA having 'totally re-

energised’ their CBO bringing new levels of participation, ownership and pride.

ANGOs working alongside PNGOs have been effective in modernising the practices and procedures of CBOs through introduction of a range of procedures and support in development of a range of skills. CBOs see a direct correlation between this support provided by AMENCA and their improved ability to mobilise resources from a range of different donors, enhancing sustainability.

- The Program has worked to establish a strong structure for **learning and continuous improvement**. Annual Program Workshops are valued for bringing the ‘whole’ of AMENCA2 together to share ideas, concerns and achievements. Case studies have been effective in drilling down into key issues, allowing for richer understanding of success factors and qualitative considerations. Some frustration was expressed amongst most partners that recent workshops have devoted too much time to administrative matters related to due diligence and security matters, detracting from consideration of the intended substantive focus related to M&E, value for money, and sustainability.

5.2.3 Program Efficiency

“While complex, AMENCA’s implementation arrangements are no more complex than the environment that the Program operates within, and have resulted in impressive and seemingly cost effective bottomline results in terms of enhancing food production and incomes. However, deeper analysis of causal factors underpinning these results (as well as other ‘hard to measure’ results such as empowerment and psychosocial health) would allow greater appreciation and understanding of ‘value for money’ within the AMENCA context, and greatly inform future planning.”

It is important to firstly acknowledge that there are considerable ‘transaction costs’ related to working in the PTs given its unpredictability, insecurity, complex political considerations, movement and access issues, blockade related constraints, and complex due diligence requirements. These factors contribute to what can appear on the surface to be a cumbersome, multi-layered partnership model.

The following table looks at the role played by different stakeholders within the current Program implementation model.

Table Two – AMENCA Stakeholders and Partnership model

AMENCA Stake-holders	Role	Contribution to Program performance
DFAT (Desk)	Overall coordination and responsibility for monitoring contract compliance; corporate engagement within DFAT and broader Australian Government; liaison with ANGO Head Offices.	Mandatory role ensuring smooth running of Program and compliance with Australian Government procedures
ANGO	Signatory to contracts with DFAT; overall responsibility for ensuring contract compliance and quality control; monitoring role; liaison with DFAT	Mandatory role – responsible for ensuring contractual compliance, reporting oversight, maintaining clear dialogue with Canberra, and that adequate due diligence processes are in place for selection of local partners.

AMENCA Stake-holders	Role	Contribution to Program performance
		<i>NB important to ensure ANGO roles and responsibilities are not overly duplicated by PT based offices</i>
DFAT (Post)	Responsible for day to day higher level Program management; performs important monitoring and facilitating role; liaison with PA; contact point for Implementing partners in PA; participant in relevant technical working groups; troubleshooting	Performs vital relationship management, coordination and troubleshooting role, ensuring clear understanding of AMENCA amongst key stakeholders; ensures AMENCA an Australian face within the Palestine development community ¹⁶ <i>NB Interviewees persistently praised the commitment, knowledge and interest of DFAT staff in Ramallah</i>
M&E Advisor	Initially an external monitoring function that has evolved into a more substantive hands on monitoring, coordination and M&E capacity building role; important backstop and information source to Post	Critical to the current program in terms of collating and synthesizing a vast amount of project data into relevant Program level analysis; has helped develop considerable M&E capacity amongst consortia members, which has been used to improve program performance and efficiency
INGO (in PTs)	Lead agency in country, responsible for coordination of day to day implementation arrangements of consortia to ensure achievement of objectives	All four projects have set up significantly different in-country structures. <i>Role, responsibility and costings need to be considered alongside those of Australian based staff to avoid duplication and better understand 'value for money'</i>
PNGOs	Responsibility for delivery of discrete components of consortia contracts; generally very capable in all aspects of implementation; technically strong in their specialist areas; bring vital cultural understanding and nuance to Program	Critical to implementation, especially given complex operating environment; their local understanding and relationships contribute substantially to risk assessment and management; they value add to AMENCA in terms of bringing lessons already learned to Program decision-making and strategic planning
Palestinian Authority	Some collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, though no formal relationship at this stage; Program generally aligns with PA strategic directions	Momentum exists within the Palestinian development community for greater levels of engagement of Palestinian authorities – often couched in 'state building' or 'institutional strengthening' language
CBOs (and Cooperatives)	Both a beneficiary and facilitator; key point of investment for Program; play important role in one or more of community mobilization/strengthening, service provision, beneficiary selection and leveraging opportunities for more active participation of women and youth	To use a cliché, CBOs can be either part of the problem or the solution. CBOs potentially reinforce traditional power dynamics within a community when not actively engaged or closely monitored. In other communities, CBOs have acted as profound agents of change opening opportunities for critically important opportunities for women and youth.
Communities	It is important to note that CBOs are not communities. Some CBOs are akin to 'clubs' or 'interest	The Program would benefit from ensuring that it is <u>genuinely</u> engaged at 'whole of community' level, by ensuring it is engaging

¹⁶ On various occasions, mention was made of "AMENCA" being a well known brand, associated with quality programming and innovation. However, AMENCA is not understood by all to be an Australian program.

AMENCA Stake-holders	Role	Contribution to Program performance
	groups' catering to the needs of only a proportion of the community – often the already empowered section with time to spare to be active in a 'club'	local and community leadership, as well as CBO leadership. While these often overlap, it is important that the 'whole of community' understand the Program purpose and the opportunities on offer through it. Some activities seem overly reliant on the perspectives and decision making of the CBO, and that CBOs sometimes take self-interested decisions. A more diverse engagement approach can facilitate richer understanding of community needs and power dynamics, OR confirm and validate that the CBO IS working in the interests of 'whole of community'.
Beneficiaries	Put simply, the Program's two pronged approach facilitates two (often overlapping) beneficiary types – 1/ poor families identified because of their vulnerability, 2/ farmers capable of increasing quality and quantity of their agricultural production to ensure availability of food at market	On the surface it appears that this two-pronged approach works, though it is not possible to extrapolate from data the Program's performance in relation to the two beneficiary types. Effort should be made during the remaining Program period to disaggregate data in relation to the 'two pronged strategy' to facilitate learning ahead of future planning.

While the above describes a seemingly complex implementation and partnership model, it is important to note that each 'level' makes an important contribution to the overall success of the Program, especially given the highly complex environment that the Program operates within. It was clear during field work that consortia mostly maintain close, effective and complementary relationships, with PNGOs having space to play a lead role in strategic planning and direction setting.

Contributing to the layers of current partnership arrangements was the somewhat vague, all embracing goal of the original AMENCA2 Program design goal, which aimed 'to contribute to the reduction of vulnerability of Palestinians by improving livelihoods, access to basic services, and the capacities of Palestinian NGOs'. This led to implementing partners submitting designs that were significantly varied in focus (geographical coverage, different sectors covered) and approach, requiring the participation of a large range of actors.

Similarly, little guidance (or rigour) seems to have been provided at Program startup regarding management and in-Australia costs able to be charged to the Projects. This has led to some confusion and resentment amongst and between partners, even though the costs applied were agreed to by AusAID at the time of contract signing. This should be avoided in any future AMENCA type program. Clear definition of how the Program views 'value for money' should also be achieved ahead of any new phase, since currently different organisations have different understandings, with some viewing it in terms of their 'in-kind contribution', others in terms of low overheads, and others in terms of sustainability.

Efficiency can be enhanced by ensuring that the contribution (value add) of each level is clearly justified, clearly articulated and measurable. APHEDA's successful program while having only a very light touch staffing complement is noteworthy, and suggests opportunities exist in the future for even greater levels of responsibility being assumed by PNGO partners.

While it is impossible and inappropriate to totally avoid some degree of duplication between levels (the aim should be to dovetail), this should be minimized as much as practicable. Specific attention should be paid to streamlining arrangements between consortia members to ensure all members contribution is maximized and consistently contributing towards achievement of Program objectives. For example, a conservative CBO that is token in its efforts to provide opportunities for vulnerable women and youth is not contributing to Program objectives and should therefore be challenged to adapt or be bypassed in future programming.

The Program's current approach to assessing 'value for money' is highly quantitative, and based primarily on the calculation of measuring the productive value of Program activities then considering them against the cost to the Program of those activities. It is also the case that the two larger partners – WV and CARE – complement their AMENCA activities with their own resources (financial and human).

While both these measurements carry some validity, it would be beneficial for the Program to dig deeper into the specific causal factors underpinning Program achievements, in order to better understand attribution. For example, investments by APHEDA and WV in Gaza have achieved very good results in terms of food production and increased incomes, yet these impressive results come from multiple interventions of capital, training, follow up technical support, and activities related to improving psychosocial health. What would be interesting for all interested parties would be to dig deeper in order to understand the relative contributions made by different inputs.

Attribution and consideration of 'value for money' becomes even more challenging when considering 'soft outcomes' such as empowerment and psychosocial health. However these are major achievements of the Program, and require deeper investigation given that resilience sits at the heart of the Program.

Overall, project reporting is of a high quality (and significantly improved over the life of the Program). However it is somewhat complicated, with a variety of styles and approaches used to meet different project and program reporting requirements. While this ensures a vast array of information, it is not particularly user friendly. Deeper analysis of causal factors contributing to (what are undoubtedly impressive) results would allow greater appreciation and understanding of 'value for money', and greatly inform future planning.

5.2.4 Program Sustainability

"When holistically and effectively applied, the Program's multi-pronged strategy for building community resilience appears largely sustainable owing to the collective impact of advances in strengthened community structures and CBOs; enhanced opportunities for women and youth; strategic and largely sustainable livelihood investments, and increased stores of social capital."

The Review observed generally consistent performance across the Program in relation to sustainability planning for its investments and beneficiaries. APHEDA and CARE initiated independent sustainability analysis of their interventions in Year Three of the Program.

Observations of strong progress towards sustainability are backed up by 'sustainability assessments' initiated by the M&E Advisor, and through exit or transition strategies

prepared by partners. The definition applied within the Program to measure sustainability is *“the capacity to cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities.”*

Some larger Program investments - such as CARE’s Nursery and Seed Banks and ActionAid’s support to CBO infrastructure - were conceived with sustainability plans in mind.

Participants are able to clearly articulate recurrent costs and strategies in place to ensure sufficient income to cover such costs. CARE’s Nursery and Seed Banks are now best viewed as medium size enterprises, requiring substantial business plans to ensure their continued success. They are currently viable and self sustaining, and looking at opportunities for expansion. ActionAid’s CBO infrastructure investments are more straightforward given that the bricks and mortar have now been paid for by the Program, and income is only required to cover recurrent costs such as electricity, internet connections, and water.

Larger scale agricultural infrastructure investments are generally low risk, since they are mostly grant based. Ongoing sustainability of larger agricultural infrastructure investments such as greenhouses is primarily based on an expectation of their ongoing profitability. This is realistic *assuming there are no unexpected shocks* – something of a gamble in the PTs.

Home gardens have proven highly effective in enhancing food security and incomes for very poor Palestinian households. While these interventions have a high success rate, their sustainability is dependent upon them applying sound business principles to their work, such as savings for maintenance and inputs, and to cover shocks. Partners have worked to ensure these skills, though it was observed in Hebron that some women beneficiaries of loans or grants for agriculture were unable to articulate their ‘business case’ even in the simplest of terms. In one instance, a loan recipient could not see the flaw in a business where she was spending more on fodder than she earned from livestock sales. Her ongoing enthusiasm for the enterprise is likely explained through her feelings of empowerment at having her own economic productive capacity. However, a failing business is a failing business and will not be sustainable in the long run.

From the experience of the Review, grant and loan recipients would benefit from further ‘business management’ training that ensures the various skills relevant to successful micro business, such as basic record keeping; plans to set aside savings for future capital investments or to respond to emergencies, and the ability to do basic market analysis.

It was also observed that it currently seems common for beneficiaries to return to ‘the donor’ to seek further assistance when trouble strikes, even in instances where it appears that their business should have the capacity to resolve the issue directly. This reflects elements of a patron-client relationship that partners seem willing to indulge, but which in the long run denies opportunities for additional beneficiaries to be involved in the Program.

Assessing sustainability of community structures and social change is more complex. Across all projects, the Review was fortunate to be able to meet with women for whom the Program has been profoundly liberating. These women had commonly moved from being silent members of their community to active, analytical decision-makers. It would be overstating the Program’s performance to suggest that gender equality has been achieved, but it would seem likely from the experience of the Review that progress on gender is in many respects irreversible since both men and women have witnessed the positive impact of an enhanced role for women in their communities.

When holistically and effectively applied, the Program's multi-pronged strategy for building community resilience appears largely sustainable owing to a considered mix of approaches that aim to build resilience, develop productive capacity, foster innovation and reduce risks faced by beneficiaries in their day to day lives. This household focused approach is complemented by efforts to strengthen community structures and CBOs; enhance opportunities for women and youth; and generally build social capital. In WV's Gaza work, resilience has been further enhanced through the mainstreaming of awareness and skills related to better understanding and management of psychosocial health issues into livelihoods programming. Programs in West Bank would benefit from deliberate consideration of psychosocial issues in their target area, with a view to integrating responses within their livelihoods programming – as modeled by WV .

While the overall assessment of Program sustainability is positive, it is important to note that the most sustainable investments can very quickly be made unsustainable through restrictions on movement of people or goods, conflict or other unexpected events.

The strong progress of AMENCA partners would benefit from macro level support of the broader donor community to advocate and help resolve the many fundamental obstacles that currently retard Palestinian development. Improved mobility and access, improved importing and exporting opportunities, and improved access to water would all profoundly progress AMENCA's ambitions.

5.2.5 Program Gender performance (refer to the whole document for discussion of Program gender issues and actions)

At design stage, AMENCA2 clearly identified the need for the Program to actively address issues of women and girls' disadvantage across the PTs. Relevant and plausible activities were identified and resourced, and gender disaggregated data collated. The primary gender approach of the Program has been to support women's economic empowerment, supporting them to take on a productive role in their community or family. The Program has been active on many fronts in trying to promote women's social and economic empowerment, tailored to the cultural context that is the PTs. It was observed during the Review that not all of the women that have 'participated' in the Program were necessarily 'empowered' by the Program, with men commonly still guiding decision-making in relation to Program investments . This appears to come back to the capacity of some local partners who accept participation as empowerment, whereas genuine empowerment in a conservative country such as Palestine requires consistent and deliberate support over a long period of time.

A notable achievement, already mentioned, was Asala's success in promoting women's inheritance rights in Hebron. As with so much of the AMENCA Program, it is important that an opportunity or modality is found to ensure that key success strategies are shared with other partners before Program close.

5.2.6 Program Disability performance

Disability is a significant issue in the PTs requiring concerted attention, however was not mentioned AT ALL in the initial Program Design, Concept Paper and Guidelines prepared by AusAID in 2008. Despite this, all four partners stated objectives to include people with disability in their designs, with WV including a 'Disability Analysis' as part of their design. All four partners worked with people with disability. However, it has been WV that has been most active, providing grants to people living with disability while also supporting the disability focused CBO *Al Basma* in advocating the rights of disabled people. While the

Program database reports 1,071 (354 women) disabled people as being direct beneficiaries of the Program, it is likely that the numbers are significantly higher. For example, disability within a household informed beneficiary selection across all for consortia, but unless the actual beneficiary was disabled, this does not appear in the data.

6. Future options

Being one of very few multi year development programs operating in the PTs, AMENCA2 forms a vitally important knowledge bank of experience in relation to building resilience at community and household level, including strategies to address vulnerability. The AMENCA Program's importance is enhanced by the fact that it was implemented by four different development organisations applying different philosophies and theories of change, while working in different geographic locations with communities that have a broad cross-section of characteristics.

AMENCA2 performance has been strongest when approaches to achieving resilience for individuals and/or communities have been sophisticated, holistic and integrated, catering for both their economic and social empowerment. These learnings should be central to any future phase of the Program. Key overarching lessons learnt through AMENCA2 include:

- integrated approaches that address both economic and social empowerment make for sustainable outcomes and help build social capital
- by flexibly defining 'food security', Program partners have been able to tailor their responses to the nuanced needs of specific contexts, as well as their own organisational strengths (both ANGO and PNGO)
- substantive themes such as 'food security' can act as a useful vehicle for progressing other resilience factors such as community strengthening, women's empowerment, opportunities for youth and building capacity for the promotion of psychosocial health
- strong progress on women's empowerment is achievable in the PTs when supported by clear and sensitive strategy
- strategic infrastructure investments can facilitate significant returns when evidence based
- the exceptional capacity of many PNGOs positions them as important development partners, capable of assuming even more responsibility in any future phase
- ANGOs' role remains significant in facilitating innovation and knowledge management, but their contribution and value add must be clearly articulated alongside that of local partners
- While information sharing between partners is important and valued, it has not led to any substantial degree of collaboration between consortia, nor adoption of each 'other partner's better practice'.
- Ensure gender is central to the program and mainstreamed as far as possible

Given the above, it is recommended that a new five year AMENCA Program be initiated by DFAT that continues to operate across BOTH West Bank and Gaza, building on key lessons learned from AMENCA2 to ensure that Australian assistance continues to evolve and become even more sophisticated in its response to the complex issues of the PTs. This should occur as soon as possible to assure continuity of presence and learning, and also to avoid close-down/start-up costs, and loss of staff. If this cannot occur, bridge funding should be made available to current partners, based on submission of a feasible work plan.

Given Palestinian national development priorities (and Australian competitive advantage as a leader in dry land agriculture), it is proposed that the new Program be rural development/agriculture/resilience focused and build on the strengths of AMENCA2 by focusing on the promotion of activities that facilitate economic and social empowerment. The Program parameters should NOT be overly prescriptive, leaving room for different organisations to articulate their own program logic and theory of change in order to allow them to bring their consortia's strategic advantage to the selection table. In this model, emphasis would be placed on consortia presenting a coherent, persuasive and compelling logic that their approach is relevant to the context they describe, and reflective of lessons learned through AMENCA 2. Particular emphasis should be given to strategies for 'adding value' to Program efforts, be that through marketing, value chain modelling, cooperation or synergies between consortia. Bids should also include clear strategies for inclusion of the vulnerable and women in their activities. While such a program should not exclude strategies that promote export agriculture, its primary focus should be on expanding domestic production with the aim of greater levels of self-sufficiency given restrictions posed by the blockade.

A clear role should exist in any new Program for PNGOs, who have demonstrated in AMENCA2 the value of their technical skills, astute local understanding, and generally highly developed capacity. Australian NGOs should be pressed to clearly define their value add. Consortia must be more than just relationships of convenience, and must demonstrate their complementarity and collective alignment towards an agreed goal. Such a Program would leave space for both innovation and inclusion of any of the successful components of AMENCA2, putting the onus on applicants to the Program to provide a compelling and persuasive argument that their approach is holistic and would effectively navigate the value chain. It also leaves the door open for the participation of new partners, given that decision making would be directly aligned to the relevance of the theory of change and approach being put forward.

Over the course of AMENCA2, there has been considerable shift in the Palestinian political environment, with a strong focus emerging on the concept of 'state building'. This is reflected in the Australian Government strategy for the PTs, which aims to progress state building. While limited engagement of the PA has occurred during AMENCA2, opportunities exist for further evolution in a new phase. While it is premature to rely on the PA as an implementing partner, it is important that a new AMENCA Program phase reflect, align and be supportive of PA development planning – notably the National Development Plan for 2014-16 and the National Agriculture Sector Strategy. A Program Steering Committee should be developed to support Program implementation, with representation of relevant PA officials. This will ensure increasing levels of ownership and synergies between government and non-government entities.

DFAT's contribution to the success of AMENCA2 has been significant, and is highly appreciated by partners for its hands on, flexible and informed approach to complex issues. Central to this success has been the strong relationship that has existed between the Program Manager and the M&E Advisor. Given the symbiotic relationship that exists between politics and development in the PTs, it is proposed that Program Management continue to be undertaken from within the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah. It is further proposed that consideration be given to appointment of a Program Advisor with extensive experience in rural development, community strengthening, agriculture and M&E to represent the Program, support coordination and information sharing, and identify opportunities for potential innovations. This is in many respects recognition of, formalisation

and expansion of the role of the current M&E Advisor, whose work has been of critical importance to the Program's achievements.

Finally, any future Program needs a further strengthened capacity to advocate around issues relevant to the achievement of its outcomes, since such advocacy is often beyond the capacity of partners.

ANNEX

1. AMENCA2 Review Terms of Reference
2. AMENCA2 Evaluation Plan
3. Map of AMENCA2 Project sites
4. List of Outcome Themes
5. AMENCA2 Review Schedule