

# ANCP Annual Reflections Workshop 2016

Tuesday 2 August, Melbourne / Thursday 11 August, Sydney

---

In August 2016, DFAT, ANCP NGOs and representatives of both ACFID, the Committee for Development Cooperation (CDC) and accreditation assessors met in Melbourne and Sydney for the second ANCP Reflections Workshop. The purpose of the Workshops was to celebrate the highlights of 2015-16, discuss progress on implementing the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) Evaluation recommendations, particularly ways of working and learning, and discuss the work program for the coming year.

## **A. ANCP Highlights**

1. Highlights in the 2015-16 financial year for ANCP noted by DFAT include maintaining the current budget of \$127.3 million; continuing program reform and implementation of the Funding Policy; finalisation and publication of the Program Logic (aka Theory of Change) and Performance Assessment Framework in September 2015; and publication of the Gender Thematic Review (more below).

## **Discussion**

2. Participants were supportive of the ANCP's progress in implementing the ODE Evaluation Recommendations. Particular emphasis was given to the implementation of the Funding Policy, with some participants noting that the Policy provides greater certainty and transparency in relation to ANCP processes and funding. In addition, some participants noted the ANCP's core commitment to flexibility and the continued importance of this principle.
3. The value of the measures adopted by DFAT to achieve greater transparency, including consultative workshops like the Annual Reflections Workshop and consistent access to information via the ANCP Bulletins was also noted by participants. Indeed, some noted that one of the key achievements of the ANCP program was that it 'enables the building of social capital... enabling local organisations to carry development forward.'
4. Participants noted a range of NGO achievements from building local capacity and partnerships, leveraging additional funding to extend the reach of ANCP projects, and achieving development results in a range of sectors from women's empowerment and leadership to WASH, disability inclusive development and mental health advocacy.

## **B. Gender Highlights**

5. DFAT discussed the results of the Thematic Review on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment released in March 2016. The Review found that the ANCP NGOs with the best contributions to gender equality were those with a strong organisational commitment (internal) and an operational framework for actioning gender in their programming (external).
6. DFAT explained the key findings, including:
  - a. achieving results in gender equality is a gradual process;
  - b. religion and culture adds a layer of complexity with tailored approaches, including working with gatekeepers, having been shown to have the greatest rate of success;
  - c. the sharing of resources and using short term advisory inputs or mentors to build capacity is one way forward;

- d. there are challenges in capturing data; noting ANCP has taken steps to address this including updating templates to better capture analysis in planning and results in reporting;
  - e. the benefits of sharing/leveraging and building coalitions around gender challenges.
7. The workshop broke into five groups to discuss the following key themes:
    - a. Gender equality projects that engage both women and men;
    - b. Working in traditional structures (i.e. church, chiefly) to achieve behaviour change;
    - c. Youth as change agents;
    - d. Mainstreaming gender, including in emerging sectors;
    - e. Strong gender analysis in design /M&E systems that collect both qualitative and quantitative to inform implementation.
  8. An additional area of consideration, the intersectionality of gender and disability, sexual orientation/LGBTI, gender and caste, urban/rural was also discussed.

### ***Discussion***

9. Participants supported the findings of the Thematic Review. Some highlighted the importance of having dedicated resources to drive gender mainstreaming and that champions/agents for change must exist at different levels to support mainstreaming. Participants also emphasised the importance of cultural sensitivity and avoiding a 'value based approach'.
10. Individual organisations reported on different successes in gender. Some participants noted that they had achieved success in gender by focussing on internal Human Resources: encouraging recruitment of women into senior roles. Other achievements noted by participants included where male leaders had been involved as 'Agents of Change' with the goal of creating opportunities for women. Further successes involved offering programs exclusively to men encompassing health, social and gender education.
11. However, some NGOs noted that engagement in gender should not focus predominantly on men and that it was important to offer opportunities to girls and women, particularly in relation to health education. It was emphasised that in order to be effective, programs focussing on health and education often have to be provided in a secure and private forum. A number of participants noted the importance of making girls and youth leaders the agents of change and of offering female-only programs. Participants noted the effectiveness of social media – where available – in providing a safe and private environment for girls and women to share learnings.
12. The difficulties in gathering data reflecting gender results for M&E purposes was discussed by participants, with some noting this issue was particularly present where NGOs worked with in-country 'grassroots' partners. Participants noted that if partners operated at that level, qualitative as opposed to quantitative discussions often deliver the most effective approach. The inclusion of longer and more specific questions on gender in the Performance Report also encouraged greater reflection and discussion with local partners and within the organisation.

13. Participants noted the benefit in developing groups of NGOs interested in working in consortium to share expertise and learnings in gender. Reference was made to the ACFID-DFAT Community of Practice on Gender and Development which is very active, meeting twice each year. Participants were encouraged to check the ACFID website or get in touch with ACFID to become members of the community.

**C. Data and the ANCP Performance Assessment Framework**

14. DFAT highlighted the impressive development results achieved by ANCP. In 2014-15 48 accredited ANGOs worked with more than 5,000 in-country partners to deliver 621 projects in 58 countries. Based on the information provided in the Performance Reports, the following results were noted:
  - a. 7.8 million people (49 per cent women and girls, half a per cent people with disability) provided with integrated community approaches to health and wellbeing
  - b. 2.6 million people (60 per cent women and girls, half a per cent people with disability) have greater awareness of gender equality, women's equal rights and issues related to violence against women
  - c. 2.5 million people (50 per cent women and girls, 3 per cent people with disability) gained increased knowledge of hygiene practices
  - d. 1.7 million people (47 per cent women and girls, 6 per cent people with disability) gained increased access to essential medicines and health commodities including HIV treatment
  - e. 1.3 million people (46 per cent women and girls, 13 per cent people with disability) provided with prevention services excluding HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.
15. However, there were challenges and complexities in the data collection, verification and usage, as highlighted by the ODE Evaluation. DFAT explained why performance management is essential to ensure that the Department continues to improve its aid program and deliver effective results and the importance of ensuring ANCP results are credible.

**Discussion**

16. Some organisations reported that it was a relief not to have to report indirect beneficiaries. NGOs noted that confusion remained regarding the definition of a 'beneficiary'. Participants identified that disability indicators continued to present a challenge to organisations due to difference in terminology and definition. The issue of reporting on results where ANCP NGOs work in a coalition was also discussed. Organisations requested greater clarity on how data should be recorded in the Annual Development Plan (ADPlan) to ensure that figures are correct. Some NGOs were careful to emphasise that there will always be variability in data collection.

17. Participants noted a potential benefit in NGOs sharing resources and learnings on data collection and verification. A common suggestion was that an 'M&E Sharing Platform' be established, including a list of ANCP projects that are undergoing evaluation. Some participants also suggested that information regarding projects undergoing evaluation be included in the ANCP Bulletin or that the Bulletin include a space for announcements. The ACFID website was also identified as a forum for sharing M&E related advice and information. Suggestions also included an extra half day at the time of the Annual Reflections Workshop be organised for NGOs to share best practice and an ANCP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF) Reference Group or an ACFID M&E Group could be organised to develop a consistent approach to data collection.

**D. Ways of Working**

18. DFAT explained that recommendation 2 of the ODE Evaluation was to ensure that the principle of partnership is applied across all ANCP members and that this is reflected in a suitable naming convention. DFAT acknowledged that the Partnership between DFAT and the current group of ten is coming to an end in June 2017 and that it is in the process of exploring how DFAT and ANCP NGOs define the relationship beyond that point.
19. DFAT noted that ANCP is a strong partnership modality with core partnership principles, including mutual benefit, equity and transparency.

**Discussion**

20. Participants noted that a collaborative relationship exists between DFAT and ANCP NGOs and that there was a sense that both entities were working to prove the ANCP's worth. Some participants emphasised that this extended the relationship beyond a purely 'transactional' relationship.
21. It was noted that DFAT had previously flagged the possibility of developing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) once the current one expires and in-line with the new grant agreements; however, the group discussed strengthening existing arrangements as an alternative. There was discussion on where and how partnership principles might be reflected in the Program given the existing architecture: DFAT's policy document, *DFAT and NGOs: Effective Partners*, the ANCP Program Logic and Performance Assessment Framework, the ANCP Manual, Accreditation Manual, ANCP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF).
22. It was agreed that a new MOU was not needed but that the Program Logic could be updated to reflect both partnership principles and behaviours. In addition, the partnership relationship would continue to be discussed at the Annual Reflections and from 2017-18 would be reported on by all ANCP NGOs and discussed in the Annual Program Performance Report drafted by DFAT.

## **E. Learning**

23. DFAT explained that it is also considering how to bring learning into accreditation through providing accreditation assessors with our Monitoring and Engagement (M&E) trip reports/Annual Development Plan (ADPlan) & Performance Report Assessments, and Partner Performance Assessments (where relevant). DFAT opened the floor for discussion on how to best implement recommendation 5 of the ODE Evaluation: sharing lessons including with involvement from ACFID.

## **Discussion**

24. Participants noted that there are a number of learning opportunities that are available to NGOs. Webinars were identified as a useful tool because they can overcome issues of distance and attendance and ACFID Communities of Practice provide valuable learning opportunities. Some NGOs noted that it would be beneficial to develop 'self-help' groups to encourage collaboration and share learnings.
25. Participants noted the capacity to organise in-country round tables to share lessons on M&E and ANCP processes. Some participants noted that it would be beneficial for ANCP NGOs' in-country partners to share training on DFAT policies and to engage in other capacity building and collaborative learning opportunities together. Some organisations noted that the potential exists for greater learning at the time of re-accreditation. It was suggested that ANCP NGOs undergoing re-accreditation 'buddy-up' with recently re-accredited NGOs to facilitate and streamline the re-accreditation process.

## **F. Next Steps**

26. There was generally positive feedback in the evaluation forms from both Sydney and Melbourne workshops. Agenda items considered most useful were data and gender discussions. Holding information sessions on the Performance Reports following the reflections was also useful with some suggestions to DFAT on refining the format.
27. The following work will be undertaken before the 2017 Annual Reflections:
  - a. DFAT to reconstitute a MELF Reference Group by the end of 2016 to meet via telecon on a regular basis, open to all interested ANCP NGO contacts. The MELF Reference Group will:
    - i. participate in a data validation exercise (ODE Evaluation Recommendation 4(c));
    - ii. consider topics for the next Thematic Review;
    - iii. consider mechanisms to improve learning within the Program.
  - b. DFAT will draft partnership principles and behaviours to be included in an updated Program Logic and circulate for comment and formal agreement at the Annual Reflections in 2017;
    - i. once agreed, DFAT will amend the Program Logic and Performance Reporting templates;
    - ii. The ANCP Partnership will also be a regular agenda item at the Annual Reflections Workshops.