



ANCP ANNUAL REFLECTIONS WORKSHOP 2017: OUTCOMES

The third annual ANCP Reflections Workshop was held in August 2017 and was attended by DFAT, ANCP NGOs and representatives of both ACFID, the Committee for Development Cooperation (CDC) and accreditation assessors. There was excellent attendance and participation by the ANCP NGOs in both Sydney and Melbourne. The purpose of the workshop was to reflect on the highlights of 2016-17; discuss and share approaches to key quality programming issues; and provide an opportunity to provide feedback on ANCP and discuss emerging issues.

ANCP Highlights

1. DFAT shared highlights for ANCP, including an expansion in the program from 54 to 57 accredited NGOs and two upgrades from Base accreditation to Full accreditation and a \$2.4 million increase in the budget for 2017-18 to \$128.8 million.
2. DFAT reported that it had undertaken 13 monitoring and evaluation visits to ANCP programs, with 5 of these being Canberra-led and the others being Post-led.
3. DFAT outlined the ANCP team's continued work on implementing the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) Evaluation recommendations, including:
 - drafting partnership principles and circulating them for comment before formal agreement (ODE Recommendation 2);
 - reconvening the MELF Reference Group which met once in December via telecon (ODE Recommendation 4)
 - drafting a policy on the role of DFAT Posts which outlines expectations including hosting annual roundtables and undertaking some ANCP monitoring (ODE Recommendation 3)
 - engaging with ACFID on planning future learning opportunities (ODE Recommendation 5)
4. DFAT reiterated its commitment to continue to look for ways to improve and strengthen ANCP systems. It has planned a review of accreditation in 2017. The review will be consultative with ANCP NGOs and through the Committee for Development Cooperation.

Risks in ANCP Programming

1. DFAT outlined its approach to managing the risk of delivering aid through the ANCP NGOs, which includes:
 - upfront due diligence in the accreditation process,
 - rigorous contractual requirements,
 - regular monitoring and engagement visits globally,
 - robust financial and performance reporting requirements,
 - a rolling program of management and financial audits for all NGOs,
 - a 'zero tolerance' approach to fraud and corruption that includes investigating all allegations to determine the nature and extent, recover any money or assets lost, and seek application of appropriate penalties and prosecutions, and



- a range of risk related contractual requirements that apply to NGOs participating in the ANCP.
- 2. DFAT noted the changing aid environment in which ANCP works and highlighted examples of emerging risks that have been observed by the ANCP team including increasing risks to aid workers; closure of projects in high risk locations; and the impact of the potential for terror financing.
- 3. DFAT drew attention to this year’s ADPlan forms, which included updated questions that sought to better identify risk and risk management strategies. DFAT advised that Posts review all new or significantly changed projects proposed by NGOs, providing advice on the local operating environment and considering financial, reputational, and development risks. Posts also consider consular risks, in particular in relation to the safety of Australians in certain high-risk contexts.
- 4. DFAT recognised that NGOs have a range of robust and important risk management mechanisms, including systems to mitigate the risk of fraud and corruption, and detect fraud; due diligence processes in selecting implementing partners; safety and security protocols; regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting to DFAT, and comprehensive financial management systems.

Discussion

- 5. Participants worked in small groups to identify risks that they faced in ANCP projects and shared different mitigation strategies that they employ to manage risk. The groups rotated between risk categories to review and build on the body of risks and mitigations strategies.
- 6. Participants noted the deep value in discussing different experiences of and approaches to risk, recognising that they have much to learn from each other. Discussion within the groups in plenary highlighted that risk management is well integrated in project design and monitoring, but formal risk identification and documentation is sometimes less comprehensive and could be improved, specifically with in-country partners.
- 7. Participants discussed some of the opportunities and challenges associated with considering project implementation through a risk perspective – for example gender. DFAT noted that ADPlans often only list very generic risks and encourage NGOs to include more frank, project-specific risks and management responses. Project managers were also encouraged by DFAT to engage with risk as an on-going project management tool, including engagement with in-country partners wherever possible, rather than seeing the risk matrix as a compliance exercise.
- 8. Risks and risk management strategies highlighted through the discussions were:

Political context

- **Risk** – restructuring or refocusing of aid budget, governance restructuring in host countries affecting relationships and authorities to release funds and sign MOUs, diminishing space/increased restriction for CSOs in host countries, change of government elections in host countries leading to delays & disruptions, ‘pork barrelling’/corruption, balance between partnering with government and advocacy against it, projects or advocacy that challenges social norms leads to increased unrest and staff security, security during political unrest.
- **Risk Management Strategies** – collaborate and communicate with DFAT; develop contingency plans and contingency funding agreements with partners; good communication with partners; maintain relationships with partner host governments; use aid language sensitively; clearly define advocacy and differentiate it from civil disobedience; develop standards of operating during elections; include flexibility in planning to accommodate delays, safety concerns, and lack of communication; rely on partner advice in terms of security; ensure partners have security protocols; support community based protection mechanisms; have alternate ways of staying in touch if normal communications are disrupted.



Personnel safety

- **Risk** - national staff or community members at risk if advocating in political or cultural environments, increased visibility of staff and assets, non-compliance with OH&S policies, theft, health/infectious/communicable diseases, safety with travel, gender based violence, disaster risk reduction, transport and travel to remote areas i.e. dangerous roads,/driver/vehicles, boat travel, small aircraft, kidnapping, tensions and violence, child protection and reputational risks.
- **Risk Management Strategies** – provide orientation briefings; use approved transport; consider NGO identification badges; have a vaccination policy for staff and partners; use mosquito nets; comply with local dress code; use Codes of Conduct; undertake good context analysis; minimise visibility by removing logos where needed; avoid night travel; have appropriate insurance; register with SmartTraveller; have evacuation protocols and services; seek partner advice; provide security briefings, appoint safety managers; have comprehensive human resource policies; have counselling or referral services available to staff; have emergency policies and procedures; use early warning systems; provide training to staff on travel safety and personal security.

Gender

- **Risk** - customary norms/roles preventing participation, shifts in power dynamics causes backlash, increased risk of gender based violence when women's incomes increase, structural issues such as laws that discriminate against women, increased work load on women due to program demands, project activities reinforcing discriminatory gender norms.
- **Risk Management Strategies** - Undertake gender analysis; create safe spaces for women to engage; work through women's organisations; engage local authorities who are supportive of change; engage with male champions; hold activities at times when women can participate; check with women to ensure they are not overburdened; respect cultural norms while also changing attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of women and men; help women to collect evidence of structural discrimination; acknowledge that men can experience discrimination; seek to gender mainstream rather than frame a 'gender' project; recognise the differences between women based on different factors such as age.

Child protection

- **Risk** - role of children in program delivery may increase vulnerability to exploitation, reduced income from reduced child labour, changes in family dynamics could have unintended consequences such as violence in households, unknown adults entering communities, private information and images of children, downstream partners with less accountability and child safe practice, unintended impacts due to programs such as meetings during school or study hours.
- **Risk Management Strategies** – look for child protective activities already established in the partner community; undertake a comprehensive situational analysis; build culturally sensitive mechanisms and organisational culture to receive, report and act on any identified risks or issues; staff commitment to Child Protection Code of Conduct; ensure all visitors to projects sign a Code of Conduct; comprehensive pre-employment screening and training related to child protection; ensuring genuine informed consent for images; policy on safe and ethical photography; integration of child protection in partner agreements; community consultation on child protection.

Sustainability

- **Risk** – challenges engaging with governments to ensure ownership, reliance on training to increase knowledge, limited participatory planning leading to low community ownership, partner staff turnover, funding uncertainty, climate change leading to increase frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.
- **Risk Management Strategies** - Start with local level government and work up to higher levels; formal MoUs with government where appropriate; develop informal relationships in some contexts; aligning with government strategies and priorities; follow up training activities with refresher courses and



monitoring; increase training quality through capacity building; prompt design improvement through proposal templates and feedback; conduct social planning with all groups in a community; support partners in staff development; support longer term partnerships; support local civil society organisation alliances; citizen education; scan for alternative long term funding sources.

Finance

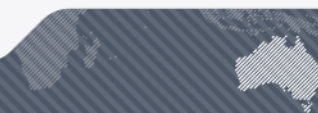
- **Risk** – fraud, terror financing, partners financial management systems, cash transfers, exchange fluctuations, underspends, corruption/facilitation payments, acquittal and rollover with ANCP timings, retaining good partners finance staff as they are sought after skills.
- **Risk Management Strategies** – financial policies included in partner agreements; partner training on financial management and fraud prevention; ensure clear understanding of terrorism policy; ongoing monitoring and checks regarding terrorism financing; nuancing terror financing strategies to local contexts; financial management capacity assessments with partners; regular audits; regular review of budgets; more frequent reporting for higher risk partners; agreements in AUD to limit exchange risk to the Australian partner; project staff work with finance staff to ensure understanding; consider new technology such as block-chain; continuous training .

Operating in remote locations

- **Risk** – value for money difficult to demonstrate, accurate budgeting, increase issues with safety and security, weak sub national government partners, lack of political leadership to go to remote locations, lack of resources and infrastructure, additional time for design and implementation, monitoring.
- **Risk Management Strategies** –provide phone credit so remote partners can report; bring documents or staff to a central location to report; consider timing of project activities to avoid challenges such as monsoon; build capacity for local data collection; have flexible funding or contingency options if remote locations do not deliver; allow sufficient funds for regular visits; early transport of goods required; local sourcing of materials wherever possible; coordinate with other organisations.

Gender Equality

1. DFAT noted that gender equality is one of six key investment priorities for the Australian aid program and that DFAT has a performance target on the effectiveness of gender equality in all aid investments. DFAT also noted that Gender Equality is a key consideration of Minister Bishop.
2. DFAT highlighted that the ANCP recently received an additional \$10m for the competitive Gender Action Platform (GAP) through which 6 ANCP NGOs (ActionAid, Act for Peace, CARE, ChildFund, Marie Stopes International, and World Vision) were selected to undertake a range of projects in 11 countries.
3. DFAT advised that it introduced updated guidance from the DAC on the gender equality policy marker in the most recent ADPlan template. However, it observed that when assessing ADPlans this year, it appeared that some activities may be incorrectly coded. DFAT explained that the marker is the key monitoring and accountability tool in the context of 2030 Agenda and the only common tool available to DAC members to track bilateral aid commitments on gender equality. It advised NGOs that when completing performance reports, they will have the opportunity to revise the marker chosen for 2016-17 projects. It encouraged all NGOs to make sure staff read the guidance and answer appropriately – as DFAT uses this to report on gender in the Aid Program Performance Report.
4. DFAT referred to the results of the Thematic Review on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment released in 2016, which found that the ANCP NGOs with the best contributions to gender equality were those with a strong organisational commitment and an operational framework for actioning gender in their programming. In the spirit of continuous learning, DFAT invited participants to share with each other their approaches to gender equality within ANCP projects and their overall organisational approaches to gender equality.



Discussion

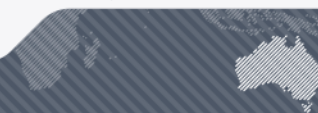
5. Participants were invited to individually reflect on their agency's current approach and practices towards promoting gender equality and share in small groups. In plenary, discussion highlighted that explicit commitment to gender equality from the leadership of the organisation has made significant impacts on overall agency practice in several organisations. Other participants noted that integrating gender analysis within project management tools and systems also creates a discipline and rigour to successfully promote gender equality at all stages in the project cycle.
6. Discussion highlighted the need for gender analysis to recognise systemic inequities that must be addressed by empowering women and providing pathways for their engagement in decision making and leadership. Some NGOs also noted that commitment alone is not enough to integrate gender into programming.
7. Some participants noted the importance of ensuring that discussion on gender includes issues facing women and men, as well as different sexual orientations and gender identities.

ANCP Communications

1. DFAT provided an update on the work it has done to develop a communications strategy with its NGO partners; DFAT staff, particularly those at Post and on country and thematic desks; and the Australian public. The strategy is aimed at working together to promote the good work of ANCP to the Australian public. DFAT highlighted the importance of collectively demonstrating the value of the Australian Aid program, fostering positive attitudes towards aid and garnering support for the Australian aid program.
2. DFAT shared that it has updated Communications and Engagement Section (Section 8) of the ANCP Manual with more information on how NGOs should acknowledge ANCP and a new section on digital communications. These updates were addressed in some detail at a recent communications webinar for ANCP NGOs. A recording of the [webinar](#) held on 6 June 2017 is available on the ACFID Youtube channel and NGOs were encouraged to share the link with their colleagues and partners. DFAT has also created an [Australian Aid branding file](#) in a publicly accessible digital library including good practice examples.
3. DFAT advised that standard wording on matched funding, acknowledgements, and accreditation will go in next year's update to the ANCP Manual. NGOs are encouraged to contact DFAT if they require wording for any other aspect of the program.
4. DFAT noted that there is mutual benefit to communicating the achievements of the ANCP program and increasing the number of online conversations about what the Australian Aid program does and why. DFAT highlighted that the [ANCP Twitter List](#) is now up on @AusHumanitarian. [ANCP Twitter List](#) is an effective way to promote the collective efforts of ANCP partners to the public. DFAT encouraged NGOs to continue to use the Twitter handles #ANCP and #AustralianAid to share positive stories about their ANCP funded work.
5. DFAT's Communications Team has committed to updating the [Branding aid projects and initiatives web page](#) and the [Logos and style guides web page](#) – the ANCP will notify NGOs once this finalised.

Discussion

6. Participants shared experience and tips of maximising social media outreach. Some participants noted the limitations of Twitter and encouraged efforts to be directed to other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.
7. Participants brainstormed Australian Aid messages and media opportunities that ANCP NGOs could consider when developing their own communications strategies. Some of the messages and methods suggested were:
 - Highlight the buy in or investment from public – matched funds, public/private collaboration.
 - Rigour of due diligence undertaken – accreditation, due diligence, trusted partners.



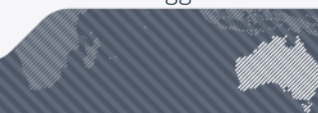
- Business case on return on investment.
- Highlight private sector engagement, trade.
- Highlight relevant health security issues eg TB in PNG.
- Quality of services.
- Value for money.
- Ensure relevance to recent media dialogue.
- Tap into community based action i.e. women's groups, agricultural sector.
- Use celebrities as ambassadors.
- Tell story behind a current event/emergency – how NGOs prepare communities and how NGOs respond better.
- Demonstrate with evidence how the Australian community is interested and supportive of aid program.

ANCP Results and Data Validity

1. In 2015-16, ANCP provided \$126.4 million to 53 NGOs. DFAT highlighted the impressive development results achieved by ANCP Based on the information provided in the Performance Reports, the following results were noted:
 - 5.6 million people with increased access to medicines & health commodities incl. HIV treatment
 - 1.3 million people with increased access to financial services
 - 1 million people with increased knowledge of hygiene practices
 - 970,000 people exposed to awareness raising campaigns/activities on violence against women.
2. DFAT noted that comparison and analysis of ANCP results from year to year is challenging due to shifts in sectors, project locations and expenditure and beneficiary numbers, to reflect NGOs' annual programming priorities. DFAT explained that while there are some very good reasons for changes in overall results, there needs to be continued attention to the validity of ANCP data. DFAT emphasised that confidence in ANCP data is critical to delivering effective results and ensuring that ANCP results are credible.

Discussion

3. Participants worked in small groups to share their approaches to data collection and their application of ANCP guidelines on beneficiary counting. NGOs discussed some of the challenges they face in data validation, including the reliability of baseline data collected by overseas governments, access to data in project locations that are remote or unsafe, and shared understanding of beneficiary definitions with overseas partners. NGOs also highlighted challenges associated with counting beneficiaries in multi-year projects, in multi donor funded projects, and where beneficiaries access more than one aspect of a project or program.
4. Other challenges with data collection and validation included: attribution, changes to populations i.e. urban/rural, double counting, counting beneficiaries across a whole program with multiple projects, data fraud, disability definitions and disaggregation, collecting data on sensitive topics or in sensitive contexts, differing methodologies of partners, submission of ADPlans before design finalised, outcomes vs outputs, how indicators are interpreted by partners, resources needed, partners and communities may value data differently, reliability of secondary data.
5. Some participants registered their confusion with how the definition of 'baseline' required in the ADPlan should be applied to beneficiary values. NGOs shared their approaches to calculating baseline, which differed depending on project context. There was a suggestion that perhaps the 'baseline' figure is not useful for data analysis and could be removed. DFAT undertook to consider this suggestion.



6. NGOs who expressed greatest confidence in their data explained that they had made formal investments in developing beneficiary guidelines and data collection tools.
7. Ideas for innovation and improvements to data collection and validation were discussed. The key messages were:
 - Improved needs analysis leads to improved understanding of data to be collected.
 - Use M&E budget to train partners in M&E.
 - Utilise technology to capture data.
 - Improve agency MELFs, develop PAF.
 - Improve data collection templates.
 - Open Data Kit.
 - Undertake research into social impact.
 - Data collection tools including KoBo Toolbox (open source), software app.
 - Train community facilitators in data collection.
 - Work with local governments to improve data collection.
 - Invest more in qualitative data collection methodologies.
8. DFAT highlighted that the ANCP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF) Reference Group was re-established following a telecon meeting in December 2016. This group will provide a good forum to continue discussion and sharing of best practice in relation to data collection and data validity.
9. DFAT also noted that ACFID was considering an ANCP Community of Practice as part of its research on demonstrating impact, and encouraged all ANCP NGOs to participate if it was established.
10. Members of the former APAC group announced that attendance at the ANCP Learning Event – scheduled for 28 November will be open to all ANCP NGOs. Details on this event will be shared via the ANCP Bulletin.

ANCP Performance Assessment Framework

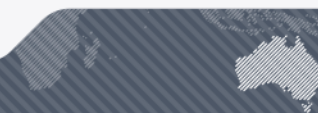
1. DFAT explained that the ANCP Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) was developed with the Program Logic in 2015. It is the basis on which DFAT reports on the ANCP as a modality on an annual basis. DFAT highlighted that the PAF seeks to accommodate the diversity of a large number of different sized organisations and the flexibility of the ANCP, which enables NGOs to develop programs in a large number of countries and in many sectors.
2. DFAT noted that it is committed to reviewing the PAF annually and invited feedback on whether the PAF indicators and targets still relevant and whether there are any major omissions.

Discussion

3. Participants generally agreed that the current indicators and targets for the outcome area 'Effective Engagement with In-Country Partners' could be revised. The current target, being 'the percentage of projects that have clear exit strategies' was considered to be of limited value. DFAT undertook to review the indicator and target for this outcome area and revise the PAF accordingly.

ANCP Principles of Engagement

1. DFAT noted 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. It noted that the 2016 ANCP Annual Reflections Workshop agreed the principles did not need to be contractual in nature (MOU) but that the ANCP Program Logic should be updated to include these principles.



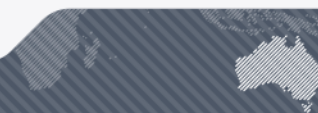
2. DFAT explained that it had drafted a document known as 'Principles of Engagement', which seeks to guide the way in which DFAT and NGOs as a group engage and relate with one another in the delivery of the ANCP. Whilst DFAT felt that the ANCP model with a large and continuously growing membership is not well suited to a traditional partnership model, it wanted to document the principles and behaviours to guide the engagement and relationship between ANCP members. A draft of these principles was circulated among ANCP NGOs, and feedback was invited. A total of 18 submissions were received: 16 NGO submissions, one from ACFID and one from the CDC. DFAT advised that four NGO submissions supported the principles in draft form with no suggested changes. The remaining submissions made a range of suggestions to the wording of the proposed four principles - almost all of which have been incorporated.
3. DFAT advised that suggestions related to adaptability and flexibility of ANCP programming; funding predictability; and acknowledging the role of accreditation in due diligence and risk management are addressed comprehensively elsewhere (ANCP Program Logic, ANCP Manual, ANCP Funding Policy etc.) and are more focused on the design or modality of the ANCP than the relationship between the parties who participate in the program.
4. DFAT advised that some of the NGO submissions asked for clarification on what the indicators, reporting requirements and assessment process would be in place to measure implementation of the new principles. DFAT shared its intention to update the Performance Report template from next year (2017-18) to capture information from NGOs on this and report as a whole in the APPR. It also committed to including a health check as a standing agenda item for future ANCP Annual Reflections.

Discussion

5. Participants were invited to comment on the latest draft of the Principles of Engagement. DFAT noted that partnership principles are already well embedded within ANCP practice but that they are not clearly documented anywhere else. Discussion raised that with the move from Head Agreements to annual grant agreements, much of the previous reference to the ongoing relationship and engagement underpinned by ANCP Accreditation had been removed. DFAT noted that the ANCP grant agreement is DFAT's standard grant agreement used for all partners and meets Commonwealth requirements. The approach DFAT has taken is to separate out the relationship aspects from the contractual documentation, thus providing maximum flexibility to develop these relationship principles and continue to tailor and adjust these as time goes on.
6. Participants noted the value of formally documenting principles that underpin the relationship with each other and with DFAT in the ANCP. Following discussions at the Annual Reflections Workshop, DFAT amended the principles and circulated seeking endorsement via the post workshop survey. The post workshop survey indicated unanimous endorsement of the updated ANCP Principles of Engagement.

Learning

1. NGO representatives explained that a small working group has been liaising with ACFID to organise a shared learning event for ANCP NGOs as the final engagement under the former MOU with the larger ANCP NGOs, known as the ANCP Partners. The learning event open to all ANCP NGOs will be held in Canberra on 28 November with the agenda still being finalised. Following this event, a new group will be established as an ACFID Community of Practice and all ANCP NGOs are welcome to join.



Next Steps

1. There was generally positive feedback in the evaluation forms from both Sydney and Melbourne workshops. Of the 31 ANCP NGOs who completed the survey, 84% rated it as very or extremely worthwhile. Almost half of the respondents indicated that 2017 was the first Annual Reflections Workshop they had attended. Agenda items considered most useful were risk in programming, gender analysis and data validation. Topics suggested for the 2018 workshop included: Gender, Data Validation, Environment and Climate Change, Disability, reflection on the Performance Assessment Framework and the ANCP Principles of Engagement. The majority of respondents indicated that August is the preferred timing for Annual Reflections Workshops and that they should continue to be held in Sydney and Melbourne rather than Canberra.
2. The following work will be undertaken before the 2018 Annual Reflection:
 - DFAT will convene the MELF Reference Group;
 - DFAT will review the indicators and targets for the PAF;
 - The PAF will continue to be reviewed annually at Annual Reflections Workshops; and
 - DFAT will finalise the Principles of Engagement and update the ANCP Program Logic to include these.

