

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### AusAID NGO Cooperation Program 2013 Meta-evaluation

#### 1. Objectives

The 2013 AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) meta-evaluation will be an independent review of a selection of program and project evaluations carried out by non-government organisations (NGOs) funded under the ANCP. The meta-evaluation will:

- Provide insight into the way in which NGOs are assessing their program/project approaches and learning from their experiences and those of their in-country partners.
- Identify opportunities for shared learning on what does or does not work in NGO program/project design and evaluation.

Through the collaboration and shared learning generated by this appraisal, AusAID seeks to instil a process of continuous improvement to build on the effectiveness and sustainability of aid delivered under the ANCP.

#### 2. Background

Working with non-government organisations is an integral part of Australia's approach to achieving the strategic goals of the aid program. The Civil Society Engagement Framework (CSEF) sets out how Australia will work more effectively with civil society organisations (CSOs) in Australia and overseas to increase the impact of aid for the world's poorest<sup>1</sup>. Effective engagement between the Australian Government and CSOs is guided by 10 principles, including mutual accountability for results, shared learning and collaboration, and building local capacity to ensure sustainability.

The AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)<sup>2</sup> is AusAID's largest and longest running program. It supports 43 Australian NGOs to undertake community-based development work in over 50 countries.

The ANCP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF)<sup>3</sup>, launched in 2012, is providing the evidence base to demonstrate the effectiveness of the ANCP in achieving results in poverty reduction. The MELF draws from NGO reporting systems and facilitates the tracking and evaluation of ANCP results on reducing poverty and achieving value for money. Results achieved by ANCP funded NGOs contribute directly to the assessment of progress against the Australian aid program Results Framework and the Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> CSEF: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/civil-society-engagement-framework.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> AusAID NGO Cooperation Program: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/ancp/Pages/home.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/ancp-melf-report.aspx>

Evaluations are central to aid effectiveness and the results agenda in driving ongoing learning which informs the direction, design and management of the ANCP. ANCP guidelines require all NGOs to undertake an evaluation of ANCP projects and programs periodically and provide for up to 10% of ANCP funds to be allocated to design, monitoring and evaluation. These evaluations allow NGOs to measure outcome and impact, and to assess their strategies and approaches in a way that complements results based reporting. Ongoing evaluative activities are a useful source of data, providing additional information to meet the MELF objectives of accountability, outcome information, and learning.

Under the MELF, AusAID has committed to carrying out a biennial meta-evaluation of NGO evaluations of ANCP funded projects. The intent is to capture the more in-depth and detailed assessments undertaken by NGOs to complement the summary data presented in the Annual Performance Reports. These meta-evaluations will provide an opportunity for NGOs to share learning and outcome information within AusAID, and with other NGOs and interested stakeholders.

### 3. Scope

The CSEF recognises the strength that diversity brings to the delivery of effective aid. The broad range of NGOs funded under the ANCP provides an excellent opportunity to examine how different approaches, procedures and contexts contribute to reducing poverty.

In 2012 NGOs were asked to include in their Performance Report a list of evaluations they had undertaken in the last financial year. They were asked to note the country in which the project was based, summarising the purpose, key findings and how the findings were used. NGOs were also asked to provide data on the total evaluation cost, including the AusAID subsidy amount. In addition, NGOs listed their evaluations undertaken in the past three to five years, providing only the project name, evaluation title and country details.

AusAID compiled the evaluation data and, based on the information supplied by NGOs, aligned each evaluation to the strategic goals of the Australian aid program<sup>4</sup>.

*An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results* sets out the five strategic goals of Australia's aid program.

The goals are:

- saving lives
- promoting opportunities for all
- sustainable economic development
- effective governance
- humanitarian and disaster response

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<sup>4</sup> *Helping the World's Poor Through Effective Aid: Australia's Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework to 2015–16*: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/about/Documents/capf.pdf>

There were a total of 378 evaluations during the period 2007 to 2012, spread across 57 countries. The table below shows the evaluations reported by NGOs by the top five countries and matched against the strategic goals:

| STRATEGIC GOAL                   | CAMBODIA  | TIMOR-LESTE | LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC | BANGLADESH | PAPUA NEW GUINEA | Total      |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| Promoting opportunities for all  | 15        | 5           | 9                                | 12         | 7                | <b>48</b>  |
| Sustainable economic development | 17        | 8           | 8                                | 6          | 6                | <b>45</b>  |
| Saving lives                     | 4         | 14          | 9                                | 6          | 8                | <b>41</b>  |
| Effective governance             | 8         | 3           | 3                                | 2          | 3                | <b>19</b>  |
| Humanitarian and DR              | 1         |             |                                  | 1          |                  | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>45</b> | <b>30</b>   | <b>29</b>                        | <b>27</b>  | <b>24</b>        | <b>155</b> |

The highest number of evaluations of ANCP NGO activities over the last three to five years were carried out in Cambodia. Of these, a significant number were carried out on activities which aligned to the following two strategic goals: *sustainable economic development* and *promoting opportunities for all*.

The 2013 meta-evaluation will examine ANCP NGO evaluations carried out between 2007 and 2012 in Cambodia that align with *promoting opportunities for all* and the development objectives of:

- Enabling more children, particularly girls, to attend school.
- Empowering women to participate in the economy, leadership and education.
- Enhancing the lives of people with disabilities.

#### 4. Focus Questions

Given the diverse range of approaches used by ANCP NGOs, AusAID is mindful of the need to keep the focus of the meta-evaluation broad. It is not the intention of the meta-evaluation to compare evaluations or NGOs. The aim is to examine and report on lessons learned and overall quality and range of outcomes for ANCP.

The main areas of inquiry for this meta-evaluation are:

- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the NGO evaluations?
- What are the factors that contribute to their quality?
- How effective are the evaluations at examining the value<sup>5</sup> of the particular project/program approach?
- How do the evaluations consider gender, age and disability? And do the evaluations provide disaggregated data (if relevant)?
- What are the main lessons learnt? What works and why?

<sup>5</sup> 'Value' is used in the broadest sense—that is, as articulated by the NGO undertaking the project/program.

- Are there any trends or patterns regarding the effectiveness, relevance, impact, outcomes, system or other characteristics of evaluated projects?
- What evidence is there that the ANCP is contributing to sustainability through in-country capacity building of organisations and individuals?

## 5. Approach

The meta-evaluation will be an assessment of NGO evaluations of ANCP funded projects. It will take the form of a document review of a selection of ANCP NGO evaluation reports. Additional relevant information will be sourced from Annual Performance Reports submitted to AusAID.

The focus will be on NGO evaluation reports for ANCP projects in Cambodia, over the last three to five years, which align with the Australian aid program's strategic goal of *promoting opportunities for all*.

An independent consultant will be engaged by AusAID to carry out the meta-evaluation. The consultant will have expertise in the appraisal of monitoring and evaluation strategies, as well as familiarity with the AusAID NGO Cooperation Program.

The meta-evaluation will be overseen by AusAID, through the NGOs and Business Branch, and an ANCP reference group comprising representatives from ANCP NGOs and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

## 6. Outputs

The key output will be a final report presenting the findings of the meta-evaluation. The report should be a Word document of up to 30 pages. The report should summarise the evidence collected, present analysis and findings against the focus questions and make recommendations where appropriate. A shorter version of the report, of up to five pages and containing an expanded executive summary and recommendations, is also required.

The primary audience for the report will be AusAID and ANCP NGOs, but the final report will also be available to a wider audience via the AusAID website<sup>6</sup>. The language used should be clear and concise and avoid jargon. Any acronyms should be spelled out when first used.

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<sup>6</sup> AusAID acknowledges that some evaluations may contain sensitive material. If so, AusAID will consult with the relevant NGO and any content considered confidential will not be published.

## 7. Time Frame

The anticipated time frame for the meta-evaluation is:

| Activity  | Estimated time taken | Proposed dates         |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| Review evaluation reports   | Up to 15 days        | 27 May to 17 June      |
| Prepare draft report  | Up to 5 days         | Between 17 and 28 June |
| Draft report to AusAID  |                      | By 2 July              |
| <i>AusAID to review draft report and seek feedback from ANCP NGOs</i> |                      | <i>2 to 19 July</i>    |
| Finalise report   | Up to 2 days         | Between 22 and 30 July |
| Final report to AusAID  |                      | By 31 July             |
| Present report findings to AusAID and ANCP NGOs                       | 1 day                | Date in August TBC     |

## 8. Limitations

The meta-evaluation will be a desk-based document review. The reviewer will work only with the NGO evaluation reports collected by AusAID and other relevant information supplied to AusAID in Annual Performance Reports. Visits to projects will not be included in the meta-evaluation and additional information will not be sought. Assessment may be limited by the information available in the evaluation reports.

The projects being evaluated may have concluded or been redesigned since the evaluation was carried out by the NGO. Therefore, any lessons learned for future project design or suggestions for changes to ANCP strategy may have already been superseded.

The meta-evaluation will look at evaluation reports from a number of different NGOs. There may be difficulties in accommodating the different agency structures and resources. There may be challenges in comparing the various methodologies, objectives and contexts, given the diverse range of approaches used by ANCP NGOs.