

Mid-Term Review of the Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Sector Linkages Program – Phase II MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Initiative Summary

Initiative Name	Phase II – Agriculture Sector Linkages Program (ASLP 2)		
AidWorks initiative number	INJ015		
Commencement date	1 October 2010	Completion date	30 September 2015
Total Australian \$	\$14,741,767 - \$13,741,767 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) & \$1,000,000 Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)		
Total other \$			
Delivery organisation(s)	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)		
Implementing partner(s)	University of Canberra, Charles Sturt University, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, University of Queensland and Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.		
Country/Region	Pakistan		
Primary sector	Agriculture/Rural Development		
Initiative objective/s	<p>To collaborate strategically to improve livelihood systems for the rural poor in Pakistan, and to build linkages between the agricultural sectors of Australia and Pakistan through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhancing selected value chains that benefit the rural poor through improved productivity, market and employment opportunities; 2. Supporting analysis that improves economic and natural resource management; and 3. Building the capacity of government, private and civil sectors to service the needs of stakeholders across the program. 		

Mid-Term Review Summary

Evaluation Objective: To review the effectiveness, efficiency, monitoring & evaluation and sustainability of ASLP 2.

Evaluation Completion Date: June 2013

Evaluation Team: David Swete Kelly and Keith Chapman

DFAT and ACIAR's response to the evaluation report

- ACIAR and DFAT appreciate the time and effort that the independent reviewers put into producing this high quality review report.
- DFAT and ACIAR accept most of the recommendations of the report, whilst noting that ACIAR and DFAT will need to continue discussions around some of the detail of the recommendations. A number of the recommendations will require significant work on the part of both DFAT and ACIAR.
- ACIAR and DFAT have agreed on additional funding to the value of \$743,600 (plus GST) for further activities under ASLP Phase 2 based on the review.

- This Management Response only responds to the 14 overarching recommendation made on pages 9-10 of the mid-term review report. It is noted that the review also contains a large number of recommendations specific to the individual projects that make up ASLP Phase 2. These detailed recommendations will not be dealt with as part of this management response. Recommendations regarding additional project activities and additional funding will be subject to Australian Government approval of a design of a new phase of ASLP and to sufficient budget availability.
- The observations and recommendations made in the review will provide important inputs in developing a possible Phase 3 program.

ACIAR and DFAT's response to the specific recommendations made in the report

Note: Minor changes have been made to the wording of the recommendations in the review to reflect changes to the Australian aid program since the report was written.

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. It is recommended that the ASLP teams purposely adopt the more nuanced approach to pro-poor research and development, as outlined.	Accept.	ASLP project teams to work with farmers and other stakeholders who have the capacity to implement new technology and practices, as well as identifying constraints (including political economy constraints) to adoption by poorer farmers/smallholders and marginalised groups including women to identify how they can access project developed innovation.	ACIAR ASLP project teams	By June 2014.
2. Rationalisation and simplification of security protocols between DFAT and ACIAR is urgently needed.	Accept. It has now been agreed at a corporate level that ACIAR will be responsible for the security of Australian ASLP staff with DFAT protocols taking precedence in Pakistan. These arrangements are now in place.	ACIAR to continue following its own security plan in compliance with DFAT security protocols for official visits to Pakistan.	ACIAR	Ongoing.

3.	It is therefore suggested that DFAT aim for a minimum of two scheduled field visits per year (totalling 5-6 days) to ASLP activities, in order to increase both its understanding of, and engagement with ASLP.	Accept. DFAT and ACIAR will coordinate to ensure that DFAT staff can accompany ASLP staff on a minimum of two field visits per year.	ACIAR to provide DFAT with sufficient advance notice of field visits (i.e. at least two weeks prior to planned visit). DFAT to seek funding and security approval for its involvement in field visits.	ACIAR DFAT Islamabad	Ongoing, starting from January 2014.
4.	It is recommended that ASLP discuss the format and structure of cascading operational and oversight meetings with PARC. ASLP engagement should align with PARC recommendations so that ownership is more clearly embedded with the Government of Pakistan as they themselves come to grips with their changing consultation mechanisms under devolution.	Partially accept, as the governance arrangements for ASLP need to take into account the views of provincial agencies as well as federal agencies such as PARC.	ACIAR to review governance arrangements for ASLP 2 in consultation with Pakistan federal and provincial agencies including agriculture and livestock ministries and departments, as well as DFAT. In particular effort should be made to ensure that the focus of the annual steering committee meetings is on strategic and not technical issues.	ACIAR DFAT Islamabad	Prior to the 2014 steering committee meeting.
5.	ACIAR should resolve the confusion regarding fund flows through ICARDA by circulating to Project Team administrators a set of Standard Operating Procedures that meet ICARDA accounting standards.	Accept.	ACIAR to circulate to project team administrators a set of standard operating procedures that meet ICARDA accounting standards.	ACIAR	Jan 2014

6. DFAT and ACIAR should come to a clear decision that either confirms the APARDS as an adequate (but not perfect) strategy, or sets a timeframe for the development of a new strategy to guide Australia's support to agriculture and rural development in Pakistan.	Accept.	No further action required DFAT and ACIAR agree that APARDS will be used as a guiding document until it is replaced by a new strategy.	ACIAR DFAT	Completed.
7. DFAT and ACIAR need to simplify the M&E Framework and agree on a minimum suite of indicators needed to meet Australian Government requirements for results reporting.	Accept.	DFAT and ACIAR to develop a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) to guide monitoring and evaluation. The PAF should identify a few key indicators for each project, identify data sources and establish realistic targets that meet the Australian Government's results reporting requirements for aid-related investments.	DFAT ACIAR	By June 2014.
8. Each ASLP project needs to better articulate the Impact Pathway underpinning its engagements, while subsequent reporting should note if the project is on track to deliver its agreed steps in this process. All stakeholders need to understand this distinction and resist the demand for ASLP to demonstrate widespread impacts.	Partially accept. ACIAR has systems in place to articulate impact pathways and performance against milestones and outputs.	ACIAR to share with DFAT the impact pathways, milestones and outputs of each ASLP project. These need to be reflected in the performance assessment framework. These should also be reflected in the ASLP communication strategy.	ACIAR	Prior to the 2014 steering committee meeting.

9. ASLP high-level reporting should focus on synthesising the key achievements that demonstrate ASLP is on track to deliver the necessary foundation for long-term change, along with any constraints it is facing.	Accept.	ASLP 2 Annual Reports to focus on the high level reporting including opportunities and constraints to transformational changes the project could help bring about in the selected commodity chains, based on the PAF. This report should form the basis for the annual steering committee meeting's agenda.	ACIAR	For the 2013-14 annual report.
10. Also at the project level, greater consistency in the individual project reporting would aid the process of synthesising program level achievements and risks. ACIAR should consider introducing a standard ASLP project reporting template, as per the example given in Annex 3. This incorporates reporting on potential adoption and impact as well as constraints.	Accept.	ACIAR to introduce a standard ASLP project reporting template.	ACIAR	By June 2014.
11. The ASLP overall as well as individual projects need to significantly increase their synthesis and reporting of key achievements (not just outputs). This would further strengthen the public profile of ASLP and its contribution to Pakistan agriculture.	Accept.	ASLP 2 Annual Reports to focus on the high level reporting including opportunities and constraints to transformational changes the project could help bring about in the selected commodity chains, based on the PAF.	ACIAR	For the 2013-14 annual report.

<p>12. ASLP should consider developing in common the logic, principles and standards associated with the program's diverse training activities. While unnecessary for all forms of training, there are certain key areas that would benefit from greater consistency and common standards. In particular, there should be strategies in place that ensure the long-term capacity of national institutions to maintain and enhance the technologies and approaches developed by ASLP.</p>	<p>Partially accept.</p> <p>As the review indicates, capacity building of national institutions has been a major focus of all ASLP activities.</p> <p>However, there is always room for improvement.</p>	<p>ACIAR and ASLP project teams to discuss improvements in ASLP's capacity building approach including capacity building needs of the relevant provincial level institutions.</p> <p>The measurement of capacity change in relevant institutions should form part of the PAF.</p>	<p>ACIAR ASLP project teams.</p>	<p>Prior to the development of the PAF.</p>
<p>13. It is recommended that DFAT, ACIAR and the project teams should be more proactive in promoting ASLP II and highlighting its linkage benefits in-country.</p>	<p>Accept.</p>	<p>DFAT and ACIAR to develop a workable protocol for approving media materials and develop a joint communications plan for the ASLP 2.</p>	<p>ACIAR DFAT</p>	<p>June 2014</p>
<p>14. The review recommends DFAT and ACIAR commence the design of a new phase of ASLP. This should be based on 'organic' growth of current engagements, plus an assessment of all the proposed initiatives against the core principles of ASLP.</p>	<p>Accept.</p>	<p>DFAT and ACIAR to begin discussions about a new phase of ASLP, following approval by the Australian Government.</p>	<p>ACIAR DFAT</p>	<p>This will be subject to Australian Government approval of a new design and to sufficient budget availability.</p>