2008 ANNUAL THEMATIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW

HUMANITARIAN

Contents

1. Introduction

AusAID's humanitarian program:

- supports global initiatives to improve the overall effectiveness of the international humanitarian system;

- provides support for preparedness and disaster risk reduction programs that will assist in improving response capacities as well as assisting in reducing the impact and severity of a disaster at the regional and national levels; and

- responds to sudden onset and protracted emergencies.

The 2007-08 humanitarian component of the Australian Government's aid program was $299.4 million.

AusAID's objectives for humanitarian action are grounded in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, and articulated in the *Humanitarian Action Policy (2005)* – "to protect lives, alleviate suffering maintain human dignity and assist recovery from conflict, natural and other disasters, through effective response, prevention, preparedness, and risk reduction". This policy is complemented by a framework of other polices and principles relating to conflict, gender, child protection, environment, corruption, and research. As the *Humanitarian Action Policy (2005)* is now more than three years old, during which time there has been substantial progress internationally on issues such as state fragility, early recovery, and disaster risk reduction, and there has been a change of government in the interim, the current policy framework is being revisited.

The *Humanitarian Action Policy (2005)* outlines eleven key areas of focus that align with the objectives of international good practice and the thematic cross-cutting environment. In implementing the policy, and in supporting changes to the international humanitarian system, AusAID set out five key objectives:

1. to better enable partner governments and communities to be able to respond and manage their own disasters reducing the call on the international community for international response, and improving the sustainability of response and recovery through stronger ownership by the beneficiaries of response options.

2. to support advances in reducing the impacts of disasters

3. to respond more effectively to calls for international assistance

4. to capitalize on Australia's credibility in the humanitarian environment

5. actively support the principles that are outlined in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and support the development and implementation collaborative practices to achieve these principles.

In addition to the base on-going program, a four year Budget Measure focusing on the first three of these objectives was implemented across the agency

The program itself is not only a thematic issue in it's own right, but consists of a range of cross-cutting issues that are relevant to the other thematic areas of the international development program. In particular, close attention has been paid in the last several years to linkages between humanitarian and peacebuilding, gender, and health in striving to deliver against the five objectives above.

As this is the first performance report on the humanitarian program it seemed appropriate to focus on Australia's contributions to supporting the changes to the international humanitarian architecture, particularly at the global and regional level. Good progress has been made against all five objectives in the past three years within this context.

2. State of the Humanitarian Sector – An Overview

2.1. Current Humanitarian Environment

The past decade has seen significant changes in the patterns of crisis, both natural and man-made, that impact the global population. As populations increase, issues such as aging populations, unplanned and accelerated urbanization, environmental degradation, habitation of higher risk geographic regions, as well as poverty and disease, create situations in which communities are increasingly vulnerable to crisis. Major crises remain beyond individual countries' capacities to manage, and increasingly the impacts of crises cross borders. In response, the international community has been making substantial changes to the way humanitarian assistance is provided to support improved effectiveness on the ground.

Global issues, including the closely linked issues of climate change and food and resource insecurity, are potential catalysts for further poverty and human insecurity, and place developing nations at even greater risk. The longer term implications of these issues include reduced capacity to meet the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development goals. Moreover, the costs of humanitarian responses are rising as impacted populations increase, greater volumes of infrastructure are destroyed and some places struggle to return to some form of post-crisis equilibrium.

In recognition of the range of challenges Australia's humanitarian program has over the last four years focused on:

- strengthening global and regional humanitarian systems to provide more effective and efficient responses;

- engaging in strategic partnerships and supporting emerging donors to facilitate a greater number of contributors to share the load; and

- supporting countries [particularly in the Asia Pacific] to build their own capacity to respond and to focus on reducing potential impacts of disasters through disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention programs.

2.2. Recent Developments in the Global Humanitarian System

As a result of a view commissioned by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 2004 to identify gaps in the humanitarian system, three key areas were identified for reform: improved and timely funding mechanisms for the early stages of sudden onset disasters and filling the funding gaps in "forgotten emergencies"; a new coordination approach in humanitarian response with designated organizations as the lead agency in specified sectors (known as the "cluster" approach); and strengthening the skills, authority and accountability of the humanitarian coordinators (a humanitarian coordinator is a UN appointed expert who leads a humanitarian response). The intended systemic change has been a major undertaking for all the partners in the international community. Good progress has been made, and efforts are ongoing to refine and improve implementation of the major streams of action.

Cluster Approach and Humanitarian Coordination

Significant reform efforts have focused on better coordination to integrate and support existing national capacities and ensure more coherent, better targeted, international assistance. Enhanced coordination focused on two areas: better sectoral cooperation and coordination through the cluster approach; and improved arrangements and skills development options for humanitarian coordinators and their teams. These global system reforms complement the ongoing agency based performance improvements that have been undertaken to support dynamic and emerging issues such as the marked increase in the need to support internal displacement situations, as well as improvements to general performance.

The occurrence of a number of major disasters in the Asia and Pacific regions have energized regional efforts to build capabilities and develop coordination mechanisms, both utilizing existing international mechanisms as well as establishing regional specific mechanisms through arrangements such as the France, Australia and New Zealand Agreement for cooperation in the South Pacific (FRANZ), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the emerging Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Tsunami Early Warning system initiatives in both the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, the East Asia Summit, the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forums, to name but a few. There remain significant challenges in facilitating coherence and minimizing duplication between these groups in part because many of the groups have overlapping membership, and no one nation's needs are fully covered. Several of these bodies are developing an operational coordination role, and it remains unclear how regional coordination mechanisms might support national government coordination, and the role that multilateral coordination activities might align.

Humanitarian Financing

A critical issue in humanitarian response is ensuring that sufficient funding is available to start response and recovery operations in as timely a manner as possible, and there have been calls for greater earmarking to enable better agility and flexibility in response options. Protracted situations suffer from the "forgotten emergency" dilemma – where funding has become unpredictable and often inflexible, resulting in breaks in pipelines for life saving assistance and the inability to plan for maximum benefit.

Reforms to the financing system to overcome these types of issues have included the implementation of the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which complements the UN Flash Appeals, agency level contingency funds called Emergency Response Funds (ERFs), and the piloting of a pooled unearmarked funding mechanism for protracted crises at the country level to complement the existing Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). Since its launch on 9 March 2006, CERF has committed US$ 835.7 million for almost 1000 projects in 62 countries, spanning the globe in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America

Civil-military interactions

The international humanitarian community has in recent years sought to clarify the role of the military in disasters and how they might fit into the larger humanitarian response domain. In early 2008, an OCHA commissioned study was released. It reviewed the effectiveness of foreign militaries in natural disaster response, and the effectiveness of the various guidelines such as the Oslo Guidelines in natural disaster situations. One of the study's recommendations was that regional capacities to respond to disasters should be developed and relevant institutional relationships strengthened, particularly between existing regional organizations and the UN regional offices.

Militaries often play a major role in disaster response in the Asia Pacific where professional, well trained and capable militaries work within defined governance structures to relatively stable governments. Thus civil-military coordination is a key area of focus by ASEAN member states within the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (2005), and by the ASEAN Regional Forum member states in their Statement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (2006).

Greater Emphasis on Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction

Subsequent to the development of the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by 168 United Nations Member States, including Australia in 2005, a number of mechanisms and programs have been established to progress efforts in disaster risk reduction implementation. The UN's International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR) Program hosts a forum for continued and concerted emphasis on disaster reduction, providing strategic guidance and coherence for implementing the Hyogo Framework, and for sharing experiences and expertise among all its stakeholders. Through this forum, ISDR are presently

coordinating efforts of governmental, international and civil society partners to produce a Global Assessment Report for Disaster Reduction (GAR/DRR), due to be launched in 2009. In collaboration with ISDR, the World Bank has established the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) to reduce disaster losses by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development.

3. Progress against Agency Objectives

This section looks in summary at all five of the objectives stated in Section 1. Unlike other thematic policies, objectives within the humanitarian program have been established without strict timeframes, and recognized monitoring indicators for humanitarian actions tend to be input and output focused (e.g. number of tonnes of food purchased and delivered) rather than outcomes and impact focused. This is, in part, due to the fact that humanitarian action is focused on keeping people alive, and hence tends to be short term in focus, even if humanitarian situations are lengthy. Recovery (which introduces aspects of development into the crisis situation) seeks to move beneficiaries from day to day survival towards a return to pre-crisis livelihoods and community sustainability, and is hence more focused on longer term objectives.

Each of the objectives indicated in Section 1 has been provided a traffic light rating to indicate qualitative progress, including:

- regional and global focus on the issue, and Australia's standing on the issue;

- uptake by country programs, other thematic areas, and potentially whole of government linkages;

- the view of the issue through other thematic lenses; and

- resourcing.

3.1. Increased Community, National and Regional resilience and capacity to manage own disaster response

Rating: Amber

AusAID's humanitarian program has striven to support an environment where countries and communities have greater ownership and control over the responses and recovery programs to situations within their boundaries. This was felt to be much more realistic than that of partner countries being positioned to manage and respond effectively to their own situations without the need for any international assistance. Even so, AusAID's goal in this area is particularly ambitious, and measurement of this objective is clearly challenging. However, qualitative evidence suggests that progress is being made in this area, particularly in the Asia region. It is because of the scale of issue, the difficulty in measurement, and the tension between delivering aid and supporting survivors that we have rated this objective as Amber.

Australia has supported a range of activities at the global and regional level to support the increased local resilience and capacity building. These activities have been focused on both supporting the development and implementation of global and regional frameworks, and in supporting skills and resource capacity building.

Framework development

Effective frameworks at the global, regional and national levels are important to facilitate responses and recovery efforts that support and meet the needs of beneficiaries. There has been clear progress in the development of these frameworks over the last several years as part of the new international humanitarian architecture, and in their implementation. Examples include:

- Australia was an early supporter of the cluster approach to coordination and to the changes to the Central Emergency Response Fund during 2005. The cluster system was first trialled in the Pakistan Earthquake as a way to coordinate the disparate sectors in providing assistance. Funding decisions were made by AusAID based on cluster information, and included funding to selected

cluster lead agencies specifically for coordination activities. Independent reviews after the response indicated that "in broad terms, the earthquake response was regarded as effective, particularly as the anticipated second wave of winter deaths was avoided.[1]" In particular, in the absence of a national disaster management office, the cluster approach provided a framework for the Pakistan Government to establish a response coordination mechanism that engaged strongly with the international response. While the reviews indicated many areas for improvement in the system, it was felt that the approach was practical and issues were not insurmountable.

- During the recent response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, the cluster approach proved to be very successful not only from a coordination point of view, and also valuable as an advocacy tool for access to areas. The cluster system operated early, thus a more coordinated Flash Appeal was able to be issued. The cluster also gained involvement at high level from the Government line ministries, thus allowing it to function as intended.

- For the last six years, Australia has funded a position in Bangkok with IFRC to support development of guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. These guidelines, called the International Disaster Response Laws, Principles and Guidelines (IDRL) are meant to assist governments to become better prepared for the common legal problems in international response operations, thus potentially streamlining dissemination of humanitarian relief. On 30 November 2007, members at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent unanimously adopted the Guidelines. While it is too early to measure adoption rates and impacts of the guidelines themselves, the unanimous endorsement that included the Asian and Pacific governments and national societies in attendance indicates a strong recognition of the importance of these frameworks. AusAID is now funding further IFRC programs to support guideline implementation in the Asia and Pacific regions.

- Close attention has been paid in the last 18 months to the interactions between the military and civilian actors in the humanitarian space. This is of particular interest in the Asia region, where militaries are considered by their governments as primary responding agents. AusAID has engaged closely on a global review of the guidelines relating to civil military interactions in natural disasters, and the recommendations are informing our efforts in supporting ASEAN and ARF partners in developing standby arrangements and regional response coordination guidelines. While still in draft format, and remaining to be properly implemented, these instruments guided ASEAN's approach to assistance efforts in response to Cyclone Nargis.

Capacity development

In line with the development of frameworks that guide preparedness and response efforts, building of capacities to respond within these frameworks has also been of significant importance in enabling communities to own response and recovery efforts. This area of focus has afforded opportunities for cross cutting issues to be advanced, including health, gender and child protection issues.

- Our capacity development support to the UN, non-government organisations and international organisations enabled a range of preparations and contingency planning for a situation in Myanmar. Agencies pre-positioned food and materials for response in-country and at regional hubs, and local staff and trained volunteers became the critical response mechanism to the Myanmar Cyclone Nargis response given the difficulty of access for international personnel.

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[1] ActionAid International: 2006, The Evolving UN Cluster Approach in the Aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: An NGO Perpective

- In 2007, Asia-Australia Mental Health and the Peking Institute of Mental Health delivered Stage 1 of the AusAID sponsored project, Protecting Children's Mental Health in Disasters. The project focuses on the needs of primary school children and aims to enhance knowledge within communities of key intervention strategies to promote children's short and long-term well-being post disaster. During the Sichuan earthquake disaster a national team of 15 young mental health professionals worked with Asia-Australia Mental Health staff to develop ten simple key mental health first aid principles and a training program for parents, schools and community members to protect children at risk during the disaster. Project staff advised on the mental health aspects and assisted in the national coordination of the relief efforts for the Sichuan Province Earthquake. Twelve days post-disaster, the Ministry of Health formally requested the assistance from Australia to provide technical training for psychosocial disaster intervention to urgently build the capacity of the core mental health leadership and workers to deliver timely psychosocial response in Sichuan.

- The Mentawai and Nias Islands are remote communities highly vulnerable to seismic activity. As part of AusAID's $3.15 million emergency preparedness program in Indonesia, SurfAID International is assisting isolated communities to build their capacity to respond to such disasters and develop contingency and mitigation plans. The program's success was demonstrated when powerful earthquakes struck Western Sumatra in September 2007. Many affected villages confidently put their training into practice, resulting in only limited casualties.

- During 2007-08, AusAID supported the placement of four protection officers to UNHCR and up to eight protection officers to requesting UN agencies in Sri Lanka to enhance protection for IDPs and conflict-affected communities. The assistance has enhanced the protection capacity of UN agencies in emergencies and ongoing humanitarian crises through the quick deployment of professional protection practitioners. It has increased Australian expertise on protection issues by developing a pool of specialists who can be called upon to assist in emerging and ongoing crises. Since the AusAID protection officer support program commenced, more than 25 placements have been undertaken, and Australia is recognized as a leader in protection officer support activities.

3.2. SUPPORT FOR REDUCTION IN DISASTER IMPACT

Rating: Green

Complementary to enabling countries and communities to manage their own response is the goal of reducing the impact of a crisis on the community. This goal is also challenging to achieve for a range of reasons. Reduction of impact can be considered through a range of lenses. As was seen when Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh, disaster risk reduction efforts over the last several decades have significantly reduced the death toll, which is clearly a positive reduction in impact. However, the need for a humanitarian response has changed from requiring fatality management to relief and recovery support for survivors who might otherwise have perished. The need for assistance has not reduced, but the type of assistance has changed, and national and international systems must be able to support significantly more survivors.

It is also difficult to assess the impact of risk reduction measures since the most obvious indicator of success is that a disaster did not happen. Limiting impact through risk reduction has become a much greater focus for efforts in the recent 12 months as understanding of the disaster risk management cycle has expanded to include mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and development. Quantitative measures internationally are difficult to source, however ISDR has developed indicators of progress for measuring the reduction of disaster risks and progress towards implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. It is too early to measure the impact that Australian contributions have made in terms of outcomes.

Country programs are increasingly interested in supporting disaster risk reduction initiatives, reflecting increased interest from national governments in working to mitigate and prepare for disasters. Additionally, focus in this area is increasingly necessary as climate change adaptation and food security

issues have a large factor of risk reduction necessary to ensure success in these areas. As these areas have recently become priorities for the aid program, resourcing of disaster risk reduction activities is increasingly important. For these reasons, the progress against this objective is designated *Green.*

Greater uptake of these issues is demonstrated by the following:

- AusAID is providing support for disaster risk reduction at all levels including: a commitment of $5 million over three years (2007–2010) for the World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR); a commitment of $5 million over 3 years (2008–2011) to the Asia Pacific Program of ISDR; and a further commitment of $5 million over 3 years to build disaster risk management capacity in Asia. The agreement by the Australian Government to support such a program is indicative that recognition has developed of the importance of disaster risk reduction in addition to the more high profile response operations.

- Following Australia's geotechnical risk management response to the landslide in Guinsaigon, Philippines in 2006, the Government of Philippines has been keen to pursue a stronger relationship with Australia in relation to disaster risk management. Australia is contributing to a number of disaster risk reduction initiatives which will improve hazard mapping and community based disaster preparedness. As a result of engagement between Australia and the Philippines, there has recently been agreement to a program of professional linkages, focusing on professional networking and exchange of risk assessment methodologies, between the geological and mapping agencies of Australia and the Philippines. This program is about to commence under the 2008-2009 tranche of the Enhanced Humanitarian Response Budget Measure

- As part of Australia's response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China, Australia provided $1 million to support joint damage and needs assessments to inform recovery and reconstruction planning underpinned by risk reduction principles. Country programs responded positively to the opportunity to incorporate risk reduction as part of the emergency response activities and Australia's support for these initiatives was positively acknowledged by the international community.

3.3. AUSTRALIA RESPONDS MORE EFFECTIVELY TO INTERNATIONAL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE
Rating: Green

Since July 2004, Australia has provided significant disaster relief to more than 40 disasters including the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004), the Pakistan Earthquake (2005), the Philippines Landslide (2006), the Yogyakarta earthquake (2006), the Solomon Islands Tsunami (2007), and most recently to support the international efforts in Myanmar as a result of Cyclone Nargis (2008).

While responses to crises are an area that always provides lessons to be learned due to the unique and complex nature of any situation, evidence indicates that Australia has made good progress in strengthening this area since the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami both in terms of better Australian preparedness to respond, and in response operations themselves.

- Efforts to develop stronger whole of government partnerships with the Australian Defence Force, Department of Health and Aging, and technical agencies such as Geoscience Australia and The Bureau of Meteorology have resulted in closer engagement in committees, staff secondments and establishing liaison officers in order to better communicate and coordinate. The improvements were demonstrated during the Solomon Islands Tsunami response where ADF and civilian responses were able to be flexibly and quickly coordinated through a joint AusAID-ADF team, coupled with advice from Geoscience Australia on the geotechnical consequences of the event which quickly informed relief and early recovery efforts particularly in relation to public health.

- The outsourcing of AusAID's emergency stores to a HK Shipping, a professional warehouse management and sourcing firm, has resulted in more accurate and cost effective stock control, faster deployment of stores (noted by senior ADF officers), and effective stores replenishment to position Australia for further responses, as happened in November 2007 during the PNG Oro Floods situation coinciding with other cyclone activity in the region.

- AusAID is increasing Australia's capacity to respond to emergencies in Indonesia. AusAID's Jakarta Rapid Response Team undertakes regular training, deployment equipment is continuously upgraded and a new warehouse to store emergency equipment and supplies in Jakarta will soon be opened. Through standing arrangements with key emergency response partners, Australia has responded to 10 emergencies in Indonesia in a timely manner with reduced overheads across the agency.

- While the impact of Australian relief efforts is hard to gauge by themselves as our efforts form a component of broader international efforts, and monitoring of our own response efforts could be improved, there has been increasing bipartisan support for the timing and scale of our initial responses since the tsunami – increasingly, members of the Opposition have been reported in the media as supportive rather than critical of Australia's approach to disaster response.

3.4. POSITIONING IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

Rating Green

Good progress has been made in enhancing our credibility in international fora, resulting in a strengthened ability to influence outcomes. Unlike a number of our humanitarian counterparts, Australia is particularly well positioned as our humanitarian programs sit within a development agency, enabling us to better facilitate linkages between development and humanitarian objectives. Australia contributes around 23% of its humanitarian budget to global initiatives and core contributions to strategic partners such as UN agencies and the ICRC. We are currently ranked 10th largest donor to the CERF, and 9th largest donor to WFP. While our humanitarian programs form a very small proportion of the total global humanitarian financing (around 2%), our focus in the Asia – Pacific, our selective role in strategic global initiatives and the fact of our geographic location positions Australia well to be able to influence at all levels. Australia is a well respected participant and contributor to global debate and support for global initiatives, and recognized as being a key voice on issues that are relevant for the Asia Pacific region. This has been evidenced through:

- WFP's engagement process during the Yogyakarta Earthquake resulted in high profile allegations in the media of linkages to UN prescribed individuals. In indicating Australia's concerns to WFP about these arrangements, WFP acknowledged Australia's position on the issue and immediately implemented changes in their program to resolve Australia's concerns.

- The development of the new humanitarian architecture and increasing activity in the disaster risk management environment has resulted in a number of evaluations and reviews of key programs and positions. Australia has been invited to participate on a number of reviews, including the review of the CERF and the review of the role of foreign militaries. Australia has also sought to have case studies from the Asia and Pacific region included in a number of projects reviewing aid effectiveness and good humanitarian donorship. Our engagement and influence in these types of activities has resulted in ensuring a view of the given issues that is broader than an African perspective, and facilitated access to information that is directly pertinent to Australia's broader development programs.

3.5. SUPPORT FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GOOD HUMANITARIAN DONORSHIP PRINCIPLES

Rating Green

Insofar as appropriate for a government agency to meet the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, good progress has been made in this area. The GHD principles influence several aspects of AusAID's humanitarian program, including:

- striving to provide timely and flexible funding through financing mechanisms such as CERF,

- promotion of international humanitarian law in humanitarian action,

- strengthening of the humanitarian response capacity of affected countries and local communities,

- support for the central leadership role of the UN in humanitarian response and

- striving to support recovery and long-term development.

GHD reflects a shift towards results based humanitarian action to better inform donor best practice, accordingly the widespread acceptance of the GHD principles as a normative standard is attracting increasing external scrutiny of donor performance against their commitments to the GHD principles.

In line with broader agency approaches, humanitarian partners are required to support the Humanitarian Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and… There is a substantial Link between GHD and humanitarian reform as GHD encourages coordination, accountability and transparency amongst donors to prove humanitarian response.

Proposals are reviewed against their application of international standards and guidelines (such as Sphere), their inclusion of relevant gender, "do no harm", vulnerable population considerations. A greater emphasis on pooled funding mechanisms, the use of more standard reporting processes, and increased predictable multiyear funding. Through our membership of the USAID GHD Geneva based working group on GHD Principles in Emergency Setting, we are working towards sponsoring a study to review the impact of GHD at the beneficiary level on IDPs, and will examine how donor funding is used in the field at the various phases of humanitarian response.. We successfully influenced the study to include a case study Sri Lanka, and as a result, our engagement with the USA on GHD principles and practices has been strengthened.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

AusAID's humanitarian programs are complex, high profile and in some cases high risk. The pace of change in a humanitarian situation, the need for immediate decisions in the absence of strong information, and the growing demand for high level time-critical strategic engagement in more humanitarian and disaster risk management related fora in a cross cutting development issue based environment, stretches resources. Based on the qualitative evidence to hand, we would suggest that the program is effective, and would recommend five key areas to assist:

- continued effectiveness into the future to support continuing emerging issues; and

- improved evidence base to facilitate better measurement of the effectiveness of the program

We see value in an enhanced coherent suite of frameworks around policy and priorities/program strategy/monitoring and evaluation not only to clarify and focus objectives, but also to establish benchmarks for measurement, as the latter has been perhaps the major constraint in the ability of this report to articulate outcomes. In order to establish this, and to continue to strengthen the agency's humanitarian program, further investment in humanitarian expertise is desirable.

4.1.1   Policy Framework

AusAID is increasingly engaged in humanitarian and transition activities in complex environments both remotely and more frequently on the ground. Many of AusAID's programs have a strong focus on protracted displacement situations (which can include a protracted dislocation from infrastructure, services and support mechanisms, such as occurred in the Pakistan earthquake, or a geographical relocation). The

transition from emergency relief and immediate post crisis situations back to a level of pre-disaster development is not only complex, but often falls between the gaps in planning, implementation, and funding arrangements. Challenges are inherent in having both a focus on lifesaving activities whilst at the same time ensuring the long term goals and consequent milestones are kept in view and coordinated. Similarly, activities such as effective building codes, effective legislative bodies and instruments, and health and education, that build resilience, reduce risk and better prepare individuals, communities, and nations to be able to respond should be viewed very much through the long term development lens as a humanitarian-development continuum.

Several parts of the agency are engaged in analysis and policy consideration of these environments, to which there are vastly different approaches within the international community. A key feature of a complex emergency is the societal and institutional weakness that fails to accommodate competing identity groups, while the key characteristic of a natural disaster is the physical weakness of structures and processes that fail to cope with extreme natural events. While the immediate humanitarian needs from a complex emergency are somewhat similar (food, medical, shelter, protection) to those required in a natural disaster, political and social impacts are significantly different (protracted displacement and societal breakdown), and result in vastly different recovery needs, timeframes, and resultant mechanisms. These issues should be considered more thoroughly through a gender lens, as evidence indicates that progress is most sustainable on these issues where women are engaged in capacity development and solution design and implementation.

While progress has been made, greater maturation of thinking about the differences between complex and natural emergencies will better inform our policy and operational decisions regarding humanitarian assistance and sustainable. This consideration should include the inherent differences within complex and natural emergency environments. It should also engage the debate on the balance between supporting and strengthening local capacities (as touted in good humanitarian practice), and the need to strengthen Australia's capabilities and resources to apply in an emergency.

This latter is of considerable current interest both internationally, and within Australia. The outcomes of the debate within the whole of Australian Government arena will have considerable impact upon the policy base for AusAID's activities, as well as further define operational roles and shape funding mechanisms for the agency. Given this impact and the inherent benefits and risks, it seems appropriate that the agency increase its coherence and visibility on these issues and capitalize on our international and national credibility as a joint development/humanitarian agency to influence international practice. Australia is actively taking up the role of Chair of the OCHA donor support

The agency is also reflecting on the impacts of other emerging issues such as food security, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction directions to policy and program coherence within the disaster risk management environment. As these issues have come to the fore, the agency has rightly engaged. There is further integration and coherence to be gained on these issues fostering further linkages between policies and policy objectives, particularly between humanitarian and development issues. As likeminded donors consolidate their policy positions on these issues, AusAID will seek to develop overarching strategies to inform further investment and engagement in this area.

In progressing policy considerations, there will need to be analysis on the balance between resources allocated to preparedness and response against those allocated to recovery and risk mitigation or reduction. Effective preparedness and response are critical for short term gains in the event of a crisis. Effective recovery and risk reduction are critical to progressing effective achievement of the MDGs, for without these, humanitarian assistance remains focused on the crisis point rather than sustainable long-term development improvements.

4.1.2   Clear work program strategies with identified outcomes

The humanitarian program is, both devolved and centralized, with differing levels of engagement in global, regional and country level disaster risk management and humanitarian activities. The nature of humanitarian situations (natural or complex), and the scale and resourcing of the relevant country program varies considerably across the agency. For example: while a small program overall, the humanitarian aspects of the Sri Lanka program are considerable; while for the Indonesia program, humanitarian activities constitute a small but critical component of the broader development program.

This diversity is necessary across the agency to ensure that country programs deliver to beneficiary objectives and meet agency system demands, but in doing so, the agency runs the risk of losing coherence within the broader humanitarian program. This indeed has been a key challenge for the agency – shared understanding of policy objectives, shared awareness of Australia's role in disaster response balanced against local capacities, access to clear process and tools to ensure coherent response approaches. The increase in devolution of programs in the last 12 months has seen country programs increasingly engaged in humanitarian issues and needs for policy and tools and training for program design and monitoring and evaluation have at times outstripped the capacity to support their development and implementation.

The second pillar that will support improved effectiveness is to develop clear work program strategies at both the central and regional or country program level with identified outcomes that relate back to policy objectives. This will assist the agency in:

- Visibility of the complete humanitarian work program and expected progress against policy outcomes;

- More effectively linking humanitarian outcomes to longer term development gains, particularly ensuring that multidisciplinary planning (such as gender, environment, disability) can be included in a more strategic fashion;

- Identifying adequate resources required to achieve the priorities, and allow the central policy and emergency operations area to target their priorities to support the country program needs more effectively; and

- Establishing benchmarks and measurable objectives against which to report.

Earlier engagement between the Humanitarian and Emergencies Section during annual business planning processes would assist in greater visibility of cross agency annual humanitarian business objectives, which should align with those humanitarian objectives within thematic area and country program strategies. These strategies should then inform resourcing (including consideration of funding mechanisms), not only for humanitarian programs but also thematic areas that need to engage in program humanitarian activities. The measurable outcomes can then be used to define a coherent monitoring program and evaluation activities.

4.1.3   Implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Unlike the broader development environment, where the Millennium Development Goals have established some specific quantifiable targets, there are no specific objectives for international humanitarian action, making identification of objectives for Australian humanitarian assistance somewhat more challenging. The effort of establishing measurable objectives for agency programs should be supported by a simple and streamlined monitoring and evaluation framework to enable reporting.

A number of previous efforts to develop a framework have been undertaken both centrally and by country programs with humanitarian activities. These have reached the pilot stage, but have not progressed substantially beyond this, largely due to resourcing issues as strategic demands stretch finite time and funds.

Much of Australia's humanitarian funding is channeled through international multilateral agencies. A critical issue for determining humanitarian effectiveness that arises from this approach is the tension in

defining the effectiveness of *our* funding against the effectiveness of others funding. This tension results from seeking to support the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles need for more coherent funding and reporting approaches where effectiveness is considered and reported holistically, rather than on a donor specific basis.

In attempting to extract a picture of the complete humanitarian program for this report from existing agency systems, the current allocation of DAC codes and program objectives stymied a consistent approach – mine action technically does not fall within international humanitarian DAC codes for example, but is considered humanitarian in substance by the agency. There are significant gaps in humanitarian program codes and they do not neatly align with the DAC code definitions. These issues can be fixed relatively easily and would transition the agency well towards more effective understanding of the reach of the humanitarian program and the balance of resourcing to particular objectives.

Resolving this issue would also assist in clarifying how best to use the agency quality reporting systems for humanitarian activities.

4.1.4 Capitalising on Australia's credibility in humanitarian fora

Australia currently enjoys a strong position on humanitarian issues. As forthcoming chair for the OCHA Donor Support Group, current chair for the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group in New York, one of 12 donors on the Donor Support Group for the International Committee of the Red Cross, and most recently our entrance into an informal donor forum for UNHCR, we have a range of new opportunties to influence strategic direction. As perhaps the key humanitarian donor in the region due to our geographic situation and seen by other donors as a humanitarian leader in Asia and the Pacific, we also have a responsibility for strategic and pragmatic advocacy for the region.

Expanded Australian humanitarian engagement in other areas, including Africa will be well served by the credibility that we have established. While our funding is not large relative to some other donors, our credibility allows us to influence to a significant degree. It is imperative that we retain our credibility through a high level of visibility and engagement on global and regional strategic issues in order to shape and influence outcomes on current areas of focus including transition and early recovery, particularly from protracted complex crisis situations and in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and effective response operations.

5. Appendix A Peer review Participants

The following participated in the peer review meeting (11 August 2008) to discuss the consultation draft of the report:

Alistair Sherwin – Assistant Director General, Humanitarian and Middle East Branch

Tony Craig – World Food Programme, Bangkok

Richard Young, Oxfam Australia

Chris Northey – Emergencies Coordinator, Care Australia

Ingvar Ander – Emergencies Coordinator, Caritas Australia

Shireen Sandhu – Director, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section

Thanh Le – Emergencies Manager, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section

Anna Dawney - Disaster Risk Reduction Program Manager, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section

Jennifer Clancy – Disaster Risk Reduction Program Officer, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section

Allison Taylor – Humanitarian Contact Point, Africa Program

Zabeta Moutafis, Humanitarian Contact Point, North and South Asia Program

Neryl Lewis – Program Manager, Peacebuilding Unit

Barbara O'Dwyer – Program Manager, Gender Unit

Kim Jerrim – Office of Development Effectiveness

Cameron Bowles – Director, Education Thematic Group

Suzanne Edgecombe – Director, Humanitarian Policy and Review Section

Written comments have been received from:

John Tilemann – Director, Strategic Policy Section, International and Legal Division, DFAT

Lisa Staruszkiewicz – Disaster Risk Reduction Program Officer, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section

Stefan Knollmeyer – Program Engagement Manager, Humanitarian and Emergencies Section