



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australian
Aid 



INDEPENDENT MID-TERM REVIEW
AUSTRALIA ASSISTS

SEPTEMBER 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been prepared by an Independent Review Team from Ninti One comprising Donna Leigh Holden (Team Leader), Rod Reeve (Value for Money Assessor) and Peter Chamberlain (Humanitarian Adviser). Together, this team brings culturally competent expertise in monitoring and evaluation, design and program management in humanitarian and development contexts and gender and social inclusion, as well as a sound understanding of Australia's priorities and DFAT's systems and processes to prosecute these.

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Photographs courtesy of RedR.

DISCLAIMER

As an Independent Review, this report reflects the views of the Review Team and does not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or RedR, nor bind them to action.

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SHORTENED FORMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACC | Australian Civilian Corps |
| AHP | Australian Humanitarian Partnership |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| EOPO | end-of-program outcome |
| FTE | full-time equivalent |
| GBV | gender-based violence |
| HPD | Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (of DFAT) |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| IPPF | International Planned Parenthood Federation |
| MFAT | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| MOU | memorandum of understanding |
| NDMO | national disaster management office |
| NGO | non-government organisation |
| SBP | Standby Partnership |
| SPC | Pacific Community |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UN OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UNWRA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency |
| VfM | value for money |
| WASH | water, sanitation and hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia Assists is the Australian Government's humanitarian deployment capability, implemented by RedR Australia. It deploys technical specialists to Australia's global partners, including host governments, United Nations (UN) organisations, multilateral organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), to help them prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflicts.



The Review was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to provide independent and informed strategic advice and recommendations to DFAT and RedR regarding the outcomes achieved through DFAT support to Australia Assists and to help inform DFAT decisions on extending the contract to seven years.

The Review finds that:

- In a short time, DFAT and RedR have successfully integrated the previous Australia Civilian Corps (ACC) with RedR's capability as a UN Standby Partner
- High quality deployments are making strategic contributions to helping governments and humanitarian actors prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflicts
- An appropriate model that combines surge support with longer term deployments that support systems strengthening and resilience has been established in the Pacific
- Australia Assists has made significant contributions to key protracted crises, including the Rohingya and Syria crises
- There is an appropriate and affirmative focus on gender, disability inclusion and protection
- High value deployments have been made to some areas of significant national interest
- Good value for money is achieved through cost consciousness, management efficiency, additionality and a results focus.

Australia Assists is well positioned to build on these efforts moving forwards.

FINDING

RECOMMENDATION

Building resilience to, preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural hazards and conflict

Finding 1:

Australia Assists represents a robust deployment mechanism that is aligned with Australia's national and humanitarian priorities while being sufficiently flexible to respond to rapid-onset humanitarian crises as well as changing partner needs along the humanitarian–development nexus.

Finding 2:

The expanding programmatic brief vis-a-vis servicing a wider set of sectoral and thematic priorities will present future challenges for Australia Assists and is likely to require strategic consideration of whether the program should set its sights wide (extending the thematic and sectoral footprint of the program) or deep (investing in priority sectors, thematic areas or partners).

This expansion of capabilities and any future shift to demand-led deployments risks placing significant pressure on the roster that would likely require major overhaul.

Finding 3:

RedR's current structure, which integrates Australia Assists across the whole organisational management structure, appears to be resulting in less than optimal lines of decision-making responsibility and reporting to DFAT.

Recommendation 1:

Developing regional strategies that allow flexible responses to crises, take into account the significant variations between regions and the need to service the Standby Partnership (SBP), and concurrently focus resources on key outcomes would help DFAT and RedR deliver greater sustainability of outcomes moving forwards.

Recommendation 2:

RedR should review Australia Assists management structure to better facilitate cross-departmental management oversight to strengthen partnership and performance management and efficiency in reporting and decision-making.

Extending reach to the Pacific

Finding 4:

The establishment of Australia Assists coincided with DFAT's Pacific Step-up which has been a key driver in establishing new partnerships and extending Australia's deployment of humanitarian technical expertise into the Pacific region.

Finding 5:

Pacific contextual realities require a shift away from short-term surge to longer term systems strengthening technical assistance that supports local leadership, improved planning and emergency management and resilience-building.

Recommendation 3:

To support a stronger focus on results as the program matures, a Pacific regional strategy should be developed that has sufficient flexibility to concurrently address long-term support for disaster preparedness and resilience-building while progressing Australia's objectives vis-a-vis protection, social inclusion and short-term surge capabilities at times of crisis.

FINDING

Contributing to protracted crises

Finding 6:

Australia Assists makes an important technical contribution to Australian and global responses to protracted crises, and in particular to Protection of Conflict Affected and Displaced Populations and Building Resilience in Protracted Crises (Objective 3: Key Result Areas 3 and 4 of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy). It has however, little or no current visibility within DFAT's current multi-year response frameworks for Syria and Iraq.

With a design process for the next multi-year framework for Australia's response for the Syria crisis underway, and a multi-year framework being considered for the Rohingya Crisis, there is an opportunity to consider how Australia Assists contribution to these crises can be more clearly articulated within these.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 4:

DFAT can create greater visibility of and alignment to Australia Assists' contribution to protracted crises by taking steps to integrate Australia Assists within multi-year response frameworks and associated MEAL arrangements for key protracted crises into the future.

Effectiveness of global humanitarian action

Localisation

Finding 7:

While Australia Assists is undertaking steps to support the localisation agenda, there is as yet no clear program-wide strategy to support localisation through divesting power to local and national actors.

Recommendation 5:

As the program matures, the need to arrive at a more nuanced understanding about what localisation means for a technical deployment mechanism such as Australia Assists will become increasingly evident. As a first step DFAT and RedR should work together to define what localisation means for Australia Assists, systematically explore opportunities and barriers to advancing the localisation agenda and develop an action plan to progress localisation efforts.

Protection

Finding 8:

It is appropriate at this stage of Australia Assists' maturity and for the size of the program that current protection efforts focus on progressing the work articulated within the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan and the Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, as well as continued support for specialist deployments that directly address specific protection issues or mainstream protection.

FINDING

RECOMMENDATION

Gender equality

Finding 9:

Australia Assists has developed a strong foundation for and is contributing to supporting Australia's leadership in prioritising gender equality in humanitarian action.

Disability inclusion

Finding 10:

Australia Assists has laid solid foundations for disability inclusive programming; however, demand for disability inclusion specialists continues to outstrip supply.

Recommendation 6:

There is an ongoing need to recruit specialist disability inclusion expertise into the roster as well as to upskill the capability of the wider roster to mainstream disability inclusion and extend partnerships with Disabled People's Organisations. This will require persistent efforts to address barriers to deployment of people with disability themselves, including addressing challenges associated with reasonable accommodations, safe workspaces and insurance and the need for adequate resourcing.

Engaging DFAT Posts

Finding 11:

Maximising the strategic value of Australia Assists and the partnership with RedR is about getting the right balance between the strategic role of Posts in ensuring complementarity with local development priorities and other DFAT humanitarian and development investments and the need to maintain a high level of currency of RedR's SBP. Good progress has been made in this regard.

See Recommendation 1

Building visibility

Finding 12:

There are tensions between DFAT corporate program-level branding expectations – the Australia Assists brand – and the operational context and role and function of deployments realities in the field, where which deployments are more clearly identified as part of a wider Australian aid contribution. These tensions undermine and call into question the effectiveness and efficiency of program-level branding.

Recommendation 7:

DFAT should pragmatically consider the extent to which pursuit of Australia Assists brand recognition effectively reinforces its wider need to promote Australia as a valuable technical partner. This should include consideration of the relative priority placed on pursuit of this identity in favour of other program management priorities.

FINDING

RECOMMENDATION

Strengthening UN agency partnerships

Finding 13:

RedR's position within the UN SBP offers unique and deep access into the UN system enabling strategic deployments, operational insights into humanitarian crises and opportunities for dialogue and influence that contribute to humanitarian reform and improving the quality of humanitarian action.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEAL)

Finding 14:

The MEAL framework clearly outlines most outcome areas and contains practical and straightforward indicators against which to measure and report activity and outcomes.

The omission of training from the framework means that training is unreported, and its central role in the quality of the roster and in contributing to Strengthening Humanitarian Action (Objective 1 of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy) is invisible.

Recommendation 8:

The MEAL framework should be revised to include:

- a narrative explanation of the purpose of the MEAL system, Australia Assists' approach to MEAL and descriptors of key terms and what successful outcomes would look like
- targets and outcome indicators for training
- a consideration of whether or not EOPO 4 (Quality of Humanitarian Action) should be articulated as a goal or remain as a standalone outcome.

Concurrently, DFAT and RedR should reengage with the Knowledge and Learning Strategy to establish and guide learning priorities and how these will be used.

Value for money

Finding 15:

Australia Assists delivers good VfM.

Finding 16:

The performance incentive provisions in the contract provide DFAT with a valuable instrument to incentivise contractor performance, and these structures are suitable contractual mechanisms moving forward.

FINDING

Finding 17:

Lower deployee remuneration compared to ACC, combined with the requirement for deployees to pay their own prequalification costs (associated with training and recruitment) contributes to the lower costs of Australia Assists but may have wider implications for the management, growth and renewal of the roster if future deployees find the rates unattractive.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 9:

To ensure attractiveness of the roster within a crowded market, RedR in consultation with DFAT should consider restructuring the deployee remuneration package to deliver equity in remuneration. This could include:

- an increase in the base remuneration package
- consideration of how best to overcome the costs of training to promote greater diversification and renewal of the roster including, for example, increased funding for training or refunding of the cost of training upon completion of the first successful deployment
- a tiered structure that allows additional cost supplementation for high value deployments into multilateral agencies (e.g. the deployment in Iraq) so that they align with the host agency.

This process could be undertaken within a wider context of considering the utility of the roster as Australia Assists matures, including the implications for localisation and for DFAT resourcing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Australia Assists is the Australian Government's humanitarian deployment capability, implemented by RedR Australia. It deploys technical specialists to Australia's global partners, including host governments, United Nations (UN) organisations, multilateral organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), to help them prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflicts.

Initially conceived in June 2016, when the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) approved the concept of moving towards an integrated deployable civilian capability for humanitarian action, Australia Assists formally commenced in October 2017 following a codesign process with RedR. Australia Assists builds on the strengths of the former Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) and RedR Australia's (RedR) humanitarian response roster and UN Standby Partnership (SBP).

Australia Assists' goals are to help save lives, livelihoods and assets and alleviate suffering by building resilience and responding to disaster and conflict.

Working together through Australia Assists, RedR and DFAT progress four key outcome areas (Figure 1) relating to:

- Stability, Resilience and Risk Reduction
- Crisis Preparedness and Response
- Stabilisation, Recovery and Reconstruction
- Quality of Humanitarian Action.

A further outcome relating to the effective management of the program is led by RedR as the contractor.



AUSTRALIA ASSISTS

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AUSTRALIA ASSISTS IS AUSTRALIA'S FLAGSHIP CIVILIAN DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM WITH A ROSTER OF 750+ HIGHLY SKILLED PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH OVERSEAS PARTNERS TO BUILD RESILIENCE AND PROVIDE EMERGENCY RELIEF - BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER HUMANITARIAN CRISES.



Figure 1: Australia Assists' program logic

2. THE REVIEW

2.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Australia Assists Mid-Term Review (MTR) is a scheduled review commissioned by DFAT Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (HPD) to provide independent and informed strategic advice and recommendations to DFAT and RedR regarding the outcomes achieved through DFAT support to Australia Assists. The MTR will help inform DFAT decisions about extending the contract to seven years.

The MTR has addressed the following evaluation questions:

1. Assess the outcomes achieved through DFAT funding for RedR to deploy specialists to work with global partners to build resilience, prepare for, respond to and recover from natural hazards and conflict.
2. Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities since inception:
 - i. Increase the program's presence and effectiveness in the Pacific, including enhancing national capacity in disaster management and preparedness, building resilience and supporting broader Australian aid priorities.
 - ii. Continue to contribute to Australia's humanitarian objectives in protracted crises in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, focusing on the Rohingya and Syria crises.
 - iii. Contribute to the effectiveness of global humanitarian action, focusing on protection and localisation, gender equality and disability inclusion.
 - iv. Foster Post engagement, with a particular focus on strengthening relations between Posts and RedR.
 - v. Build awareness of the program with key stakeholders, including the Australian public.
 - vi. Strengthen UN agency partnerships to improve the quality of humanitarian action.
3. Assess the suitability of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) framework for the program.
4. Assess the value for money (VfM) offered to DFAT through partnering with RedR to deliver the Australia Assists program, with reference to DFAT's VfM principles, including:
 - i. the current cost of the program compared to the former ACC
 - ii. the cost of RedR administrative overheads in managing the program, compared to total program funding
 - iii. the management fee and performance payment structure, including their use, how they support the program and whether they are the best contractual mechanism moving forward.

The MTR has considered Australia Assists as a global program and has considered progress from its inception on 1 October 2017 to August 2019.

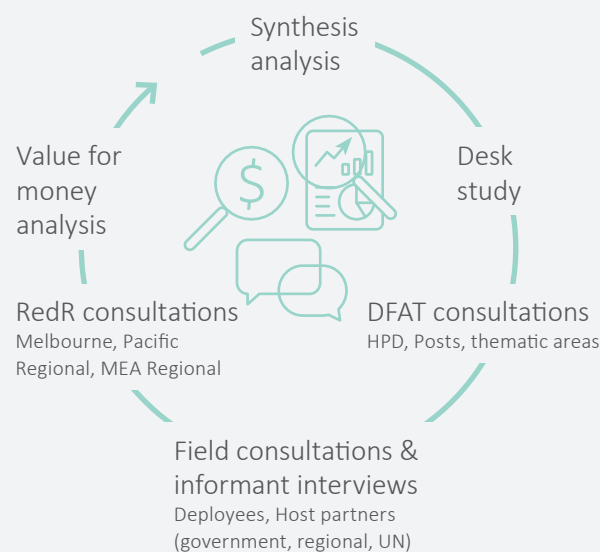
2.2 METHODS

The MTR is largely qualitative. Assessment was undertaken in line with an analytical framework developed by the team in consultation with RedR and DFAT.¹

The team has worked with DFAT and RedR data and undertaken consultations to deliver an independent analysis of Australia Assists' performance against the evaluation questions using the following methods:

- **desk study** of material including Australia Assists' performance data, reports, reviews and analytics; other DFAT thematic and sectoral evaluations; DFAT policy and program guidance; RedR policy and program guidance; case studies; and relevant humanitarian literature, including a standalone desk review of Australia Assists' support to the Syria crisis
- **DFAT consultations** with DFAT Posts, HPD, thematic areas and other technical assistance programs
- **RedR consultations** with senior management, deployments, communications, MEAL teams and Regional Managers
- **field consultations** in Fiji, Vanuatu and Bangladesh with deployees, Posts and partners
- **key informant interviews** with deployees, DFAT Posts and DFAT humanitarian partners
- **VfM assessment** against the DFAT 4E framework, which included review of Australia Assists and RedR financial data and DFAT documentation on technical assistance programs, including the former ACC, Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism and the Australian Volunteers Program.

A list of informants is provided at Annex 1.



2.3 LIMITATIONS

Outside of targeted consultations it was not the purpose of the MTR to generate new data. Evaluability therefore has been influenced by the availability of data. The team is confident it has sufficient verified data to inform the analysis.

VfM evaluability has been limited by the lack of retrospective data on the costs of the former ACC and availability of comparative data on other DFAT-funded programs that are commercial-in-confidence. Some data has not been reported due to commercial-in-confidence considerations.

Field consultations were brief (3 days each) and subject to informant availability. Due to security and management considerations in Bangladesh, the team travelled and undertook some joint consultations with the DFAT Rohingya Crisis Design Team. Further, a planned field visit to Papua New Guinea (PNG) was not undertaken due to competing priorities at Post. To address this limitation, the team undertook additional Skype and/or telephone interviews to extend the scope of consultations.

¹ Australia Assists Independent Mid Term Review Evaluation Plan (2019) available on request.

2.4 EVALUATION ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Informants engaged voluntarily and confirmed consent prior to interview. Quotes have been deidentified.

All findings are based on data derived from multiple sources/methods and have been triangulated and verified by the team.

Findings and recommendations derive from a shared team analysis. There are no dissenting viewpoints.

2.5 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The MTR has been managed by the HPD of DFAT. A Reference Group (see Annex 2) was established by DFAT to provide guidance and facilitate internal discussions and decision-making.



3. PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

Commencing on 1 October 2017, Australia Assists has delivered on all key milestones outlined in its contract and has exceeded deployment targets.

Roster

- The former ACC and RedR rosters have been consolidated.
- The roster skill base has been diversified to better align deployment capability with Australia's humanitarian priorities with particular regard to protection, gender and disability inclusion.
- There are currently 700 people on the roster.²

Deployments

- One hundred and fifty-four deployments have been made to over 30 organisations.
- Actual deployments have exceeded targets by 25–30%.
- Deployments are shifting from short-term surge to long-term humanitarian development.
- Deployments are shifting to Australia's areas of geographic priority, with 53 deployments (34%) in the Pacific and 60 (39%) of deployments in Asia.

Partnerships

- Partnerships with 11 UN Standby Partners are active, and new Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are being negotiated with UNESCO, UN Office for Project Services and UN Habitat.³
- MOUs with Pacific governments and regional organisations are in place to facilitate deployments.
- A high value partnership has been negotiated with the European Union (EU) Advisory Mission to Iraq to facilitate deployment.

Strategies and frameworks

- Key policy and guidance frameworks have been approved, including the Gender Strategy and Action Plan and the Disability Strategy and Action Plan.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL)

- The MEAL framework has been completed and approved.
- A Knowledge and Learning Strategy has been drafted and is awaiting approval.
- Analytics have been undertaken to support learning and evidence-based decision-making, including:
 - Nine impact and learning pieces including on education, health, protection and innovation for Palestinian refugees; disability inclusion; child protection in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh; and specific humanitarian crises
- Progress reports on implementation of the Disability Inclusion and Gender Equality strategies
- Two Community of Practice papers: Advancing Women, Peace and Security in the Middle East and Blockchain in the Humanitarian Sector
- Independent reviews of gender and protection and support to disaster preparedness and management in the Pacific.

Training

- RedR delivers six core humanitarian training programs with over 900 people trained.

Visibility and branding

- The Australia Assists brand has been established.
- A Communications Strategy has been developed and approved and is being implemented.
- Aid communications are regularly produced to promote Australia Assists and to educate the Australian community about the investment.

Figure 2 highlights Australia Assists activity since inception on pages 15 and 16.

² Australia Assists Mid-Year Report 2018, p. 8

³ The Australia Assists contract requires RedR to maintain a minimum of 10 SBP arrangements.



The Australia Assists Program

1 September 2017 – current (27 August 2019)

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



GOVERNMENTS

(MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS)

NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

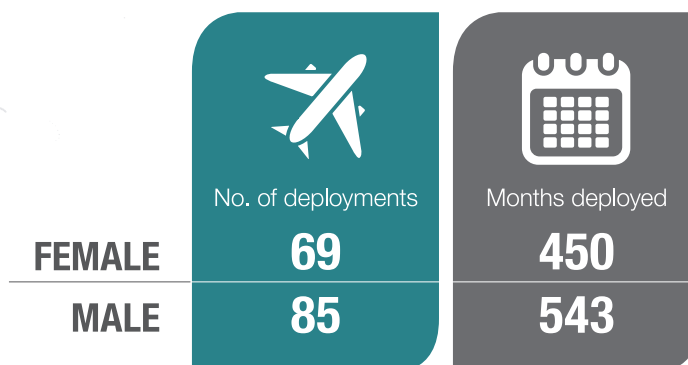
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

UN AGENCIES

(UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, FAO, IOM, UN WOMEN, UNDP, UNFPA, UNOCHA)

BY GENDER



1 in 6 deployments directly focused on strengthening gender equality

BY SKILLS PROFILE

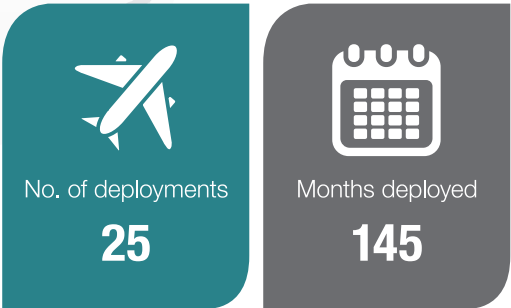


| | No. of deployments | Months deployed |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|
| CLUSTER COORDINATION | 1 | 5 |
| COMMUNICATIONS | 3 | 10 |
| EDUCATION | 3 | 15 |
| ELECTIONS | 6 | 21 |
| HEALTH/NUTRITION | 6 | 30 |
| INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY | 1 | 9 |
| INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | 6 | 42 |
| LOGISTICS | 15 | 77 |
| MEAL AND REPORTING | 5 | 38 |
| PREPAREDNESS, RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE | 13 | 122 |
| PROTECTION AND LEGAL | 17 | 112 |
| RESPONSE COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT | 45 | 271 |
| SAFETY AND SECURITY | 1 | 14 |
| STABILISATION AND RECOVERY | 4 | 40 |
| TECHNICAL SERVICES | 23 | 118 |
| WASH | 5 | 71 |

Data supplied by RedR. Variance in deployee months is due to decimal rounding.

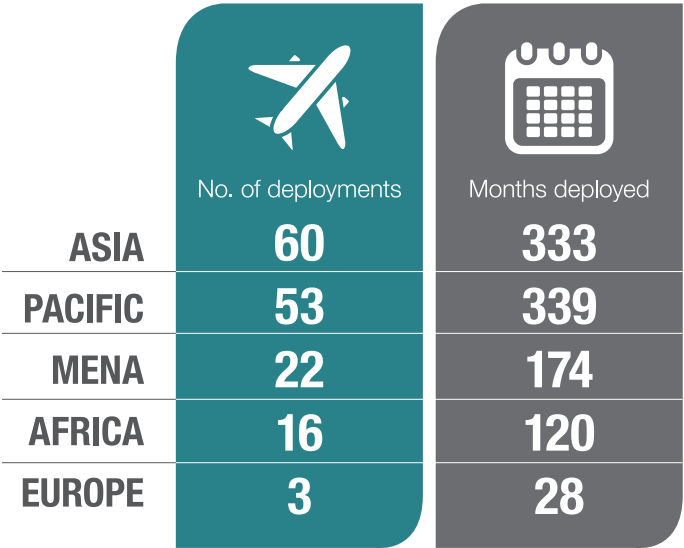


INCLUSION



GENDER, PROTECTION AND
DISABILITY DEPLOYMENTS

BY REGION



DEPLOYMENTS ACROSS THE
DISASTER CYCLE



Figure 2: Australia Assists’ performance at a glance 2017–2019

4. FINDINGS AGAINST EVALUATION QUESTIONS

4.1 BUILDING RESILIENCE TO, PREPARING FOR, RESPONDING TO AND RECOVERING FROM NATURAL HAZARD AND CONFLICT

Evaluation Question:

Assess the outcomes achieved through DFAT funding to RedR to deploy specialists to work with global partners to build resilience to, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural hazard and conflict.

Finding 1:

Australia Assists represents a robust deployment mechanism that is aligned with Australia's national and humanitarian priorities while being sufficiently flexible to respond to rapid onset humanitarian crises as well as changing partner needs along the humanitarian–development nexus.

Australia Assists is a key instrument for delivering on the Foreign Policy White Paper's commitment to enhance Australia's civilian emergency response capacity by providing *additional stand-by mechanisms with UN and international agencies at time of crisis and facilitating efforts to build the capacity of developing countries to prevent, respond to and manage emergencies, effectively drawing on the breadth of Australian expertise*.⁴

Australia Assists' program logic responds directly to the priorities established within the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy and enables the program to report against DFAT's high level humanitarian priorities

(see Figure 3).

| DFAT Humanitarian Strategy | Australia Assists end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs) |
|---|--|
| Objective 1: Reformed Global Humanitarian System | EOPO 4: Quality of humanitarian action Improved influence of Australia's humanitarian efforts and advancement of humanitarian policy imperatives |
| Objective 2: Reduced Disaster Risk | EOPO 1: Stability, Resilience and Risk Reduction Improved ability of Australia and partner countries to reduce disaster risk, build resilience and contribute to conflict mitigation |
| Objective 3: Enhanced Preparedness and Response | EOPO 2: Crisis preparedness and response Improved ability of Australia and partner countries to prepare for and respond to disaster, fragility and conflict |
| Objective 4: Prioritised Early Recovery | EOPO 3: Stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction Improved ability of Australia and partner countries to stabilise, recover and rebuild following natural disaster and conflict |

⁴ DFAT (2017) *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, pp. 45, 46, <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>.

Figure 3: Australia Assists outcomes mapped against the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy

With 154 deployments (993 deployment months), Australia Assists has exceeded deployment targets by 25–30%. The contribution these deployments make to each outcome area is variable:

- **EOPO 1: Stability, Resilience and Risk Reduction:** 42 deployments totalling 297 deployee months at an average duration of 7.07 months per deployment.
- **EOPO 2: Crisis Preparedness and Response:** 80 deployments totalling 438 deployee months at an average duration of 5.4 months per deployment.
- **EOPO 3: Stabilisation, Recovery and Reconstruction:** 32 deployments totalling 259 deployee months at an average duration of 8.09 months per deployment.
- Progress against EOPO 4 is integrated with most deployments and is discussed further in section 4.3.

Selected outcomes against the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy and Australia Assists EOPOs are provided in Annex 3.

The current imbalance between deployments against EOPOs 2 and 3 and Australia Assists' work on EOPO 1 is largely attributed to Year 1 operations during which there was a focus on surge deployments to the Rohingya and Syria crises and rapid-onset crises in the PNG Highlands, Cyclone Gita's impact in Tonga, the Ambae Volcano impact in Vanuatu and the time required to put in place the administrative mechanisms including Subsidiary Arrangements, merging of the former ACC and RedR rosters, expansion of the roster capability and establishment of operational frameworks and protocols.

The Review found clear evidence of an increased shift towards EOPO 1, and July 2019 reporting indicates that deployment targets against EOPO1 are now being met.

There are clear regional variations in the way Australia Assists is utilised by DFAT Posts and partners:

- **In the Middle East and Africa**, deployments (38) are predominantly focused on responding to protracted crises (EOPO 2 and 4) and supporting humanitarian reform. DFAT Posts in Africa, which have constrained programming budgets, are using deployments strategically by mobilising technical assistance to gain access into often crowded spaces, leverage influence within partner organisations and strengthen the quality of humanitarian action.
- **In Asia**, where an Australia Assists regional presence has not yet been established, over three-quarters of a total 60 deployments have been to the Rohingya Crisis (EOPO 2) alongside systems strengthening support for regional organisations such as ASEAN (EOPOs 1 and 4).
- **In Europe**, deployments support Humanitarian Reform (EOPO 4), including disability inclusion policy development with the World Food Programme (WFP), MEAL support for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and geographical information systems mapping support for the World Health Organization in Rome.
- **In the Pacific**, (53) deployments are spread largely across EOPOs 1, 2 and 4, with some contributions to EOPO 4 through election support to the Solomon Islands and the Bougainville Referendum.

4.1.1 FACTORS INFLUENCING OUTCOMES: EFFECTIVENESS

Section 4.2 highlights the contributions of deployments to the delivery of Australia Assists' programmatic priorities. To minimise repetition, we have focused the discussion on our assessment of the factors that contribute to the achievement of outcomes and influence the effectiveness of Australia Assists.

4.1.1.1 THE STANDBY PARTNERSHIP

The Standby Partnership (SBP)⁵ is a network of bilateral agreements that support the UN response to humanitarian crises through the secondment of humanitarian experts called upon to fill staffing needs and gaps in operations through a coordinated mechanism.

As the only Standby Partner in the Southern Hemisphere, RedR maintains a unique position in the SBP due to its proximity and capacity to service the Asia and the Pacific regions.

As SBP deployments are provided free to UN partners, RedR depends on funding from several sources;⁶ however, it has also been successful in negotiating cost-sharing arrangements with a number of UN agencies.

DFAT's partnership with and funding to RedR provides it with access to the SBP and, through that, the ability to extend its humanitarian presence by deploying Australian technical assistance into UN operations.

4.1.1.2 AN INTEGRATED RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, DEPLOYMENT AND POST-DEPLOYMENT CAPABILITY

Informants reported that RedR consistently delivers high quality, skilled and professional deployments.

"The time for an enthusiastic amateur is not in an emergency. We need highly skilled people who can make informed professional decisions in real time and this is what Australia Assists delivers."

The quality of Australia Assists' deployments is by no means coincidental. It is an outcome of a rigorous recruitment process that integrates world-class training, psychological assessment, selection, pre-deployment preparation, mobilisation, in-country management and re-entry (see Figure 4).

RedR considers that the rigour of this process contributes to very low rates of failed deployments by ensuring that roster members are well aware of the complexities of their working contexts and are equipped to manage effectively in often high risk and insecure contexts.

Applying to the roster, however, is costly due to a series of core training sessions⁷ that must be completed before proceeding to the next recruitment phase, which includes psychological testing and health checks. These costs average approximately AUD 6000–7500 and are currently borne by applicants.

This presents a key challenge for RedR as it seeks to expand and diversify the roster to include a wide cross-section of the community with regard to age, gender, sexual, ethnic and lingual diversity as well as technical and sectoral capability and experience (see 4.4.3).

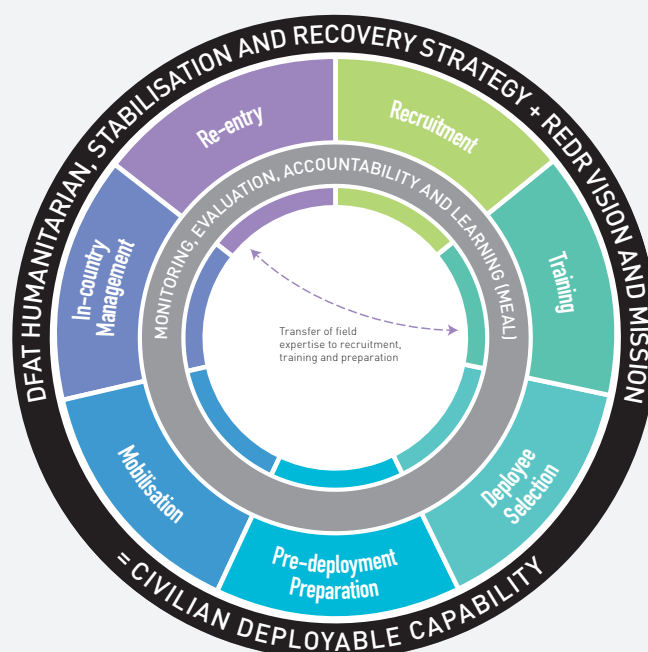


Figure 4: The deployment cycle⁸

5 <https://www.standbypartnership.org/>

6 DFAT is the largest donor to RedR Australia; however, RedR Australia also receives funding support for deployments into the SBP from the Department for International Development (UK), private sector partnerships and philanthropic sources.

7 Essentials of Humanitarian Practice and Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) – six days in total.

8 Note, the deployment cycle is RedR's deployment cycle applying to all deployments including those funded by DFAT through Australia Assists.

4.1.1.3 EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT PLANNING TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF A DIVERSIFIED AND FLEXIBLE ROSTER

Finding 2:

The expanding programmatic brief vis-à-vis servicing a wider set of sectoral and thematic priorities will present future challenges for Australia Assists and is likely to require strategic consideration of whether the program should set its sights wide (extending the thematic and sectoral footprint of the program) or deep (investing in priority sectors, thematic areas or partners).

This expansion of capabilities and any future shift to demand-led deployments risks placing significant pressure on the roster that would likely require major overhaul.

Australia Assists has created a series of shifts in the way RedR manages deployments, including:

- refocusing SBP deployments to provide improved alignment with DFAT sectoral programming and geographic priorities while maintaining the relevance of the SBP to UN partners⁹
- establishing capability to deliver on DFAT thematic priorities: protection, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion and child protection (see 4.2.3.2–4.2.3.4)
- extending deployments beyond the SBP to include non-UN, government and NGOs.

This mixture of partners and geographic, sectoral and thematic priorities presents a complicated matrix through which DFAT and RedR select and prioritise deployments and has key implications for the management of the roster. Making these shifts requires careful regeneration, management and planning of the roster to maintain a balance between roster activity and size and the diversity of (anticipated) skills, experience and background.

As the program matures, we anticipate that a more strategic longer-term approach to deployment planning that enables regular review will be essential to ensuring practical alignment between the roster and demand.

Recommendation 1:

Developing regional strategies that allow flexible responses to crises, take into account the significant variations between regions and the need to service the SBP, and concurrently focus resources on key outcomes would help DFAT and RedR deliver greater sustainability of outcomes moving forwards.

4.1.1.4 CLARITY OF PURPOSE AND COLLABORATION

The shift away from the previous DFAT–RedR partnership in which DFAT provided a grant to RedR means that RedR has less autonomy, and DFAT expects significantly more control over the nature of deployments in order to ensure alignment with its own strategies objectives.

Getting the balance right between DFAT priorities and RedR's responsibility to retain currency within the SBP is at times delicate, however, the contract establishes appropriate mechanisms to protect this balance. The annual deployment planning process appropriately allocates 20% of deployments for RedR to support the maintenance of the SBP. Maintaining this balance works best where there is a strong relationship between RedR and DFAT and the ability to deliver mutual benefit by working towards shared interests as well as towards the interests of each party.

While there have been some challenges along the way, the foundations for a more collaborative relationship are being put in place, and there is evidence of collaborative efforts in deployment planning and ensuring alignment between DFAT and RedR core business (see 4.2.4).

Finding 3:

RedR's current structure, which integrates Australia Assists across the whole organisational management structure, appears to be resulting in less than optimal lines of decision-making responsibility and reporting to DFAT.

⁹ Demand for deployments is high. Annually, RedR receives around 615 requests for deployments through the SBP alone.

The extent to which more effective collaboration can be achieved depends on the strength of leadership from within both DFAT and RedR; however, RedR's current structure and absence of a single line of reporting responsibility for Australia Assists presents some risks to this.

Various RedR team members report to DFAT on their own areas of work (roster/deployments, MEAL, Communications, etc.) but may not have delegations to make higher level decisions that affect the wider program. While most operational matters do not require an Executive function, they do require a higher level of management oversight and consistency to ensure that DFAT and RedR together make and communicate informed and actionable decisions.

Recommendation 2:

RedR should review Australia Assists management structure to better facilitate cross-departmental management oversight to strengthen partnership and performance management and efficiency in reporting and decision-making.

4.1.1.5 ESTABLISHING A LOCAL PRESENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The shift towards a greater balance between short-term surge and longer-term deployments focusing on resilience and thematic priorities such as gender and social inclusion, particularly in the Pacific and during protracted crises, requires the establishment of new and more localised relationships with duty bearers: host governments and local and regional organisations.

The establishment of local presences in the Pacific (Fiji) and in the Middle East and Africa (Jordan) has been a necessary response to this changing context and is laying the foundations for more localised, connected and nuanced responses and better engagement of DFAT Posts in deployment planning and management (see 4.2.1 and 4.2.4).

4.1.1.6 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER DFAT INVESTMENTS

Australia Assists deployments are frequently complementary to other channels of humanitarian support used by DFAT. Complementarity with other DFAT humanitarian, development and strategic investments is expressed in a number of ways:

Contributing strategic technical inputs to DFAT and multi-donor programs

- Gina Jones is using her background in disaster preparedness with the NSW fire department as a technical adviser to the Pacific Community's (SPC) Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA), a regional program advising on disaster response processes for SPC's internal emergency response and for emergency response agencies across SPC's member countries. PIEMA is funded by DFAT and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT) Aid Program.¹⁰
- Jenny Lee was deployed as a Civil–Military Specialist to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (the AHA Centre) in Jakarta, providing an important point of engagement with the centre for Australia's ASEAN mission and building on DFAT's (earlier) investment in the start-up of the centre.

Contributing to the effective management of DFAT-funded programs

- Ted McDonnell is deployed into the Vanuatu Ministry of Public Works, working alongside national government counterparts to support the management and implementation of the DFAT-funded post-Cyclone Pam Public Building Recovery Program.

¹⁰ <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/first-australia-assists-deployment-into-spc-in-fiji/>

Strengthening DFAT partners

- In Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), Anthea Moore helped introduce KoBo Toolbox¹¹ into United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) operations to facilitate accurate and timely assessment and response to needs. By identifying gaps and weaknesses, programming decisions can then be made to improve UNICEF's humanitarian response.

Contributing to whole-of-Australian Government activities

- Six deployees contributed as part of Australia's wider contribution to the 2019 Solomon Islands election, working within the Solomon's Island Electoral Commission and alongside the Australian Electoral Commission, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Defence Force and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Supporting DFAT humanitarian architecture

- Australia Assists is currently recruiting a Humanitarian Specialist to work with DFAT Post in Vanuatu to support the delivery and planning of its humanitarian and recovery investments.
- At the height of the Rohingya Crisis, Australia Assists put a Coordinator on the ground in Cox's Bazar to assess needs, establish partnerships and support Australia Assists deployments. This role was highly valued by DFAT as it mitigated some of the high transactional burden on Post.

There is evidence that improved deployment planning processes instituted in 2019, which foster greater involvement of DFAT Posts, have strengthened complementarity and alignment with DFAT investments at both country and regional levels (see 4.2.4).

Australia Assists has formal and informal links with the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) and the Australian Red Cross (ARC).

- **Informally**, ARC sends 15–20 staff to RedR HEAT training per year and contributes advice and expertise in areas such as protection and gender to strengthen RedR training courses. Similarly, many Australian NGOs utilise RedR as their humanitarian training provider.
- **Formally**, Australia Assists (RedR), AHP and ARC come together through the AHP health check and through the Australian Council for International Development's Humanitarian Reference Group where RedR's relationship with UN systems brings important insights and access. AHP and ARC have attempted to identify areas in which Australia Assists deployees could contribute to their programs, and there have been some discussions about how Australia Assists can engage with AHP's Disaster READY initiatives in the Pacific.

There is scope for Australia Assists to collaborate more proactively and strategically with ARC and AHP. Given that all of these partnerships are in their early stages of formation, preconditions for collaboration have been established and we anticipate that more tangible forms of collaboration will emerge as these partnerships move into more mature phases.¹²

These opportunities include cross-partnership collaboration and learning in areas such as working together to empower national disaster management offices (NDMOs), understanding and responding to localisation and in developing tools for humanitarian capacity assessment.

11 KoBo Toolbox is an open-source digital data collection and analysis tool kit, designed for use in humanitarian responses that allows monitoring of program implementation, household interviews, GPS locations and photographs of facilities and potential hazards to be collected and submitted electronically and available for analysis and mapping within minutes.

12 AHP is a relatively new partnership, commencing in 2017 just months prior to Australia Assists' inception in October 2017. The DFAT ARC Partnership commenced in 2015 and is currently undergoing design of its next stage.

4.2 PERFORMANCE AGAINST AUSTRALIA ASSISTS PRIORITIES

4.2.1 EXTENDING REACH INTO THE PACIFIC

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Increase the program's presence and effectiveness in the Pacific, including enhancing national capacity in disaster management and preparedness, building resilience and supporting broader Australian aid priorities.**

Finding 4:

The establishment of Australia Assists coincided with DFAT's Pacific Step-up which has been a key driver in establishing new partnerships and extending Australia's deployment of humanitarian technical expertise into the Pacific region.

Australia Assists is clearly articulated as a mechanism to support strengthening of resilience and disaster risk¹³ within the Pacific Step-up¹⁴.

Pacific deployments represent 34% of all Australia Assists deployments, exceeding the target of 30%. Importantly, and appropriately in line with the Pacific Step-up, Pacific deployments represent:

- a widening of deployment types, including a shift away from UN Standby deployments to a greater focus on deploying into NDMOs, line ministries and regional and local organisations,
- a shift away from surge response to rapid-onset disaster to a focus on enhancing disaster management and preparedness, building resilience and ensuring that specifically vulnerable groups are included in planning and response.

This work is supported by an Australia Assists regional presence whose key function is the establishment of partnerships and working with DFAT and partner agencies to identify where technical support gaps, Australia's comparative advantage and the roster capability converge.

DFAT Posts in the Pacific are variably engaged with Australia Assists. A Subsidiary Arrangement for Fiji is yet to be signed preventing deployments to Government of Fiji ministries and resulting in less engagement with DFAT's bilateral program. Posts such as PNG and the Solomon Islands, where there is already a level of saturation of technical assistance deployed to line ministries, are using Australia Assists to support rapid-onset crises (PNG earthquake, rhinoceros beetle outbreak in the Solomon Islands) as well as election support. Vanuatu, on the other hand, has had relatively high numbers of deployees supporting recovery from Cyclone Pam and the response to the Ambae Volcano and is now moving to longer term deployments predicated on systems strengthening within the humanitarian–development nexus. Vanuatu Posts co-financing of deployees is a strong indicator the programs utility for Post.

Posts interviewed felt that Australia Assists acts a further mechanism through which they can mobilise Australian expertise to contribute to the delivery of their Aid Investment Plans (see 4.2.4) and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of deployments, highlighting that these provided them with deeper insights into the operations of humanitarian assistance programs.

There is strong evidence that deployments are highly regarded by Pacific partners, with informants highlighting technical capability, independence and cultural competence as key strengths.

"I value that the deployee brings contestability to our work and that we can draw on expertise from other places."

A recent review commissioned by Australia Assists, Preparedness and Disaster Risk Management in the Pacific – From a Local Perspective, highlighted the value of the program to Pacific nations and observed that 'host agencies are also deeply engaged in reflecting on the experiences and opportunities afforded by the program as well as ways in which to improve its mechanisms and outcomes'.¹⁵

13 <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/development-assistance/Pages/resilience-pacific-regional.aspx>

14 <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/Pages/the-pacific.aspx> and <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/development-assistance/Pages/resilience-pacific-regional.aspx>

15 Greenwood, K: Preparedness and Disaster Risk Management in the Pacific – From a Local Perspective. p. 1

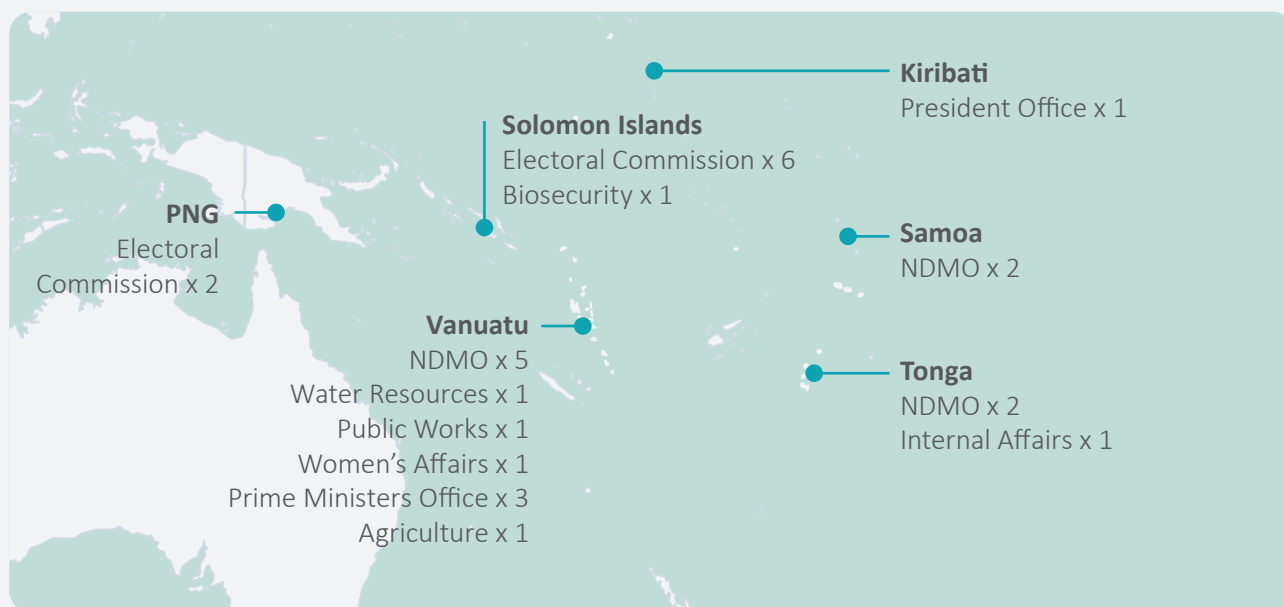


Figure 5: Australia Assists deployments to Pacific Governments

Australia Assists deployments are extending Australia's footprint to a range of Pacific partners, for example:

NDMOs and line ministries

Australia Assists has made 11 deployments to NDMOs in Vanuatu (5), Solomon Islands (2), Tonga (2) and Samoa (2) plus 18 deployments to Pacific line ministries:

- In Vanuatu, Brian Smart worked with the NDMO to support the development of an evacuation plan for 8500 people to nearby islands, while Mark Vaughan is working across government agencies and with communities to develop and implement the Second Home policy that supports the resettlement of displaced people.
- Supply Chain Management Specialist Jodie Clark worked within the Ministry of Agriculture to support project management and logistics helping to establish provincial livestock breeding centres in six locations.
- The deployment of election personnel has contributed to stabilisation efforts by supporting the 2019 Solomon Island election and the upcoming Bougainville Referendum.

UN Partners

In a region characterised by small nation states, the UN has established regional clusters in the Pacific – the only region where this has occurred. In addition to the delivery of surge support to UN actors at times of crisis, a key characteristic of the Australia Assists approach to UN deployments in the Pacific is in its support to the establishment of these regional clusters and linking their work to that of national clusters through wraparound deployments.

- Lindsay Sales, deployed to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in Fiji, is supporting policy development and coordinated efforts to support national governments in integrating protection and reproductive health within National Response Frameworks. This work is intended to link to deployments such as that of Nimarta Khuman, whose deployment is shared between UN Women and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Vanuatu to support strengthened mainstreaming of gender equality and protection into disaster response planning.

Regional organisations

- Partnerships with regional organisations in the Pacific support connectedness and Pacific leadership for disaster management and resilience-building. Currently, and outside of the UN system, Australia Assists has established relationships with key regional organisations, including International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the SPC, where deployments are strengthening local capacities and institutional approaches to preparedness, response and resilience.

Finding 5:

Pacific contextual realities require a shift away from short-term surge to longer term systems strengthening technical assistance that supports local leadership, improved planning and emergency management and resilience-building.

High disaster risk, coupled with emerging capability and pervasive challenges around scattered geography, remoteness, climate change, governance and socio-cultural diversity, requires technical assistance to focus on systems strengthening, including strengthening disaster governance and planning and national and regional coordination systems, protecting vulnerable groups and mainstreaming gender and social inclusion and child protection, and strengthening accountability through establishing procedures and guidelines for reconstruction and recovery efforts.

These functions extend well beyond the capability of short-term surge deployments and require long-term investments.

The current average term of deployment in the Pacific is six and a half months (6.4) months. This is largely a point-in-time issue associated with program inception and the need to establish an operational presence to negotiate bilateral Subsidiary Arrangements with Pacific nations and align the roster with Pacific needs. The need for longer deployments was strongly articulated by all informants and is consistent with the findings of the aforementioned Review Preparedness and Disaster Risk Management in the Pacific – from a Local Perspective.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the length of deployments to the Pacific will significantly change in the immediate future to more effectively respond to and service the intent of Australia's humanitarian support to the Pacific.

The fact that the Pacific is an increasingly crowded space is evident, including in the disaster risk reduction space. Australia itself has a number of mechanisms for deploying different forms of technical assistance (albeit that they each have specifically defined purposes, areas of focus and modalities) as do other donors and actors in the region. This means that Australia Assists has had to think strategically about how it makes the most effective use of its relationships and deployments to deliver the best outcomes.

As the program matures it will be important to define Australia Assists' value proposition in the Pacific, to guide how it mobilises its resources for best results. This includes determining the extent to which the strategy should extend the sectoral, thematic and geographic footprints of the program or focus on specific thematic and sectoral gaps.

Recommendation 3:

To support a stronger focus on results as the program matures, a Pacific regional strategy should be developed that has sufficient flexibility to concurrently address long-term support for disaster preparedness and resilience-building while progressing Australia's objectives vis-a-vis protection, social inclusion and short-term surge capabilities at times of crisis.

4.2.2 PROTRACTED CRISES

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Continue to contribute to Australia's humanitarian objectives in protracted crises in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, focusing on the Rohingya and Syria crises.**

In comparison to rapid-onset emergencies, protracted crises are characterised by slow build leading to drawn-out conflict and accompanied displacement, with no clear endpoint and multiple and competing political agendas. Protracted crises affect more than 350 million people globally, undermining the resilience of communities and the prospect of sustainable development.¹⁶ Responding to protracted crises requires investments in humanitarian assistance and protection, while concurrently building the resilience of communities to future shocks.

Finding 6:

Australia Assists makes an important technical contribution to Australian and global responses to protracted crises, and in particular to Protection of Conflict Affected and Displaced Populations and Building Resilience in Protracted Crises (Objective 3: Key Result Areas 3 and 4 of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy). It has however, little or no current visibility within DFAT's current multi-year response frameworks for Syria and Iraq.

With a design process for the next multi-year framework for Australia's response for the Syria crisis underway, and a multi-year framework being considered for the Rohingya Crisis, there is an opportunity to consider how Australia Assists contribution to these crises can be more clearly articulated within these.

Australia Assists has supported 80 deployments representing 528

deployment months to protracted crises in South Sudan, Ethiopia, Palestinian Territories and Iraq, as well as the Rohingya Crisis (Bangladesh and Myanmar) and the Syria Crisis (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq). These deployments represent a wide range of capabilities ranging from short-term surge support for emergency field coordination, information management, cluster coordination, shelter, logistics and education and long-term technical specialists supporting protection; disability inclusion; child protection; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); disaster risk reduction and resilience; civil-military coordination; and MEAL.

Australia Assists' contribution to Australia's work in protracted crises manifests in four key ways:

- **Working within the humanitarian–development nexus**

DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy commits Australia to 'improve the coherence between DFAT's diplomatic, development and humanitarian responses to protracted and slow-onset crises, including by deploying funding mechanisms that target both humanitarian and longer-term development needs'.¹⁷ Incorporating short-term (surge) capacity that focuses on urgent humanitarian needs and longer term (strategic technical) deployments that build resilience, the Australia Assists deployment model is fit for purpose for working in protracted crises.

- **Strategic deployments focusing on systems strengthening**

Predicated on systems strengthening, maintaining a clear distinction between short-term and longer term strategic deployments and their different contributions is key to creating efficiencies and delivering aid effectiveness.

- **Deployment of high-calibre technical expertise within Australia's fields of technical advantage**

In protracted crises, deployees engage with established teams and systems within a complex and dynamic context. Australia Assists deployees are highly respected among their peers and host agencies for their high-calibre sectoral/technical expertise within Australia's priority thematic areas (gender equality, disability inclusion, protection, education, WASH).

¹⁶ FAO in DFAT Humanitarian Strategy, p. 4

¹⁷ <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/humanitarian-strategy.aspx>, p. 19

- **Interacting across boundaries and circles of influence**

DFAT Posts and Australia Assists work together to identify strategic deployments that work as force multipliers, engaging Australia in new spaces, filling key technical gaps and supporting change in humanitarian practice. The ability to navigate circles of influence is demonstrated in the deployment of Dennis Malone to the EU Advisory Mission to Iraq.

The Syrian Crisis

The Syrian crisis, now in its ninth year, has resulted in high numbers of internally displaced populations, as well as large refugee populations in the surrounding countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Australia Assists has deployed 13 specialists (114.4 deployment months) into five UN agencies (UNHCR, UNOCHA, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF) located in all neighbouring countries, but not inside Syria,¹⁸ including:

- civil-military coordinators in Jordan and Turkey to gain cross-border humanitarian access to populations inside Syria
- logistics and sexual and reproductive health specialists to support the delivery of emergency reproductive health commodities and dignity kits in Jordan
- a long-term WASH engineer to ensure quality water supply and waste removal in informal tented settlements in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley
- a MEAL expert to support strengthened integrated program-wide data collection and reporting.

“The role of RedR Australia and the Australia Assists program has been absolutely critical, not just to OCHA but to the whole UN family. We’ve now had three successful deployments and each of them have played a different role throughout the cycle of the crisis here.”

The Rohingya Crisis

Since August 2017, violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State has resulted in a mass exodus of Rohingya refugees fleeing into Bangladesh. There are now over 1.2 million people in Cox's Bazar.¹⁹ Most of these refugees live in overcrowded camps and communities where there is ongoing need for food, shelter, water and health services. Around 60% of refugees are women and girls who are particularly vulnerable and in need of special protection.

Australia Assists has deployed 49 specialists (259.1 deployment months) to the Rohingya response in Bangladesh and Myanmar.²⁰

Australia Assists is a highly visible and widely known modality of providing DFAT assistance to the Rohingya Crisis. The Government of Bangladesh and UN agencies consistently reported that Australian Assists has succeeded in filling niche roles with highly effective deployees in a timely manner.

Strongly aligned to DFAT's 2015–18 Bangladesh Aid Investment Plan, contributions from Australia Assists are to building resilience, protection, disability inclusion, gender equality and localisation and enhancing Bangladeshi capacity at national and local levels.

Significantly, Australia Assists has leveraged on Australia's commitment to gender and socially inclusive development, responding to need and programming gaps by prioritising gender equality, protection and the empowerment of women and girls and disability inclusion. Deployees have been instrumental in supporting programs against many forms of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as strengthening and building capacity for sexual and reproductive health and rights, safety and dignity and family welfare in a Muslim context.

19 This figure includes 693,000 people newly displaced, 300,000 Bangladeshi people living in the region and those Rohingya who had crossed into Bangladesh prior to 25 August 2017. <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/investment-priorities/building-resilience/humanitarian-preparedness-and-response/bangladesh-myanmar-crisis/Documents/rakhine-what-will-our-assistance-do.pdf>.

20 This represents Australia Assists' largest activation, and it coincided with the inception of the program.

18 Australia Assists FY18 Snapshot Report: Syria

Palestine

RedR's partnership with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the Middle East, supported primarily by Australia Assists, has been vital to supporting UNRWA's comprehensive reform program²¹ and its delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees following the United States government's withdrawal of funding to the agency in 2018. In order to support institution-wide reform, eight deployees (totalling 47.6 deployment months) have been placed into strategic positions throughout UNRWA in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon, working in a range of sectors including education, youth, health and donor and project management.

Africa

Australia Assists supports Australia's humanitarian engagement in Africa, supporting deployments to protracted crises in South Sudan and Ethiopia. There is evidence that these are being used strategically by DFAT Posts to leverage capital.

"We have a limited humanitarian budget, and so Australia Assists is an excellent resource for us to be able to provide excellent technical support that aligns with our investment plans and advocacy agenda, when we can't assure partners of reliable funding."

Niche deployments to protracted crises in Africa include:

- Madeleine Habib, senior shipping expert deployed to WFP in Addis Ababa and Djibouti, has been critical to supporting a range of activities that have resulted in improved planning and decongestion of shipping routes, enabling the safe passage of ongoing relief supplies to Ethiopia. Madeleine also undertook an assessment of the seaworthiness of dhows to transport relief assistance to Yemen.²²

- Axelle Chazal has progressed Australia's commitments to education and disability inclusion in protracted crises²³ in her work with UNHCR in Uganda, where she provided technical assistance in mapping opportunities to deliver education to South Sudanese refugee children, including early childhood education, children with special needs and secondary children. A key outcome of this work is the identification of a school to take 100 hearing-impaired children.²⁴

Australia Assists' exclusion from current DFAT response frameworks for Syria and Iraq is largely due to these response packages having been designed prior to October 2017. It does, however, represent a lost opportunity in terms of DFAT being able to report and tell a story about deployee contributions to Australia's response to these crises, but also does not readily allow the lessons from Australia Assists deployments to be captured and amplified across the wider response framework.

The fact that Australia's response frameworks for the Rohingya and Syria crises are currently under re/design presents an opportunity for DFAT to ensure that Australia Assists is articulated within these frameworks, that deployment data is reflected in MEAL arrangements and opportunities for coordination and leveraging opportunities are incentivised.

Recommendation 4:

DFAT can create greater visibility of and alignment to Australia Assists' contribution to protracted crises by taking steps to integrate Australia Assists within multi-year response frameworks and associated MEAL arrangements for key protracted crises into the future.

21 <https://www.unrwa.org/reforming-unrwa-2018>

22 <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/strengthening-the-logistics-sector-in-ethiopia/>

23 DFAT Humanitarian Strategy, p. 19

24 <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/strengthening-the-logistics-sector-in-ethiopia/>

4.2.3 CONTRIBUTION TO EFFECTIVENESS OF GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Contribute to the effectiveness of global humanitarian action, focusing on protection and localisation, gender equality and disability inclusion.**

As highlighted in 4.2.1.6, Australia Assists contributes to effectiveness through its complementarity with other channels of humanitarian support used by DFAT, supporting humanitarian reform through high-quality technical deployments that deliver against the program objectives as well as those within DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy. In addition to these observations, the MTR undertook separate analyses of Australia Assists' contributions to the focus areas of protection, localisation, gender equality and disability inclusion.



4.2.3.1 LOCALISATION

Finding 7:

While Australia Assists is undertaking steps to support the localisation agenda, there is as yet no clear program-wide strategy to support localisation through divesting power to local and national actors.

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit reinforced 'localisation' as a priority issue and compelled humanitarian actors to sign up to the Grand Bargain committing them to strengthen support and funding tools to local and national actors and to make 'principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary'.²⁵

Arguably, DFAT's decision to transfer the former ACC into a civilian organisation and delink it from Australia's direct diplomatic presence²⁶ was an important first step. The creation of Australia Assists has resulted in significant changes to RedR's previous deployment model, which was predicated on the UN SBPs.

There is evidence that a range of efforts to support localisation are being made, including:

- establishing regional presences and engaging national staff to support relationship building
- diversifying the roster and expanding the cultural competence of deployees
- embedding deployments within government ministries and local organisations
- moving towards new partnerships with particular emphasis on national and regional partners (such as ASEAN, IPPF, SPC)
- supporting regional and national clusters in the Pacific (see 4.2.6)
- listening to how local and national partners articulate what their needs are
- localising the development of Terms of Reference
- undertaking the review Preparedness and Disaster Risk Management in the Pacific – From a Local Perspective.

²⁵ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf p. 5

²⁶ Former ACC deployees on Post were considered as part of Australia's international efforts, had direct reporting responsibilities to Posts and travelled on diplomatic passports.

These are significant efforts. However, there is as yet no clear program-wide strategy for how Australia Assists plans to support localisation through divesting power to local and national actors. Moving forwards on the localisation agenda will require DFAT and RedR to address a fundamental question: what does localisation mean for a technical deployment mechanism, which has a dual function of delivering humanitarian expertise and also promoting Australia as a trusted development partner?

Addressing localisation within Australia Assists is significantly more complex than focusing deployments on capacity building and systems strengthening. It is likely to require a greater diversification of the roster, including consideration of regional and national deployment models and of resources for professional development (including the delivery of training), and greater engagement of partners in deployment planning and performance management. Importantly, any approach to localisation will need to be able to adapt to the vastly different regional contexts and the different ways that Australia Assists is utilised in these contexts. There will likely be region-specific cost implications.

Recommendation 5:

As the program matures, the need to arrive at a more nuanced understanding about what localisation means for a technical deployment mechanism such as Australia Assists will become increasingly evident. As a first step DFAT and RedR should work together to define what localisation means for Australia Assists, systematically explore opportunities and barriers to advancing the localisation agenda and develop an action plan to progress localisation efforts.

4.2.3.2 PROTECTION

Finding 8:

It is appropriate at this stage of Australia Assists' maturity and for the size of the program that current protection efforts focus on progressing the work articulated within the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan and the Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, as well as continued support for specialist deployments that directly address specific protection issues or mainstream protection.

DFAT's Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework positions protection as a central tenet of DFAT's approach to humanitarian programming and highlights the importance of a twin-track approach that combines mainstreaming with targeted protection programming. Accountability to affected populations, supporting people with a disability and addressing GBV are key elements of this approach.²⁷

At the inception of Australia Assists, DFAT and RedR agreed to limit key programmatic strategies to two: disability inclusion and gender equality. In line with this agreement, the Australia Assists Disability Inclusion and Gender Equality Strategies and Action Plans (see 4.2.3.3 and 4.2.3.4) establish a sound foundation for progressing key protection issues for women and girls and people with disability that are consistent with the Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework.

²⁷ Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework for the Australian Aid Program, 2013

In addition to its gender- and disability-focused protection work, Australia Assists does facilitate an extensive range of deployments that extend its protection work beyond these areas to include, for example, protection in civil–military engagement, protection of sexual and gender minorities, child protection and coordination of protection clusters in, for example, Vanuatu, PNG, Myanmar and Cox’s Bazar as described below.

Civil-military collaboration

- John Kargotich was deployed to UNDP in Jordan to liaise between the Jordanian Armed Forces and humanitarian agencies, advising the Humanitarian Coordinator and heads of agencies on civil–military issues, notably gaining access to 80,000 Syrians trapped in ‘the Berm’ border area.
- Dennis Malone, deployed as Senior Strategic Adviser on Security Sector Reform Coordination to the EU Advisory Mission in Iraq, is working closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior as they transition from military to peacetime roles and advising donor agencies on how to support this process.

Protecting the rights of sexual and gender minorities

- Australia Assists partnered with Australian NGO Edge Effect to deliver training to agencies in Bangladesh about working with sexual and gender minorities in a humanitarian context.

Gender-based violence and protection in the Pacific

- Anggie Burchill was deployed to UN Women during the PNG Highlands Earthquake Response (2018) where she managed the establishment of Learning Empowerment and Protection Centres close to the epicentre of the disaster, established an emergency hotline for victims of trauma, briefed humanitarian workers in prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and led the Protection Cluster in PNG.
- As part of her deployment to IPPF, Petra Letter worked with IPPF partners across the Pacific, conducted extensive mapping of GBV legal and policy structures available within different Pacific nations and undertook a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey within member associations, the results of which were used to develop a training package on GBV that has been used in six countries.
- GBV specialist Kate Bean was deployed to UNFPA in Yangon, Myanmar, to lead the multi-sectoral program response and coordination for prevention and response to GBV in Rakhine State.

4.2.3.3 GENDER EQUALITY

Finding 9:

Australia Assists has developed a strong foundation for and is contributing to supporting Australia's leadership in prioritising gender equality in humanitarian action.

The Australia Assists Gender Equality Strategy October 2018 is consistent with DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy²⁸ as well as the gender equality priorities established within the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy. The Gender Equality Strategy also contains an action plan and MEAL framework that outline targets and milestones for the program's work on gender equality, and the first report against this action plan has been completed.

Specifically, the Strategy adopts a twin-track (dual) approach that combines targeted activities with mainstreaming across the program and highlights three key priorities:

- enhancing women's voices in decision-making, leadership and peacebuilding
- ending violence against women and girls
- building RedR's organisational capacity in gender equality, including developing improved policies, structures and systems to support quality gender programming.

Key achievements against the action plan include:

- completion of a review of Australia Assists' Protection and Gender Equality work (July 2019)
- establishment of a partnership with Edge Effect to provide technical support on consideration of gender and sexual monitories in training, deployment planning, deployments and programming
- drafting a GBV policy and delivery of GBV training
- completion of a Gender and Protection Review (July 2019), including disability inclusion
- diversification of the roster: 45% of deployees are women, representing 450 deployment months, or 45% of total deployment months (see Figure 2).

Further, the recent review of Protection and Gender Equality highlights that:

Partners recognise that having gender and protection skills on the ground are essential to life saving in a response. They argued that the humanitarian system has been slow to recognise this in favour of 'traditional' positions such as logisticians, WASH and shelter specialists but that the Australia Assists program is seen to understand the importance and value of prioritising and supporting gender and protection roles.²⁹

Australia Assists is making good progress on gender equality. Deployments focusing on gender equality are increasing in line with the action plan and programmatic focus on gender. One in six deployments (17% of deployments) makes an explicit contribution to gender equality and the protection of women and girls. This work includes mainstreaming gender into national and organisational emergency response and recovery plans, supporting the delivery of sexual and reproductive health in emergencies, addressing GBV and supporting women's safe spaces, and capacity building of women's ministries.

A number of good practice examples of Australia Assists' work on gender equality are evident:

- Working with UN Women and the Department of Women's Affairs in Vanuatu, Nimarta Khuman has contributed to supporting strengthened mainstreaming of gender equality and protection into the National Disaster Framework and is supporting leadership development of the Department of Women's Affairs to mainstream gender across the clusters and line ministries. Nim's work has been catalytic in assisting the Department to access over three million New Zealand dollars from MFAT and UN Women to support the establishment of gender and protection committees in the provinces and updating referral pathways.
- Working through the IPPF regional office in Fiji, Petra Letter³⁰ has worked to strengthen the capacity of IPPF member associations across the Pacific to implement the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations. A second deployee will soon join the IPPF to establish data collection and monitoring systems, enabling member associations to better collect, verify and analyse data in times of crises.

28 <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>

29 Australia Assists Gender and Protection Review (2019), p. 6

30 <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/gender-training-front-line-staff-in-the-pacific/>

4.2.3.4 DISABILITY INCLUSION

Finding 10:

Australia Assists has laid solid foundations for disability inclusive programming; however, demand for disability inclusion specialists continues to outstrip supply.

The Australia Assists Disability Inclusion Strategy October 2018 is consistent with DFAT's Disability Inclusion Strategy³¹ and contains an action plan and a MEAL framework. Specifically, this action plan adopts a twin-track approach towards RedR becoming a disability-inclusive organisation through strengthening training, staffing and deployment processes to be more accessible for people with disability, prioritising disability inclusion in its programming activities and working to become a strong contributor to the disability rights movement in the humanitarian sector.³²

Key achievements against the disability action plan include:

- completion of the first report on the first six months of the implementation of the strategy
- collaboration with CBM on a learning document that analyses success factors and barriers in disability programming, based on the knowledge and experience of deployees³³
- a review of RedR training courses by CBM that delivered recommendations for disability-inclusive content and delivery
- a Gender and Protection Review (July 2019), including disability inclusion
- development of partnerships with Disabled People's Organisations.

Demand for disability specialists is growing, and there is evidence that RedR is undertaking the required steps to expand disability capability. While deployments solely focused on disability – such as Vivienne Topp at WFP Headquarters (see 4.2.6) – have delivered sound outcomes, they are relatively rare and demand for disability specialists is currently outstripping supply.

Good practice examples of mainstreaming disability inclusion are evident:

- Tarryn Brown provided leadership in disability inclusion working with WFP in Cox's Bazar to build policies, processes and training for the WFP staff across the whole supply chain of food distribution at the camps.
- In Vanuatu, Project Managers Ted McDonnell (Ministry of Public Works) and Keiran Davis (Department of Water Resources) have developed guidelines for accessible buildings and WASH facilities as part of Cyclone Pam recovery efforts and have overseen the construction of a building for the Vanuatu Society for People with a Disability, other public buildings and accessible WASH facilities.
- A planned deployment to the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) based in Suva, Fiji offers potential to link with wider DFAT work in the disability sector, including collaboration with AHP which PDF collaborates with as part of its Disaster READY program.

Recommendation 6:

There is an ongoing need to recruit specialist disability inclusion expertise into the roster as well as to upskill the capability of the wider roster to mainstream disability inclusion and extend partnerships with Disabled People's Organisations. This will require persistent efforts to address barriers to deployment of people with disability themselves, including addressing challenges associated with reasonable accommodations, safe workspaces and insurance and the need for adequate resourcing.

31 Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program

32 Australia Assists Disability Inclusion Strategy p.3 <https://www.redr.org.au/news/latest-news/from-strategy-to-reality-disability-inclusion-in-the-australia-assists-program/>

33 From Strategy to Reality Disability Inclusion in the Australia Assists Program, June 2019

4.2.4 ENGAGING DFAT POSTS

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Foster Post engagement, with a particular focus on strengthening relations between Posts and RedR.**

Finding 11:

Maximising the strategic value of Australia Assists and the partnership with RedR is about getting the right balance between the strategic role of Posts in ensuring complementarity with local development priorities and other DFAT humanitarian and development investments and the need to maintain a high level of currency of RedR's SBP. Good progress has been made in this regard.

Engagement with DFAT Posts is fundamental to ensuring that Australia Assists aligns with and is complementary to local development priorities and DFAT Aid Investment Plans and that deployments are strategically positioned where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

Efforts are being made to ensure that DFAT Posts have an opportunity to engage at all stages of the deployment cycle.³⁴ Ensuring fit-for-purpose (as opposed to uniform) engagement with individual posts is important to ensure maximum efficiency and relevance.

Review consultations found that Posts are engaged to variable extents with Australia Assists, in line with their resources and programmatic footprint. Some Posts view deployments as an extension of their programming and diplomatic engagements and are actively engaged in deployment planning and management. Others place lower priority on deployments in favour of alternative mechanisms or due to lower disaster risk. Some Posts have regular engagement with employees, while others conduct only on-arrival and on-departure briefs and debriefs.

Changes to the Annual Deployment Planning Mechanism made in Year 2 of the program have positioned Posts more centrally to the deployment planning process. While Posts unanimously agreed that this process strengthened alignment with DFAT and local priorities, some consider that some further streamlining is warranted. Recommendations relating to the development of flexible regional strategies (see Recommendation 1) would support more effective and efficient deployment planning and alignment with regional and national priorities.

A planning crisis in mid-2018 led to RedR having to pull out of a number of deployments, which resulted in some erosion of trust. Significant changes have been made since this time and there is evidence that relationships are rebuilding.

Posts acknowledge the support provided by Australia Assists Regional Offices and recognise their efforts in trying to minimise the transaction costs of Post engagement with the program and in sharing information about the progress of deployments.

³⁴ Role and partner selection, drafting of Terms of Reference, selection and pre-deployment, in-country briefings.

4.2.5 BUILDING VISIBILITY

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Build awareness of the program with key stakeholders, including the Australian public.**

Finding 12:

There are tensions between DFAT corporate program-level branding – the Australia Assists brand – and operational realities in which deployments are more clearly identified as part of an Australian aid contribution. These tensions undermine and call into question the effectiveness and efficiency of program-level branding.

RedR and DFAT have worked together to establish the Australia Assists brand and management tools to support its use and development. The Australia Assists Visual Identity Guidelines govern the use of the Australia Assists brand, its logo, publication guidelines, co-branding arrangements, etc. The Australia Assists Communication Plan provides a wider framework that seeks to ensure that Australia Assists improves the visibility and recognition of Australia's global and regional humanitarian contribution and enhances Australia's foreign policy and international diplomacy efforts³⁵ including through aid communications, social media platforms, building partnerships and soft power engagement.

RedR has an established social media presence, which it uses to actively promote Australia Assists, and a solid portfolio of accessible promotional material including case studies and a photo library.

Despite evidence that both RedR and DFAT are undertaking steps to promote the Australia Assists brand through co-branding and merchandising, briefing deployees as Australia Assists roster members and socialising the Australia Assists brand to partners, Australia Assists deployments are identified in a wide range of ways and are often confused with a range of different brands such as ACC, Australia Assists, Australian Aid, DFAT, RedR, etc.

The reasons for this are multiple and, in many cases, outside of the control of efforts of the program. These include the way in which other Australian Aid programs are branded in different countries, the extent to which political and/or security contexts enable branding, that fact that RedR (not DFAT) is the UN Standby Partner and the extent to which an organisation has had exposure to RedR through the SBP arrangement or other DFAT-funded initiatives.

In coming to terms with this, it is important for DFAT to understand some of the mechanics and drivers from the perspective of host agencies. UN deployments through the SBP, for example, are administered through each agency's headquarters through their own process, and individual country offices do not have free choice over the preferred agency. They do, however, recognise RedR as an SBP member. Similarly, in locations where DFAT has a significant programmatic footprint such as Asia and the Pacific, there are multiple brands associated with Australian Aid, and local counterparts are less cognisant of and arguably have less interest in the mechanism through which technical assistance is sourced.

Our consultations consistently found that host organisations (government, UN and NGOs alike) are less concerned with the source of deployments than with the quality of technical assistance, achievement of the intended outcomes and the ability and preparedness to work within government systems.

³⁵ Australia Assists Communication Plan, p. 1

DFAT Posts without exception highlighted that Australia Assists is just one mechanism through which they mobilise technical assistance to deliver on their objectives, and that they are most concerned with delivering high quality, technical assistance that is relevant to local needs and contributes to systems strengthening. Posts highlighted that program-level branding can be unhelpful and confusing proposing that reference to Australian technical assistance is more identifiable and indicative of Australia's humanitarian and development contributions.

The MTR team anticipates that this will be an ongoing tension in the program and particularly in the Pacific with the shift towards longer term deployments in which employees are embedded within and perceived as a resource for government agencies.

These challenges give rise to fundamental questions for DFAT that extend well beyond the scope of this review and indeed of Australia Assists: To what extent does program-level branding such as Australia Assists dilute the overall message of the Australian Aid brand?

They also highlight that creating brand recognition is complex and subject to a range of factors some of which are out of the control of the best efforts of the partners to promote it.

Recommendation 7:

DFAT should pragmatically consider the extent to which pursuit of Australia Assists brand recognition effectively reinforces its wider need to promote Australia as a valuable technical partner. This should include consideration of the relative priority placed on pursuit of this identity in favour of other program management priorities.

4.2.6 STRENGTHENING UN AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

Evaluation Question:

Assess the performance of Australia Assists in delivering the program's key priorities:

- **Strengthen UN agency partnerships to improve the quality of humanitarian action.**

Finding 13:

RedR's position within the UN SBP offers unique and deep access into the UN system enabling strategic deployments, operational insights into humanitarian crises and opportunities for dialogue and influence that contribute to humanitarian reform and improving the quality of humanitarian action.

The Foreign Policy White Paper highlights Australia's commitment to reinforcing the strength, accountability and effectiveness of international institutions; supporting the UN Secretary General's reform agenda; strengthening peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development systems; and encouraging coordinated responses to conflict prevention.³⁶

As the only UN SBP in the Southern Hemisphere, and by way of its SBP agreements with 11 of 13 UN agencies,³⁷ RedR occupies a unique position through which Australia can rapidly mobilise Australian humanitarian personnel to support the delivery of humanitarian priorities while concurrently contributing to humanitarian reform.³⁸

Australia Assists has made 139 deployments to 11 UN agencies (see Table 1) through the SBP. This currently represents 76% of all deployments.

³⁶ Foreign Policy White Paper, Opportunity, Security, Strength, 2017, p. 82

³⁷ https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ac3d3c_e5545b2fae-5c4d1683b79705d805deb0.pdf

³⁸ UNOCHA http://interactive.unocha.org/publication/2006_annualreport/html/part1_humanitarian.html

Table 1: Australia Assists deployments to UN agencies, October 2017 to August 2019

| Agency | Deployments | Deployment months | % total deployments / months |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| UNHCR | 28 | 192 | 16% |
| WFP | 22 | 131 | 11% |
| UNICEF | 17 | 117 | 10% |
| FAO | 13 | 105 | 9% |
| UNFPA | 11 | 65 | 6% |
| UNDP | 8 | 64 | 5% |
| UN OCHA | 9 | 48 | 4% |
| UNRWA | 8 | 48 | 4% |
| IOM | 8 | 46 | 4% |
| UN Women | 7 | 44 | 4% |
| WHO | 8 | 36 | 3% |
| Total UN deployments | 139 | 896 | 76% |

The Australia Assists roster comprises a cadre of skilled, response-ready personnel who reflect global industry trends and requirements and who in many cases have strong understanding of UN policies and guidelines. With extensive experience in working within and alongside UN systems, these specialists are uniquely positioned to support humanitarian reform, particularly within DFAT niche areas of expertise including disability inclusion, gender equality, protection in humanitarian crises, emergency preparedness and building resilience.

Australia Assists contributes to Strengthening Humanitarian Action (Objective 1 of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy) in a number of ways:

Strengthening humanitarian diplomacy

- RedR's relationships with UN partners created through the SBP are being used by DFAT to navigate new relationships and spheres of influence. Importantly, deployments and the depth and quality of these relationships provide DFAT with deeper insights into the operationalisation of humanitarian responses which, in turn, can be used to influence policy and advocacy efforts.

"Our engagement around deployments gives us (DFAT) a better understanding of how to intervene."

Demonstrating leadership within the cluster system

- Deployed to FAO Fiji, Pamela George acted as Regional Food Security Cluster Coordinator, helping to revitalise clusters in five countries and successfully involving the Fijian Ministry of Fisheries for the first time as a cluster co-lead.
- Working with UNICEF in Bangladesh, Megan Wiezcerek acted as National Child Protection Sub-Cluster Coordinator helping to ensure that child protection issues were prioritised in the Rohingya response. This included working on the Child Protection Strategy for the Joint Response Plan and authoring a report on some of the challenges and solutions for child protection in the camps.³⁹

³⁹ Improving the Protective Environment for Children and Building the Resilience of Refugee Families in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, RedR, Australia Communities of Practice Research Report, December 2018

Strengthening program quality, accountability

- Australia Assists contributes to strengthened accountability through supporting improved performance management and reporting by providing specialist technical advisers, especially in the fields of Australia's technical advantage, and by taking leadership in promoting international humanitarian standards.
- MEAL Specialist Catriona Heath was deployed in response to a need identified by DFAT and UNHCR that would allow UNHCR to support robust impact-focused reporting, streamline and join up individual project data. Catriona has introduced program logic models integrating MEAL across 25 programs operating out of the UNHCR Regional Office in Lebanon. This work has the potential to transform UNHCR MEAL systems both across the region and globally.
- Disability Inclusion Specialist Vivienne Topp was deployed to WFP's Rome Headquarters and worked to improve and promote inclusion policies across the organisation. Vivienne undertook field visits to WFP country programs, including South Sudan, Tanzania, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Jordan, Turkey and Uganda, to support the practical implementation of these policies and establish links with Disabled People's Organisations. Vivienne provided valuable debrief with DFAT Post and in Canberra on developments in WFP's protection agenda.⁴⁰

Training

- As a registered training organisation, RedR delivers a range of core humanitarian practice trainings to UN agencies including WFP, UNHCR and FAO.

Promoting innovation

A number of deployments have supported the introduction of new technologies and establishment of private sector partnerships.

- Rob Arcidiacono's deployment to UNHCR in Jordan, with wraparound technical support from RedR corporate partner SunSHIFT as technical advisers, captured how solar electrification has improved living and protection standards within Azraq, the first camp in the world powered by solar energy. These findings have been translated into communications materials, meaning that lessons can be replicated elsewhere.
- Sarah Shouman was deployed to UNRWA in Lebanon where she led the development of a youth unit and strategy for the agency. She helped to coordinate a Palestinian youth assessment that resulted in a partnership with UNICEF to create Innovation Labs which train young people in digital, entrepreneurial and design skills, with approximately 1000 young people attending.⁴¹

⁴⁰ <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/mainstreaming-disability-in-wfp-s-humanitarian-response/>

⁴¹ <https://www.redr.org.au/news/field-stories/innovation-labs-to-brighten-futures-for-lebanese-youth/>



4.3 MONITORING EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Evaluation Question:

Assess the suitability of the MEAL framework for the program

Finding 14:

The MEAL framework clearly outlines most outcome areas and contains practical and straightforward indicators against which to measure and report activity and outcomes.

The omission of training from the framework means that training is unreported, and its central role in the quality of the roster and in contributing to Strengthening Humanitarian Action (Objective 1 of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy) is invisible.

The framework went through a range of iterations (and independent MEAL specialists) commencing with the design process in 2016 and was only approved in December 2018, meaning that it has only been in effect for seven months (one reporting cycle).

While RedR has dedicated personnel in place to support MEAL functions, these roles are positioned in communications rather than programming or program effectiveness areas. This may have some impact on the extent to which programming evidence can influence programming-level decision-making and advocacy efforts and result in a blurring between accountability and aid communication functions. This positioning should be considered in light of Recommendation 3.

The Australia Assists program logic (see Figure 1) is framed around the Humanitarian Cycle (sectoral EOPOs 1–3) with additional outcome areas associated with program management (EOPO 5) and Strengthening Humanitarian Action (EOPO 4). The inclusion of EOPO 5 demonstrates positive intent towards accountability in the management of the program and achievement of public resources.

EOPO 4 appears to be a result of an effort to align the program logic with the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy. However, in a program such as Australia Assists which focuses on deployments, this fails to create a standalone pathway for the collection and aggregation of data and reporting.

RedR confirms that a shift in deployments away from surge response conflates EOPO 4 with EOPOs 1–3, and that the increased focus of the program on systems strengthening means that EOPO 4 could potentially be seen as a catch-all for most deployments. This situation means that progress against outcomes may be inconsistently applied between the sectoral EOPOs and EOPO 4 skewing reporting.

The MTR considers that in the context of Australia Assists, EOPO 4 is more likely a high-level outcome and perhaps best articulated at the goal level unless more detailed criteria for data sorting can be articulated.

In addition to the ambiguity of EOPO 4 above, the MTR identified three further areas where the MEAL framework may be strengthened:

- **Targets:** The MEAL framework does not provide targets, reportedly due to the absence of a baseline.⁴² It is feasible that performance data from the first two years of operation could be used to establish targets moving forwards.
- **Training:** This is a stark omission and means that the framework fails to measure and report on the central role of training both in terms of its contribution to the quality of the roster and in contributing to EOPO 4: Quality of Humanitarian Action.
- **Clarity of purpose and approach:** The framework is presented in spreadsheet form and misses narrative details on the role of MEAL in the program cycle, approaches to MEAL, how monitoring and evaluation link to and inform knowledge and learning and a more detailed description of what success would look like in each outcome area.

Finally, RedR is producing a considerable number of analytics, case studies and aid communications, and the functions of these appear at times to become blurred. The MTR team was unclear about how learning pieces were being used outside the program. We note that a draft Knowledge and Learning Strategy was prepared and submitted to DFAT in mid-2018 but has not progressed further. Completion of this strategy may support a more targeted influencing agenda moving forwards.

Recommendation 8:

The MEAL framework should be revised to include:

- a narrative explanation of the purpose of the MEAL system, Australia Assists' approach to MEAL and descriptors of key terms and what successful outcomes would look like
- targets against key indicators
- targets and outcome indicators for training
- a consideration of whether or not EOPO 4 (Quality of Humanitarian Action) should be articulated as a goal or remain as a standalone outcome.

Concurrently, DFAT and RedR should reengage with the Knowledge and Learning Strategy to establish and guide learning priorities and how these will be used.



⁴² The baseline has been an ongoing discussion between DFAT and RedR and has not been achieved due to the absence of former ACC data.

4.4 VALUE FOR MONEY

Evaluation Question:

Assess the value for money offered to DFAT through partnering with RedR to deliver the Australia Assists program, with reference to DFAT's Value for Money Principles:

- the current cost of the program compared to the former ACC
- the cost of RedR administrative overheads in managing the program, compared to total program funding
- the management fee and performance payment structure, including their use, how they support the program, and whether they are the best contractual mechanism moving forward.

Finding 15:

Australia Assists delivers good value for money

Our overall assessment of moderate to high VfM assessed against DFAT's 4E VfM assessment tool (see Figure 6), means that Australia Assists offers good VfM for DFAT. This assessment takes into account Australia Assists as a new mechanism and the initial transaction costs associated with inception and operationalisation.

A summary of key considerations against each of the criteria above is provided at Annex 4.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost consciousness: High• Encouraging competition: Moderate |
| Efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence-based decision-making: Moderate• Proportionality: High |
| Effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance and risk management: Moderate• Results focus: Moderate• Experimentation and innovation: Moderate |
| Ethics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accountability and transparency: Moderate |

Figure 6: Australia Assists' value for money

4.4.1 CURRENT COST OF THE PROGRAM COMPARED TO THE FORMER ACC

In order to fulfil the objective of 'providing emergency surge support and longer term capability building support to UN organisations, NGOs, and partner governments', Australia Assists is far less costly for DFAT to operate, compared to the former ACC. The AAC was managed in-house by DFAT, who in turn, sub-contracted a range of suppliers. ACC was staffed by approximately 8–10 full-time equivalent (FTE) DFAT officers, compared to approximately two FTEs currently managing Australia Assists. DFAT's current staff commitment to Australia Assists is comparable to other current like-activities within DFAT (and other donors such as DFID) and is proportional to the objectives of the program.

Differing policy settings and responsibilities, objectives and scope mean that the cost/value equation for Australia Assists and ACC are incomparable. For example, in addition to departmental staffing for ACC, DFAT outsourced key functions including roster recruitment, predeparture training and aid communications to commercial providers. These functions are now exclusively funded through the Australia Assists contract.

If we consider the measure of how much it costs an Australian aid program to buy one deployee-month, Australia Assists is around 60% cheaper than the ACC yet has 10–30% more deployments than ACC.⁴³

In broad terms, DFAT is buying each Australia Assists deployee person-month in total for between AUD 20,000–25,000.⁴⁴ This is slightly less than it pays for an average adviser-month on traditional technical assistance programs/facilities. Using this measure, Australia Assists delivers good VfM considering the higher costs of delivering intense shorter term assignments in high security risk contexts and the costs associated with maintaining and expanding a prequalified register as the scope of the program expands.

4.4.2 COST OF REDR ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEADS IN MANAGING THE PROGRAM

There is strong evidence that RedR works with a high level of cost consciousness and takes proportionality into account in its operational and deployment decision-making.

The MTR considers that RedR's administrative overheads are proportional to the requirements of Australia Assists. Reimbursable operating costs and personnel support costs deliver sound VfM at approximately 2% and 4% of total program funding respectively.

RedR is being paid a much higher management fee than traditional DFAT technical assistance programs/facilities across the aid program. However, this is to be expected, given the higher overhead costs and unbillable time associated with extended program briefs; managing multiple diverse deployments while recruiting and maintaining a roster capable of delivering rapid deployment of prequalified and highly experienced personnel; maintaining RedR's integrated prequalification and training system that includes world-standard humanitarian, mandatory safety and security training and psychological assessment; corporate risks associated with the diverse profile of deployments and geographical spread; the high proportionate overhead costs of key political value deployments where security and working conditions are determined by DFAT and or partner organisations (e.g. the current deployment into the EU Mission in Iraq); unfunded maintenance of the SBP mechanism; and the unit cost of intense management of short assignments into multiple crisis situations.

The management fee payable to RedR for the delivery of Australia Assists has a complex structure. Moving forwards, greater clarity on the makeup of the management fee is warranted in any future contract negotiations. In considering management fee and cost overheads, it is also important to recognise that RedR has leveraged its management resources to overdeliver on deployment targets, mobilising partner co-contributions to deployment costs⁴⁵ and reinvesting some surpluses into program delivery (see 4.4.3) – an often unseen contribution to Australia Assists.

4.4.3 THE MANAGEMENT FEE AND PERFORMANCE PAYMENT STRUCTURE

The contract describes that 10% of the management fee payable in years 2–7 will be based on the annual Partner Performance Assessment (PPA). Due to a significant planning failure in mid-2018, RedR faced a reduction in the PPA payment for that period. There is evidence that this potential performance penalty has had a positive effect on performance going forward, as evidenced by improved communication, efficiency dividends and better joint planning processes for the 2019/20 Annual Plan.

43 ACC deployments per year were 10 in 2010–11, 30 in 2011–12, 22 in 2012–13, 25 in 2013–14, 50 in 2015 (ACC News Update June–July, 2015). Australia Assists deployments in 2017–2019 totalled 154.

44 This figure is inclusive of the total funding to RedR to deliver Australia Assists.

45 RedR is the only SBP that has successfully instituted co-financing arrangements, and this brings additional value to DFAT.

There is clear evidence that RedR is (beyond the terms of its contract) using its management resources to leverage additional resources to Australia Assists. In FY 2018/19 \$50,000 in private philanthropic donations were reinvested to subsidise a key deployment to the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar. RedR also generates in-kind contributions totalling approximately AUD 150,000 per year for pro bono legal advice, professional and media services, corporate partnerships and in-kind contributions by RedR deployees and volunteers.

Significantly, RedR is the only SBP that institutes co-financing arrangements, and in FY 2018/19, UN cost contributions totalling \$777,000 were applied directly to the delivery of an additional 63 deployment months.

Finding 16:

The performance incentive provisions in the contract provide DFAT with a valuable instrument to incentivise contractor performance, and these structures are suitable contractual mechanisms moving forward.

Finding 17:

Lower deployee remuneration compared to ACC, combined with the requirement for deployees to pay their own prequalification costs (associated with training and recruitment) contributes to the lower costs of Australia Assists but may have wider implications for the management, growth and renewal of the roster if future deployees find the rates unattractive.

While the MTR finds that Australia Assists delivers moderate VfM for DFAT, significant value is largely derived from reduced departmental staffing compared to the ACC, combined with a reduction in deployee remuneration entitlements. Currently, Australia Assists deployees are paid approximately AUD 9600 per month (AUD 320 per day), which is approximately 40% less than the Australian Remuneration Framework that provides the basis of payment for other DFAT-funded technical assistance programs, including the former ACC. Further, Australia Assists deployees make significant financial contributions to the program by paying for their required prequalification training and assessment (see 4.1.2.2).⁴⁶

The MTR acknowledges that the remuneration structure for Australia Assists deployees is a complex issue that has broad ramifications for RedR's wider SBP arrangements and DFAT resourcing to the program that may impact the number of deployments that can be made. However, there is concern that pay inequities coupled with the high costs of joining the roster may adversely impact the attractiveness and competitiveness of the roster compared to alternative technical assistance mechanisms, especially in the context of longer term sectoral strengthening partnerships in the Pacific.

Recommendation 9:

To ensure attractiveness of the roster within a crowded market, RedR in consultation with DFAT should consider restructuring the deployee remuneration package to deliver equity in remuneration. This could include:

- an increase in the base remuneration package
- consideration of how best to overcome the costs of training to promote greater diversification and renewal of the roster including, for example, increased funding for training or refunding of the cost of training upon completion of the first successful deployment
- a tiered structure that allows additional cost supplementation for high value deployments into multilateral agencies (e.g. the deployment in Iraq) so that these align with the host agency.

This process could be undertaken within a wider context of considering the utility of the roster as Australia Assists matures, including the implications for localisation and for DFAT resourcing.

⁴⁶ The total cost to deployees of all required training to join the roster is approximately AUD 6050 plus travel and salary sacrifice.



5. SUMMARY

Since October 2017, DFAT and RedR have made impressive progress in integrating the former ACC with RedR's capability as a UN Standby Partner and have developed a flexible humanitarian deployment mechanism that has the capability to deliver high quality, short-term surge and long-term strengthening capabilities to humanitarian contexts worldwide.

This is by no means insignificant and has required a high level of commitment, goodwill, problem solving and hard work on behalf of both DFAT and RedR.

The Review finds that:

- High quality deployments are making strategic contributions to helping governments and humanitarian actors prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflicts
- An appropriate model that combines surge support with longer term deployments that support systems strengthening and resilience has been established in the Pacific
- Australia Assists has made significant contributions to key protracted crises, including the Rohingya and Syria crises
- There is an appropriate and affirmative focus on Australian thematic priorities with regard to gender, disability inclusion and protection
- High value deployments have been made to some areas of significant national interest
- Good value for money is achieved through cost consciousness, management efficiency, additionality and a results focus.

The program is well positioned to build on these efforts moving forwards.

Recommendations against each of the MTR findings are provided in the Executive Summary.



ANNEXES



ANNEX 1: INFORMANTS

DFAT

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Jamie Isbister | Greg Furness |
| Paul Kelly | Heyerdahl Vavozo |
| Daniel Stuart | Charles Thursby- Pelham |
| Raphael McQueenie | Listi Irawati |
| Erin Magee | Laurence Philips |
| Anna Dorney | Emily Lyons |
| Ray Bojczuk | Andrew Egan |
| Susan Ryle | Aiden Goldsmith |
| Helen Corrigan | Imran Khan |
| Rachael Moore | Laura Howieson |
| Sophie Roden | Clemency Oliphant |
| Fiona McKergow | Julie Stalker |
| Amy Sheridan | Simon Buckley |
| Simon Cann-Evans | Madeleine Scott |
| Craig Robinson | Ofa Mafi |
| Trina Mohit | Steph Werner |
| Suzanne Bent | Olivia Chambers |
| Linda Gellard | Siddhartha Chakrabarti |
| Amanda Aspden | Christina Munzer |
| Ceri Teather | Robyn Stuart |
| Erin Magee Pacific | Shamaila |
| Amanda Aspden | Paula Watts |
| Steve Darville | Kathryn Roberts |
| Michael Ngari | Bharath Mohan |
| Amanda Potter | Michael Hunt |
| Jade Cooper | Erika Seymour |
| Geoff Thompson | HE Julia Niblett |

RedR

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Kirsten Sayers | Mel Schmidt |
| Drasko Kraguljac | Darren Williamson |
| Kylie Harrington | William Brown |
| Heidi Winder | Jennifer Hill |

Australia Assists Deployees

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Lindsay Sales | UNFPA Pacific Regional Office |
| Sonya Syafitri | IOM Vanuatu |
| Kieran Davis | Vanuatu Department of Water Resources |
| Nimarta Kuhman | Vanuatu UN Women and Department of Women's Affairs |
| Mark Vaughan | Vanuatu Prime Minister's Office |
| Ted McDonnell | Vanuatu Public Works Department |
| Diane de Silva | UNHCR Bangladesh |
| Tarryn Brown | WFP Bangladesh |
| Jacquie Reeves | UNHCR Bangladesh |
| Dennis Malone | EU Advisory Mission to Iraq |
| Betty Toa | UN Women Vanuatu |

UN Partners

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Haruka Ueda | IOM Vanuatu |
| Devraj Daby | UNICEF Pacific Regional Office |
| Leon Fajardo | UNICEF Pacific Regional Office |
| Patrick Adler | UNICEF Pacific Regional Office |
| Philippe Martins | FAO Pacific Regional Office |
| Sarah Boxall | UN Women Pacific Regional Office |
| Alex Robinson | UNFPA Pacific Regional Office |
| Jean Ludovic Metenier | UNICEF Bangladesh |
| Piet Vochten | WFP Bangladesh |
| Zeff Kapoor | WFP Bangladesh |
| Mir Ali Asgar | UNDP Bangladesh |
| Manuel Marques Pereira | IOM Bangladesh |
| Rosalida Raphael | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Ms Mai | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Ms Sarah | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Ms Manju | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Ms Mwajuma | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Ms Sabrina | UNFPA Bangladesh |
| Dr Khalid el Tahir | WHO Bangladesh |
| Dr Pak Mitfahal | WHO Bangladesh |

NGO Partners

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Rhonda Robinson | SPC |
| Patrick Haines | SPC |
| Dr Robyn Drysdale | IPPF |
| Simione Bula | Pacific Disability Forum |
| Monica Burns | IPPF |
| Aggie Dawainavesi | IPPF |

Government Partners

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ron Regan | Fiji Ministry of |
| Agriculture | |
| Tavaita Tamani | Fiji Ministry of |
| Agriculture | |
| McCartney Aga | Vanuatu Department |
| | of Water Resources |
| Dr Gregoire Nimbtik | Vanuatu Prime |
| | Minister's Office |
| Rothina Ilo Noka | Vanuatu Department |
| | of Women's Affairs |
| Abraham Nasak | Vanuatu NDMO |
| Jerry Lapi | Vanuatu Prime |
| | Minister's Office |
| Mohammad Abul Kalam | Bangladesh Refugee |
| | Relief and Repatriation |
| | Commission |

Others

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Michael Annear | Australian Red Cross |
| Jason Brown | Australian Humanitarian |
| | Partnership |
| Rhonda Chapman | Independent |
| | Partnership Broker |
| Kate Sutton | Humanitarian |
| | Advisory Group |
| Seeta | Humanitarian |
| | Advisory Group |
| Johannah Levey | Humanitarian |
| | Advisory Group |

ANNEX 2: MTR REFERENCE GROUP

| NAME | ROLE |
|-------------------|--|
| Clemency Oliphant | Director, Humanitarian Preparedness and Response (HRS) |
| Dan Stuart | Program Manager, Australia Assists, HRS |
| Amanda Aspden | Assistant Director, Humanitarian Reform & Performance |
| Donald Mortimore | Assistant Director, Aid Procurement |
| Erin Magee | Pacific Humanitarian Specialist, HRS (Based in Suva) |
| Simon Buckley | Assistant Director, Program Enabling Unit, Office of the Pacific |
| Sarah Bearup | Assistant Director – Protection, Gender and Disability |
| Zoe Tiller | Assistant Director, Protracted Crisis Section |
| Jennifer Noble | Director, Disaster Resilience and Recovery Section |
| Jonathan Thorpe | Senior Humanitarian Officer, Middle East Development Section |
| Geoff Thompson | Program Officer, East Africa and Indian Ocean Section |
| Linda Roche | Communications Officer, HRS |
| Raphael McQueenie | Policy Officer, HRS |

ANNEX 3: AUSTRALIA ASSISTS OUTCOMES

| OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES | EVIDENCE |
|---|---|
| Objective 1: Reformed global humanitarian system Aligns to Australia Assists EOPO 4: Quality of Humanitarian Action | |
| Humanitarian diplomacy strengthened | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment to EU Advisory Mission, Iraq • AHA/ASEAN deployment |
| Humanitarian financing base is expanded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage of private sector support through funds, expertise (e.g. SunSHIFT) and skilled deployees (e.g. Camilla Bachet, WASH engineer, Bangladesh from GHD) |
| Australian humanitarian innovation is showcased | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SunSHIFT technical support for solar power in camps in Jordan • RedR community of practice convened a workshop on the potential use of Blockchain in the humanitarian sector (e.g. in cash transfer programming) resulting in a research report identifying opportunities and challenges • Research into Palestinian refugee health published in <i>The Lancet</i> Julia McCahey, Jordan |
| Universal quality and accountability standards are applied | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main humanitarian principles and standards (Core Humanitarian Standard, Red Cross, Sphere) are included in humanitarian training • RedR is a focal point for Sphere in Australia |
| Humanitarian and development objectives are better aligned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term focus on recovery, for example, 2015 Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu; still working on recovery/resilience • Increasing focus on working with line ministries, not just NDMOs, for example, Vanuatu placements with Public Works Department, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture • Deployment to regional organisations that encompass humanitarian and development activities (SPC, IPPF, ASEAN) |
| Strategic Objective 2: Reduced Disaster Risk Aligns to Australia Assists EOPO 1: Stability, Resilience and Risk Reduction | |
| Reduced human and financial costs of disasters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of cost-effective technical support • Drafting Vanuatu's Evacuation Centre Guidelines and Displacement Policy (Masood Akhtar, IOM, Vanuatu) |
| Development partners enabled to meet Sendai commitments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanuatu deployee drafting national progress report on Sendai commitments • Support for roll-out of Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Plan (Gina Jones) • Input into Mongolia's submission to the 2018 Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Ross Hardy) |
| Australian aid investments are risk-informed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of RedR as Contractor |
| Risk profiling and hazard mapping are available and accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out of displacement tracking matrix (IOM/NDMO, Vanuatu) |
| Early warning systems effectively alert communities at-risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainfall monitoring for landslide early warning, Bangladesh (Chris Piper) UNHCR geological survey of Bangladesh |

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**EVIDENCE****Strategic Objective 3:****Enhanced Preparedness and Response**

Aligns to Australia Assists EOPO 2: Crisis Preparedness and Response

| | |
|---|--|
| Timely, effective and appropriate emergency response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surge capacity: 42 deployees to Rohingya response in Bangladesh • Deployment of UNFPA Disaster Response Coordinator for Hurricane Irma, Haiti |
| National capacities for emergency response are strengthened | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 deployees to NDMOs in the Pacific • Deployment to the National Emergency Management Agency, Mongolia |
| Rapid disaster response mechanisms are maintained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roster of 700+ experts trained, maintained and upskilled • Standby agreements with 11 UN agencies |
| Protection and assistance for conflict-affected populations is strengthened | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three civil–military advisers negotiate access to refugees / internally displaced persons in Syrian border areas • RedR/Edge Effect training on working with LGBTIQ community in the Rohingya camps |
| Responses to protracted and slow-onset crises are appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployments to Rohingya crisis, South Sudanese refugees, Ethiopia, UNRWA, Syrian refugees, Iraq • Camp planning and shelter design (Paul de Launay OAM, UNHCR, Bangladesh) |

Strategic Objective 4:**Prioritised Early Recovery**

Aligns to Australia Assists EOPO 3: Stabilisation, Recovery and Reconstruction

| | |
|--|--|
| Rapid resumption of basic services and economic activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating humanitarian access to Hela Province, PNG during the 2018 Highlands earthquake following conflict |
| Public utilities and basic services are restored | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Cyclone Pam deployments restore water systems and infrastructure in Vanuatu |
| Markets, livelihoods and private sector are revitalised | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash-based recovery activities in 2018 Laos floods response: linkages with banking sector for payments • Managing rhinoceros beetle threat, Solomon Islands |
| Local actors, including vulnerable groups, are empowered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 700 WASH personnel, Rohingya camps, Bangladesh (Tai Ring Teh, UNHCR) • GBV in disasters training in IPPF partners in six Pacific countries (Petra Letter) • Innovation labs for Palestinian youth, Lebanon |
| Communities, systems and governments are better prepared for future crises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stabilisation through support for the electoral process in the Solomon Islands and the Bougainville referendum |

ANNEX 4: VALUE FOR MONEY EVIDENCE

⁴⁷VfM was analysed by using a rubric based on the DFAT's 4Es (and 8 principles) of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and ethics. Overall, the evidence and analysis indicated that the 'Australia Assists' program is delivering **moderate to high** VfM.

| VFM CRITERIA | FINDINGS, EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE |
|--|---|
| Economy: Principle 1: Cost Consciousness VfM Ranking High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia Assists is far less costly for DFAT to operate, compared to the former 2011-17 ACC. • 8-10 FTE DFAT staff worked on AAC, compared to 2 FTEs currently on Australia Assists. DFAT's current staff commitments to Australia Assists are comparable to other current like-activities and are proportional to the program objectives. • The cost/value equation for Australia Assists is incomparable to ACC due to differing scope. If we ask, 'how much does it cost to buy one deployee-month', Australia Assists is approximately 60% cheaper than the ACC. • At less cost, Australia Assists deploys 10-20% more deployee months. • DFAT is buying each deployee person-month in total from Australia Assists, for less that it pays for an average adviser-month on traditional technical assistance programs/facilities. On this measure, Australia Assists is good VfM because deployments incur higher costs including training, costs associated with managing shorter and surge deployments, geographic spread, and the high costs of key-political-value deployments and deployments to insecure areas. • RedR's management fee is higher than on traditional technical assistance programs/facilities, however they deliver extended services. • Deployees are paid about 40% less than advisers engaged under the ARF. • Australia Assists leverages financial contributions from UN partners, to achieve higher impact over a longer period of deployment. Since 2017, UN cost-contributions have totalled nearly \$1 million, which has been re-invested by RedR to increase deployment months and impact. • Demonstrating the value of Australia Assists, four Posts (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Myanmar and Syria), co-financed around \$500K in 2019. This is expected to continue. • DFAT and UN co-financing and RedR contributions resulted in 535 deployment months being delivered in FY19 against a target of 310 months. • RedR returns approximately \$770,000 in UN cost contributions and \$150,000 per year in 'in-kind cash' plus further pro bono and volunteer in-kind contributions. In FY 19, RedR raised \$50K in donations in relation to the Rohingya crisis, which subsidised a significant deployment to Cox's Bazar. • Deployees cover their own pre-deployment training costs (about \$6000-7500) • DFAT considers that RedR provides a cost-effective way of providing training and building the skills of DFAT staff. • DFAT is diligent in gaining cost economies in its supply-chain. • "I see the value as being 3-4 times more effective than before (ACC)." |

⁴⁷ <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/value-for-money-principles/Pages/value-for-money-principles.aspx>

| VFM CRITERIA | FINDINGS, EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE |
|---|--|
| <p>Economy Principle 2: Encouraging Competition</p> <p>VfM Ranking</p> <p>Moderate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RedR was engaged by limited tender following a DFAT analysis of potential providers due to their SBP arrangements. This resulted in limited contestability and competition of ideas however the SBP was a key consideration. • There was no price contestability in the limited tender in 2017. • DFAT has multiple platforms for delivering technical assistance but each of these have their own purpose and limitations. Australia Assists is seen by Posts and Canberra as a good quality option, due to its scope, flexibility and rapid deployment capability and to deliver these services in high risk contexts. • RedR is Australia's only UN Standby Partner with 11 MOUs with UN agencies. DFAT cannot access deployees and services from the other Standby Partners. • The roster has a sound international participation. 40% of the roster are either citizens of another country or dual citizens. |
| <p>Efficiency Principle 3: Evidence Based Decision Making</p> <p>VfM Ranking</p> <p>Moderate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia Assists is complementary to the Foreign Policy White Paper, DFAT Humanitarian Strategy, the Pacific Step Up, gender and disability inclusion policies. • Improved planning systems instituted in 2019, now engage DFAT Posts and support alignment of deployments with DFAT thematic and sectoral priorities. • The MEAL system provides adequate data and analyses to inform programming decisions and deployments. • The deployment cycle and deployee reporting further support planning. • DFAT and RedR are engaging in joint decision making to ensure that the considerations and interests of both parties are considered. |
| <p>Efficiency Principle 4: Proportionality</p> <p>VfM Ranking</p> <p>High</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia Assists has created efficiencies for DFAT. Outsourcing the ACC as a single contract has relieved DFAT of the transaction burden of day-to-day management of the program. This enables DFAT program staff to focus on strategic alignment and outreach with key internal stakeholders. • Partner governments and UN partners report that deployees are providing high impact, best practice assistance. This is helping DFAT Posts to engage closely with bilateral and regional support mechanisms and partners. It further enables DFAT to leverage its finite resources and extend Australia's footprint. • In broad terms, DFAT's current overhead (corporate) costs are proportional to the needs of Australia Assists and other like modalities. • Australia Assists enables DFAT to scale-up (and down) quickly as required. • The management fee paid to RedR is not linked to deployments, due to the unpredictable nature of demand. There are appropriate planning mechanisms in place to reduce the risk of low levels of deployments. The management fee further takes into account the need to maintain the SBP and roster. |

| VFM CRITERIA | FINDINGS, EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE |
|---|---|
| Effectiveness Principle 5: Performance and Risk Management VfM Ranking Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a VfM perspective, in addition to general performance and effectiveness: • RedR assumed all duty of care (in particular to deployees) and all associated risk for the program. As per the contract, RedR has provided DFAT with an indemnity in this regard, reduced only to the extent that any loss or liability is directly caused by DFAT, its employees or contractors. The transference of this risk liability exposure is of significant value to DFAT. • Australia Assists (and DFAT) experienced the intangible costs of reputational damage as a result of delayed or cancelled deployments in 2018, due to miscommunication between DFAT and RedR about the FY19 budget. Overall budget management is improving due to the improved annual planning. • RedR helps to build relationships between Australia and its partners. • Australia Assists maintains a risk register that enables effective operations in high risk and insecure areas. • RedR has no quality accreditation (e.g. ISO9001). • RedR has a narrow business model, with most of its revenue coming from DFAT. This presents some risk to DFAT. |
| Effectiveness Principle 6: Results Focus VfM Ranking Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployees provide positive impact on-the-ground, to assist governments, multilateral agencies and communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters and conflict. • RedR is a quality training provider that delivers world class training. • RedR has a strong relationship and reputation with UN agencies through the SBP. • In a short-time Australia Assists has aligned with Australian humanitarian and foreign policy objectives including a rapid mobilisation into the Pacific. • Australia Assists enables sufficient flexibility to address changing contexts and humanitarian crises approximately 20% of funds are for surge/contingency. • There is evidence of deployees leveraging ODA funds for their partners. |
| Effectiveness Principle 7: Experimentation and Innovation VfM Ranking Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RedR training is innovative. • There are numerous situations where deployees have been innovative in their on-the-ground assignments. • RedR observes high levels of duty of care. • RedR is establishing private sector partnerships to support deployments and technical support to deployees. • The deployee roster is unique and RedR believes that it is proprietary to them, however the RedR has no IP protection on the roster. |
| Ethics Principle 8: Accountability, Transparency VfM Ranking Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFAT felt that RedR was insufficiently transparent around their decision to recall some deployees following a planning and budgeting crisis in 2018. This caused embarrassment and reputational damage for DFAT with UN partners, partner governments and the deployees. • DFAT and RedR initially engaged in a co-design process for an integrated deployment capability based on a partnership approach. DFAT made a late decision to move to a contract model which has shifted the relationship to a greater focus on outputs, losing some opportunity for strategic collaboration. • There is scope for DFAT and RedR to rebuild trust around these events. • Australia Assists is integrated into RedR's organisational structure. There is no single Director at RedR with overall day-to-day management responsibility for the program. This means that conversations and contacts with DFAT tend to be functional and task-based. This could be strengthened by positioning a manager with strategic oversight over the program and its relationships that can navigate the various programmatic functions as well as levels of relationship with DFAT. |

