



# Management Response

## Mid Term Review of the Australia Awards in Africa

June 2015

### Initiative Summary

<b>Initiative Name</b>			
AidWorks initiative number	Primary Initiative: INI978 (Australian Scholarships for Africa Program 2010-13) Awards; Other related Initiatives: INF725 (Australian Scholarships for Africa Program); INJ269 (LTA intake 2010); INJ540 (LTA intake 2011)		
Commencement date	20 Dec 2010	Completion date	30 June 2015 (since extended to March 2016)
Total Australian \$	\$100 million		
Total other \$	N/A		
Implementing partner(s)	DFAT Africa Posts and Canberra + Managing Contractor (GRM International)		
Country/Region	Africa		
Primary sector	Education in multiple sectors		
Initiative objective/s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop capacity and leadership skills so that individuals can contribute to development in their home country</li><li>2. Build people-to-people linkages at the individual, institutional and country levels.</li></ol>		

## Evaluation Summary

**Evaluation Objective:** i) explore the impact as per the goals set in the design on a selected sample of Australia's African partners; and ii) assess how effectively and efficiently Australia Awards are being implemented in Africa by both DFAT and the Managing Contractor (GRM) with a view to strengthening delivery for the remainder of the contractual period.

The review:

- undertook a limited impact assessment of Australia Awards on a selected sample of partner countries in Africa;
- assessed both DFAT's and the Managing Contractor's (MC) performance in administering and supporting the delivery of the Australia Awards in Africa during 2011/2012; and
- recommended options for strengthening the implementation of Australia Awards.

**Evaluation Completion Date:** October 2012

**Evaluation Team:** Mr Colin Reynolds (Team Leader) and Dr Donna Podems (Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser).

### DFAT response to the evaluation report

The review of Australia Awards in Africa was brought forward to inform decision-making on the awarding of the Managing Contractor (MC) extension in 2013. The program had been in operation for approximately 20 months, one year less than for the standard period for conducting a review of this nature.

Several key considerations, some outside the original terms of reference of the review, influenced the evaluation exercise. This included a now outdated proposal to consolidate a number of aid activities into a single Human Resources Development program.

Australia's policy environment in Africa has changed substantially during the tenure of the program, and particularly since the review was completed, leading to delays in the publication of the document. These changes have impacted on DFAT's management response to the review.

DFAT broadly agrees with the findings of the review. Some recommendations related to the bedding-down of issues that are typical of the earlier stages of a new program and which were resolved through ongoing continuous improvement and performance processes. In a number of cases, particularly in relation to *Program Operation and Performance*, DFAT agrees with the recommendations and notes plans were quickly in place to address.

DFAT ensured all review recommendations were considered during the design of the successor program for 2016-2020, undertaken in 2014.

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>AusAID should combine all of its existing and proposed human resource development (HRD) programs under a single management structure with clear and unambiguous lines of internal authority and contractor communication; have this combined AusAID HRD unit develop and implement an overall HRD strategy that clearly identifies the capacity building tools available from AusAID and their appropriate application; have this combined AusAID HRD unit formulate a related joint promotional and partner government engagement strategy that consistently pertains to all HRD programs; and enable the AAA program to be modified into a 'partial facility' with the aim of assisting other AusAID programs (including, but not limited to, other HRD programs) to utilise the various capacity development tools offered by Australia Awards, while also maintaining the ability to maintain a 'base-load' of direct award provision to ensure overall targets continue to be met.</p> <p>Interim Recommendation 1a:</p> <p>AusAID immediately develop an action plan to begin bringing selected responsibilities for Australia Awards partner government engagement, promotional, and alumni activities back to existing AusAID Scholarships staff.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p> <p>The scope and nature of Australia's HRD activities in Africa have reduced considerably since this review was undertaken, due to changed priorities following a change in Government in 2013.</p> <p>Outside of Australia Awards, the main delivery mechanism for HRD in Africa has been the Australia Africa Partnership Facility (AAPF). Under new government policy, the scale of the AAPF has also been reduced.</p> <p>Design of a new, smaller Australia Awards program has taken place. The AAPF will cease operating once the current contractor agreement expires.</p>	<p>The respective responsibilities of DFAT and GRM have been reviewed and revised since the IPR was conducted leading to more effective and efficient programming and addressing problems highlighted in the Review</p>	<p>DFAT</p>

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<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>AusAID utilise the proposed 'tiered' approach to rationalising engagement in Africa to streamline (and therefore render more effective) HRD promotional workloads. In the case of HRD programs, including the Australia Awards program, it may be best to limit the number of tiers to two levels. In the first (most engaged) tier countries, expanded promotional activities would be designed and implemented to more substantially engage potential employer agencies. In the second (lesser engaged) tier countries promotional activities would mostly target Coordinating Authorities, and would only expect to directly engage employer agencies opportunistically, such as through other AusAID programs.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p> <p>In response to a contracting budget context, DFAT has adopted a tiered approach to Australia Awards country participation since 2014, based on eligibility for Masters awards and short courses. DFAT is pursuing a strategic approach to engagement that seeks to target promotional activities, including through leveraging existing relationships with key ministries, as well as civil society and the private sector. Such an approach is not consistent with the recommendation but is considered more effective.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to review country participation in Australia Awards in Africa on an annual basis</p>	<p>DFAT</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Use the option available in the current managing contractor's contract to extend their period of service for an additional period of one year, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow the necessary amendments to current roles to be clarified and contractual responses to be formulated</li> <li>• provide an opportunity for the contractor to better demonstrate its ability to fulfil the broader requirements of the current Scope of Service.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The extension option has been exercised.</p>	<p>DFAT</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>The definition of Short Course Awards under the Australia Awards program be readjusted to:</p> <p><i>“Opportunities for formal study or training, generally of not less than 3 months duration, and no more than 5 months’ duration, delivered by an approved Australian higher education provider (see Table A, B, &amp; C of the Higher Education Support Act 2003) or an Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTO), that while being customised to specific needs of recipients will, as far as practicable, also result in a formal statement of credit or attainment that is:</i></p> <p><i>recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)*; approved in accordance with state- specific legislative frameworks for Australian universities; or recognised under Australian Nationally registered Vocational Education or Training (VET) material.”</i></p> <p><i>Standard notes:</i></p> <p><i>1. In competitive bidding for course provision, preference will always be given to providers willing to formally recognise their own training delivery (through a statement of credit or attainment)</i></p> <p><i>2. In cases where a qualification of any form can realistically be attained, opportunities to do so should be maximized, and this will also be viewed favourably in competitive bidding processes.</i></p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Compliance with a high level of quality assurance requires a recognised standard of course content and delivery.</p> <p>The definition of short courses was revised in the design to be:</p> <p>Short course awards will be generally of up to three months’ duration, designed and delivered by a sub-contracted, approved Australian higher education provider or an Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Course providers will be encouraged to demonstrate strong partnerships with African entities in design and delivery to ensure the content is relevant to the African context. Providers will also be strongly encouraged to work closely with relevant private sector and industry bodies to leverage their skills, knowledge or other assets as possible.</p>	<p>Tender documentation for the short courses noted that only Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTOs) and/or Australian tertiary institutions (Higher Education Act 2003, Table A, B, C) were eligible to deliver short courses from 2015.</p>	<p>DFAT to develop the definition and endorse service provider selection, including based on this criteria</p> <p>MC to manage tender and sub-contract short course delivery.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 5: Selection processes for contracted short course providers, and bidding processes for specific course delivery to include a dominant selection criterion related to the providers willingness to provide accredited recognition of course completion. Such recognition may be made available on the basis of opt-in/opt-out assessment, if necessary, but any selection by a course participant to opt out of assessment would require written approval of their employer.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle The design noted wherever possible, successful completion of the training should result in either a formal transcript or a complete unit/subject offered within a course under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Where custom-designed courses are unlikely to be accredited within a full degree, thereby limiting their use as a pathway to a complete degree, consideration will be given for developing two levels of training (basic/intermediate and advanced) within some courses. Where feasible, courses will be designed so that they can be converted into an e-learning resource.</p>	<p>“The offer of recognition, accreditations or pathways that will be offered as a result of the short course” was included in the tender documentation as an element of the technical selection criteria</p>	<p>DFAT to endorse service provider selection, including based on this criteria MC to manage tender and sub-contract short course delivery.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>AusAID expand the permissible form of long term awards (LTAs) beyond solely Masters courses by allowing VET diploma or certificate courses of up to one year duration to be included in what may be applied for under long term awards in Africa. No target should be set for proportion of Masters versus VET courses provided as LTAs; rather this should be informed by demand identified in the application process.</p>	<p>Not accepted</p> <p>The Australia Award's focus should continue to be on tertiary education, which has the potential for leveraged impact at policy and strategic levels. DFAT acknowledges that many African countries lack the capacity to deliver vocational education and training (VET) programs in of adequate scale and quality. However, Australia Awards are not the most appropriate or cost-effective way of addressing these capacity deficits. Delivery of VET training is not within the current remit of Australia Awards and its inclusion would dilute programming focus and negatively impact on cost effectiveness of the program.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>The current range of contracted short course providers be reviewed to enable delivery of a greater percentage of VET-oriented short courses. Coordinating Authorities, line ministries and other employee organisations should be made aware that VET opportunities are available under the program and encouraged to identify relevant course topics at this level.</p>	<p>Not accepted.</p> <p>See above.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>The delivery of VET-oriented long or short term awards be focused on 'Tier 1' countries (see Recommendation 2.), so that they are applied in a coordinated manner with higher level Australia Awards (e.g. post-graduate courses) to vertically integrate capacity development and thereby remove existing skills-based barriers to generating positive development impacts.</p>	<p>Not accepted. See above.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>Prescriptive targets for private sector involvement in LTA provision be removed, and replaced with a stated aim to progressively increase private sector involvement from its current baseline.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle Australian government policy is to pursue private sector linkages and participation while delivering Australia's aid program.</p>	<p>Posts have developed country profiles which identify the preferred mix of awards beneficiaries, including government, private sector or civil society – this will vary according to Post economic diplomacy priorities.</p>	<p>DFAT</p>

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<p>Recommendation 10:</p> <p>Remove the PhD component from the program. If the benefits of retaining them are assessed to outweigh the streamlining opportunity represented by their potential removal, investigate the feasibility of the allocation of a set number of Australia Award PhDs to CSIRO and/or ACIAR to administer and deliver should be considered to remove administrative and promotional redundancies.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The PhD component targeted agriculture sector scholars, and is closely aligned with agricultural productivity programs funded through the Australian aid program and delivered by ACIAR and CSIRO. Australia has a strong comparative advantage in delivery of tertiary education in agriculture. Nonetheless, DFAT reduced the number of PhD Awards offered from 2014 in line with reductions in the scale of the wider Australia Awards program and the high opportunity costs of providing PhDs.</p>	<p>DFAT will not offer PhDs through Australia Awards in Africa from 2015 but continues engagement with ACIAR and CSIRO.</p>	<p>DFAT</p>

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<p>Recommendation 11:</p> <p>The Australia Awards program make full use of the opportunities related to alumni now offered by centralised Australia Awards initiatives, including use of the centralised alumni database, and potential partial funding for conducting a definitive 'tracing exercise'.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Australia Awards alumni in Africa an exceptional cadre of talented, linked-in professionals who are driving African development and can contribute to Australian economic diplomacy objectives. The level of engagement with alumni upon their return home significantly influences the development and public diplomacy impacts achieved.</p> <p>Australia Awards in Africa offers professional development and networking opportunities in soft skills such as leadership, governance, communication and public diplomacy through a range of post award activities, including conferences, workshops, access to small grants and practical experience.</p>	<p>The program links in with centralised Australia Awards alumni activities, funded and coordinated by DFAT's Scholarships and Alumni Branch (SCB), and the global Alumni Engagement Unit.</p> <p>DFAT has deployed substantial resources to alumni activities. Each Post in Africa is implementing Alumni Strategies. Since 2013, DFAT has conducted large-scale alumni conferences, promoted Alumni Ambassadors and Alumni Associations.</p> <p>SCB has provided funding to posts for the establishment or strengthening of Australia Awards alumni networks since 2009. SCB released the first global whole-of-government Australia Awards alumni engagement strategy in 2013. SCB has also drafted an Investment Design for a Global Tracer Facility to strengthen the global approach to alumni tracer studies and help country programs with long term monitoring of alumni.</p>	<p>DFAT to implement policy at posts.</p> <p>MC to resource alumni activities sufficiently, including a senior Alumni Engagement Manager.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 12:</p> <p>AusAID should use the opportunity presented by consolidation of an overarching AusAID HRD program in Africa to streamline and clarify lines of decision making and communication thereby ensuring unambiguous directions from AusAID to the Australia Awards MC.</p> <p>Interim Recommendation 12a:</p> <p>Current overlaps between AusAID staff responsible for direction of the MC, in relation to both short and long term courses, to be clearly identified and related interim protocols to be developed for avoiding conflicting direction.</p> <p>Interim Recommendation 12b:</p> <p>The current schedule of fortnightly inter-regional forums between AusAID scholarships staff should be expanded to include fortnightly meetings of key staff with duties that are separated along long and short course lines.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>As noted in the IPR (p24), there were 'massive workloads' for both DFAT and GRM during the rapid early scale-up of the Australia Awards program. Once this phase ended, communication issues were resolved.</p>	<p>DFAT and GRM continue to conduct frequent Australia Awards management meetings at both senior and operational levels. These meetings provide a forum for the early identification and resolution of potential problems, as well as acting as a platform for ongoing improvement of Australia Awards policy and operations.</p>	<p>DFAT and MC</p>
<p>Recommendation 13:</p> <p>Both the MC and AusAID should take greater care when suggesting or approving tasks that are outside the existing scope of services. Approval for such additional tasks should only be given in cases where additional associated workloads do not divert resources from other critical tasks.</p>	<p>Not accepted.</p> <p>Neither DFAT nor GRM consider there to be problems associated with adherence to the Scope of Services under GRM's contractual agreement with DFAT.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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<p>Recommendation 14:</p> <p>Greater direct involvement by AusAID in partner government engagements, promotions and alumni activities, should be used to reduce the potential for minor mistakes and diffuse the mutually defensive communications.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Given the importance of Australia Awards to Australia's relationships with partner governments and for providing support to its programs in Africa, it is essential that DFAT retains strong strategic management and takes the lead on interactions with partner governments. Consultations promote strong inter-governmental relationships and facilitate matching of African governments' needs with opportunities in Australia.</p>	<p>The roles and responsibilities of DFAT and the MC have been further defined in the design for the new program.</p>	<p>DFAT AFB is responsible for the management, accountability, quality and delivery of the program.</p> <p>Heads of Mission have accountability and leadership responsibilities for the aid program for the countries to which they are accredited.</p> <p>The MC provides personnel, resources and management and administrative services to undertake all relevant planning, logistics, coordination, administration, liaison and communication necessary for the effective implementation of the program.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 15: The MC should continue to review and hasten implementation of its recruitment processes, particularly in relation to advisory and mid-level staff.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>Recruitment for initial positions was completed. Some ongoing turnover of staff continues, within normal and expected parameters.</p>	<p>MC</p>
<p>Recommendation 16: That the outcome level components of the Australia Awards M&amp;E framework be urgently refocussed in line with data collection and analysis approach suggested in Annex 1 of this IPR.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>Pretoria Post undertook a major review of the M&amp;E framework</p>	<p>DFAT and MC</p>

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<p>Recommendation 17:</p> <p>The program should focus on achieving a basic degree of relevant outcome monitoring before considering expansion into any more complex approaches to M&amp;E, including those proposed in the IAAMP Outcomes Evaluation report</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>This recommendation was accommodated in the updated M&amp;E framework to furnish output, outcome and preliminary impact indicators.</p>	<p>SCB has an M&amp;E team that is responsible for: providing advice to posts and country programs; administering the annual on award surveys; providing advice on QAls; annual program performance reporting; and commissioning ad hoc evaluations and research pieces to inform policy and management decisions.</p> <p>SCB has recently developed a program logic and Australia Awards M&amp;E framework. As part of the first steps in implementing the M&amp;E framework, SCB is undertaking a review of all Australia Awards country and regional program M&amp;E arrangements.</p> <p>SCB is also in the early stages of designing a facility to implement a comprehensive system of alumni tracer studies.</p> <p>A revised and M&amp;E System and draft M&amp;E Framework was developed for the new design.</p>	<p>DFAT to develop policy and guidance</p> <p>MC to revise and implement M&amp;E system</p>

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<p>Recommendation 18:</p> <p>Course providers should be required to provide simultaneous translation of short course delivery, as necessary.</p>	<p>Not accepted.</p> <p>A range of language support measures have been implemented to support non-Anglophone awardees. Short course service providers are tasked with ensuring that language needs of Awardees are met, and they have the expertise to effectively mobilise appropriate strategies. The cost of compulsory simultaneous interpretation of course presentations would be prohibitive.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Recommendation 19:</p> <p>Consideration be given to passing on a greater degree of responsibility for administrative and logistic workloads associated with short course delivery to course providers (including responsibility for awardee travel and visa acquisition), particularly when non-standard delivery options are proposed.</p>	<p>Not accepted.</p> <p>GRM has appropriate logistics expertise and systems in place. Tasking individual service providers with additional logistics activities would create unnecessary complexity and potentially result in duplication of roles.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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<p>Recommendation 20:</p> <p>Consider using ancillary awards to further increase the participation of women, disabled persons and candidates from non-English African speaking countries in the LTA component of the program.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>Equity and Access Funds were established and can be drawn upon where a female Awardee or an awardee with a disability identifies a barrier to participation in any aspect of the program cycle.</p> <p>Funding was also made available for up to 9 months English Language Training (ELT) in Africa and 3 months pre-course English (PCE) in Australia. From 2015, up to 3 months PCE will be offered to candidates from non-English speaking countries eligible for Masters awards.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 21:</p> <p>Conduct a rapid review of target organisations to assess real world availability of female candidates and use of this information to review blanket targets or reassess reporting against blanket targets. AusAID should consider how addressing gender and equity issues fits in with the larger overall HRD strategy.</p>	<p>Not accepted.</p> <p>A gender study of Australia Awards was conducted in 2012 to identify the factors which prevent and enhance the equal participation by women in the program, and provide evidence-based analysis to inform the design of the Australia Awards Gender Strategy.</p> <p>Since 2013, women have accounted for at least 46% of Australia Awardees and DFAT maintains its full gender equity target for Australia Awards enrolments.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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<p>Recommendation 22:</p> <p>The option of provision of awards to both disabled persons and people working in disability sectors as a means of addressing disability targets should be continued provided care is taken to ensure that this does not impede the persons living with a disability from accessing awards.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>SCB has developed <i>Principles &amp; Procedures for Disability Support – Australia Awards Scholarships</i>. This document sets out the policy on the provision of support to awardees (and applicants) with disability, and the processes country programs, managing contractors and institutions must follow to ensure a good outcome for scholars with disability.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Recommendation 23:</p> <p>A Critical Incident Management Team should be created for addressing unforeseen problems faced by applicants, awardees or alumni, and the creation of this team and the procedures for them to follow be reflected in amendments to the QAM.4.5 Ratings against each Criterion.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Arrangements and procedures for management of critical incidents are in place, with close collaboration and communication between DFAT Africa, DFAT Canberra and GRM Africa and GRM Australia as well as the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Critical incidents involving LTAs while they are in Australia are managed by SCB in the first instance.</p> <p>GRM and short course providers are initial managers for short course awards critical incidents</p>