

## Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP)

### DFAT Management Response to Independent Mid Term Evaluation

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) is five-year (2017–2022) partnership between DFAT and six peak Australian NGOs designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and enhance human dignity during and in the aftermath of conflict, disasters and other humanitarian crises. The AHP has three key pillars – response, preparedness and sectoral learning.

AHP has two major areas of work. The first revolves around response to protracted and rapid onset disasters, which continues the utilisation of Australian NGO expertise in Australia’s disaster responses. The second program component is Disaster READY, a sub program that focuses on disaster risk reduction in Timor-Leste, Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

To date, DFAT has committed more than \$200 million (including Disaster READY) through the AHP, responding to more than 40 humanitarian responses with over four million people projected to be reached.

DFAT holds an overarching contract with Alinea-Whitelum for the AHP Support Unit (AHPSU) who in turn enters into contractual agreements with the six Australian NGOs and facilitates all contractual, administrative and funding requirements. The AHPSU also assists with the management of Disaster READY and undertakes a range of support functions for the partnership on behalf of DFAT, including monitoring and evaluation, operations, grants and communications.

An independent Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) of AHP was undertaken through 2020 (March to December) to provide an evidence-based assessment of the progress of AHP and recommendations for future planning. The independent review team comprised two consultants (Linda Kelly and Anna Roche) with the MTE managed by the Humanitarian, NGOs & Partnerships Division within DFAT. The MTE addressed six evaluation questions exploring the effectiveness of the AHP mechanism, the Disaster Ready sub-program, the extent of progress in the cross-cutting issues of localisation, gender & disability inclusion and the contributions AHP has made to learning and improvements in the humanitarian sector, DFAT humanitarian programming and to the NGO community. The review team consulted with:

- DFAT Posts;
- AHP partners and their consortium partners in Australia and in-country;
- AHPSU staff; and
- in-country Government officials, Civil Society Organisation staff and local community members.

**DFAT's response to the Independent Mid Term Evaluation:** DFAT welcomes and accepts the review's key overall findings that:

- AHP provides an effective way for DFAT to utilise Australian organisations to contribute to response and recovery in the area of rapid and slow onset disasters, noting some possible areas for improvement in the activation mechanisms;
- there is evidence of progress against all five Disaster READY end of program outcomes; and
- the current program modality, a partnership between DFAT and six accredited Australian NGOs supported by an administrative and contracting mechanism, has provided for efficient and timely use of Australian funds.

The Mid Term Evaluation made ten recommendations based on their findings and posed a number of further AHP and Disaster READY program level considerations to inform future planning. DFAT supports 8 of the 10 recommendations in full and partly supports the remaining 2 recommendations.

DFAT commits to implementing recommendations where possible through the AHP design refresh process (through 2021) and the Disaster READY refresh (through mid-2022).

## Recommendations and Responses

**Question 1:** To what extent has AHP enabled Australia to address the needs of affected populations in rapid and slow onset disasters?

**Overall findings:** AHP has been a highly effective mechanism to enable Australia to address the needs of affected populations in rapid and slow onset disasters.

Recommendation	Response	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> DFAT, supported by AHPSU, increase or include criteria around participation and localisation in assessments for both rapid onset and protracted activations.</p>	Agree	<p>Update templates to embed additional criteria or weighting for participation and localisation where relevant in activations during remainder of AHP Phase I.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 to be addressed through the AHP Phase II design refresh.</p>	<p>Current</p> <p>June – October 2021</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> DFAT, supported by AHPSU, make transparent the steps in its decision-making process for both rapid onset and protracted activations.</p>	Partly agree	<p>DFAT supports accountability and transparency in humanitarian response programming. However, rapid activations are assessed by NGO partners and often response priorities are driven by partner governments and DFAT post priorities in rapidly changing contexts.</p> <p>DFAT will seek to provide further certainty to AHP partners where possible by sharing Assessment Criteria and a Decision Summary for all protracted crises activations.</p> <p>As part of the design refresh for AHP Phase II, DFAT will also update the standard operating procedures for rapid and protracted activations in consultation with AHP partners.</p>	<p>Current</p> <p>June – October 2021</p>

**Question 2:** What progress has Disaster READY made towards increasing the capacity of Pacific communities and their representative organisations to prepare for and respond to disasters?

**Overall findings:** Disaster READY has made a demonstrable contribution towards increasing the capacity of Pacific communities and governments to prepare for and respond to disasters. However, the complexity of the program, together with its utilisation for disaster response as well as disaster preparedness, and its varied implementation in different country contexts, makes it difficult to provide a simple assessment across all of its intended outcomes. On the other hand, the diverse experience and experimentation of Disaster READY, provides considerable learning for any possible future programs of support.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> The AHPSU explore and identify how the Disaster READY in-country committees can be more effectively resourced to enhance collaboration within Disaster READY and across other DFAT programs and development actors.</p>	Agree	Recommendation 3 to be addressed through the AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II design refresh.	June 2021 – June 2022
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> AHP partners design and implement mechanisms, relevant to their consortia arrangements, to provide communities, in-country partners and local government representatives the opportunity to provide feedback and commentary on the value and quality of disaster ready activities.</p>	Agree	AHP partners to consider and implement as part of the design refresh for AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022

**Question 3:** To what extent is the overall modality of AHP including the Support Unit, the partnership arrangements and the respective roles played by NGOs, the local partners and DFAT, fit for purpose?

**Overall findings:** The Disaster READY modality has met the needs of DFAT and AHP partners and has largely been fit for purpose. There is opportunity for further development of the modality in future phases of the program

Recommendation	Response	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> Review and update the Terms of Reference for the AHPSU to match the current services provided, noting adjustments since the commencement of the AHP.</p>	Agree	Recommendation 5 to be addressed as part of the AHP Phase II design refresh.	June-October 2021
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> Adjust the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF) and reporting requirements for Disaster READY, to require AHP partners to provide evidence-based reporting on progress against outcomes.</p>	Agree	Recommendation 6 to be addressed as part of the AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II design refresh.	June 2021 – June 2022

**Question 4:** To what extent have the activities of AHP supported and advanced the localisation of Australia’s humanitarian response?

**Overall findings:** Some AHP activities have supported good practice in localisation at community level. However, Disaster READY shows very slow progress in shifting decision making and resources to local organisations

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Recommendation 7</b> Require all AHP partners to report on progress towards localisation against an agreed set of program wide indicators.	Agree	Recommendation 7 to be addressed as part of the AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II design refresh.	June 2021 – June 2022

**Question 5:** To what extent have the activities of AHP supported and advanced leadership and participation of women, people with disability and other marginalised people in disaster preparation and disaster response?

**Overall findings:** AHP results show that the program has worked to include women and people with disability. Results show that overall, gender inclusion has been more effective than inclusion of people with disability.

Recommendation	Response	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b> AHP partners to identify and implement a strategy to increase inclusion of people with disability in program decision-making and program implementation, utilising the guidance and ideas from country DPO.</p>	Agree	Recommendation 8 to be addressed through the AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II design refresh.	June 2021 – June 2022
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b> AHP partners and their consortia members to ensure that at least 15% of Disaster READY program beneficiaries are people living with disability.</p>	Partly agree	ANGOs and DFAT are committed to strengthening disability-inclusive development through holistic program approaches. An evaluation of disability inclusion in Disaster READY has been undertaken concurrent to the mid-term evaluation which sets out a number of recommendations including a more holistic approach to strengthen disability inclusion. DFAT will prepare and implement a management response to respond to these recommendations, and implement them as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	July 2021

**Question 6:** To what extent have AHP activities and approaches contributed to learning and improvements in the humanitarian sector, DFAT humanitarian programming and that of the NGO community?

**Overall findings:** AHP has good information for wider sector learning but there are currently limited opportunities to share this learning.

Recommendation	Response	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b> The AHPSU to identify a process to capture relevant program learning and together with AHP partners, ensure this is communicated regularly through the existing program and other learning forums.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Recommendation 10 to be addressed through the AHP Phase II and Disaster READY Phase II design refresh.</p>	<p>June 2021 – June 2022</p>

## Future considerations beyond AHP

	Action	Timeframe
<b>AHP as a whole</b>		
In any future phase of AHP, consider the inclusion of a mechanism that regularly reviews program innovations and relevant new policy or practice ideas, and identifies the implications for the program, as part of ongoing program adaptation and improvement.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for AHP Phase II.	June 2021 – October 2021
<b>Disaster READY specific</b>		
Any future phases of Disaster READY should limit the number of program objectives in order to ensure one clear overall purpose for the program.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
Sustainability, specifically including pathways towards localisation, ought to be a major consideration for any future phases of Disaster READY.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
Activities under any future phase of Disaster READY ought to be framed within an understanding of resilience relevant to the country and regional context.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
Any future phase of Disaster READY, should shift to a country focus, while retaining opportunity for regional exchange, learning and cooperation. That is, the program should become a multi country program.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
In line with the current Disaster READY rationale, any future phase of the program should consider expansion to countries in the Pacific and beyond that are highly disaster prone. In the Pacific this would likely include Tonga (the remaining Pacific country among the world's most 15 disaster prone countries) and the small island states of Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru (all countries at particular risk of impact by disasters due to the growing influence of climate change).	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
Any future phase of Disaster READY should consider inclusion of monitoring systems that provide information about the value of different consortium models in relation to program implementation and outcomes.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022
Any future phases of Disaster READY should require a costed and time bound plan for achieving localisation as part of the selection criteria for participating Australian NGOs. The new phase should require that the selected NGOs to report against this plan throughout the life of the program.	For consideration and implementation as part of the design refresh for Disaster READY Phase II.	June 2021 – June 2022