

## Management response – Building Community Engagement in Papua New Guinea Mid-Term Review

This document outlines DFAT’s management response to the independent Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Building Community Engagement in Papua New Guinea (BCEP) program. The review found BCEP to be relevant, well-performing, and aligned with Australia’s strategic objectives in PNG. It identified a series of practical recommendations focused on strengthening program delivery, enhancing strategic alignment, and improving value for money. DFAT broadly agrees with the recommendations and will incorporate them into planning for Phase 2 (2026–2030).

### Key recommendations

Recommendation	DFAT Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
The AHC and BCEP Senior Leadership should review their respective roles and responsibilities in the engagement with GoPNG and with other components of the Australian aid program. The refresh should be designed to exploit BCEPs ability to generate contextual information and the greater convening power of the AHC at high levels of GoPNG. The aim should be to bolster strategic alignment with government priorities where that is appropriate and to respond more effectively to the needs of public diplomacy.	Agree	DFAT and BCEP leadership will jointly develop a refreshed engagement strategy, clarifying roles and identifying opportunities for strategic alignment and public diplomacy.	Q4 2025
The BCEP leadership team should develop the existing group of external advisers (which at present operate in an on-demand modality) into a standing advisory panel that meets regularly. This would provide an opportunity to make sense of the wealth of contextual information available and provide broader strategic guidance. This arrangement would provide validation of the quality of the analysis being generated, link to contextual opportunities, ensure the continued relevance to the dynamic PNG context and strengthen coherence with wider change processes. The cost would be minimal, in the range of 60 consultancy days per year.	Agree	BCEP will review the structure and Terms of Reference for the Strategic Advisory Panel to formalise the advisory panel structure. Consultancy dates will be agreed through usual annual work planning process.	Q1 2026

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Recommendation	DFAT Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>BCEP should conduct a Political Economy Analysis that reviews the prospects for Bilum to achieve greater accountability in the use of SIP funds over the medium to long-term. The PEA should examine the potential for other components of BCEP to support and exploit the potential of the platform. That assessment should be the basis of future investment decisions on the platform. The cost implications are around 40 days consultancy fees.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>To inform future programming, BCEP will incorporate a Bilum Platform Political Economy Analysis as a section under the broader BCEP Political Economy Analysis.</p>	<p>Q1 2026</p>
<p>BCEP should revitalise the coalition change strategy process to ensure lessons learned lead to revision of approach and tactics. BCEP should deploy coalition facilitators to ensure local coordination of the actors. These may be existing staff or part-time consultants recruited to the roles.</p>	<p>Partially agree</p>	<p>Noting the multifaceted relevance of this recommendation, BCEP will review different approaches to coalitions across the program to support local coordination, learning and deployment of coalition facilitators (from within existing staff footprint) as appropriate.</p>	<p>Q2 2026</p>
<p>BCEP should update its strategies on inclusion and expand its resourcing to support partner implementation of their individual strategies and annual work plans on GEDSI. That will increase pace and scale and ensure high quality implementation across both gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BCEP will refresh its GEDSI and DSI Strategies and assess resourcing needs to support implementation across all partners in consultation with DFAT.</p>	<p>Q2 2026</p>
<p>BCEP and the AHC should develop more fit-for-purpose decision-making structures to support adaptive management. The level of authority delegated to the BCEP team to make changes should be clarified.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BCEP and DFAT will review and revise decision-making protocols to support timely and adaptive programming.</p>	<p>Q2 2026</p>
<p>As part of the annual planning process, BCEP should agree with the AHC annual targets to demonstrate its progress toward the Intermediate Outcomes. The process should incorporate a high degree of flexibility so that targets that have become irrelevant do not lead to sub-optimal programming choices.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BCEP and DFAT to review the MEL Strategy with a view to introducing annual targets.</p>	<p>Q2 2026</p>
<p>BCEP should support public diplomacy by doing more to publicise the results it is achieving in ways that the Papua New Guinea public and leadership will relate to.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BCEP will work closely with DFAT to strengthen its communications strategy and coordinate to amplify results through public diplomacy.</p>	<p>Q4 2025</p>

## Related recommendations

Recommendation	DFAT Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
BCEP should systematically document the recommendations of Tok Politic sessions' recommendations to enhance responsiveness to the context based on the tacit knowledge of staff and advisers.	Agree	BCEP will integrate documentation of Tok Politic insights into MEL processes and reporting cycles, including reflection logs.	Q4 2025
EOPO 3 should be reframed to also capture the contribution of BCEP to developing an effective and sustainable civil society more widely within PNG. There is also potential to disseminate BCEP approaches more widely in PNG civil society. The cost implications should be assessed carefully in advance. This may be an action for a future phase of BCEP.	Not agreed	BCEP will explore opportunities to share learnings and approaches within existing program budget, however reframing EOPO 3 is not supported in light of likely cost implications.	Q3 2026
BCEP explore with other Australian programs the potential for synergy between policy interventions for instance in the health and education sectors.	Agree	BCEP to increase discussion with other Australian programs to explore program synergies and complementarities between activities.	Q1 2026
BCEP should review the structure of the components within BCEP to exploit the full synergy between Social Accountability and Coalitions for Change. Consideration should be given the amalgamation of Social Accountability and Coalitions for Change so that issues can be addressed under the most appropriate component and so that the combined expertise can be brought to bear.	Agree	BCEP will undertake a review of component structures and assess options for closer coordination between Social Accountability and Coalitions for Change components. These options will be presented to DFAT for discussion and agreement.	Q2 2026
Capture the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches to coalitions to support BCEP's own effectiveness and to contribute to the wider body of knowledge.	Agree	BCEP will document comparative lessons from different coalition models and share findings with DFAT and partners.	Q3 2026
Revisit the opportunities assessment and consider the addition of a new issue to the combined workstream.	Agree	BCEP and DFAT will revisit the original opportunity assessment and consult partners to identify new strategic issues for inclusion.	Q2 2026

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Ensure that media strategies are supported across all partnerships to maximise the sharing of research, policy messaging and content to shape understanding, norms and behaviours across the range of focus areas under BCEP.	Agree	BCEP will work with the Media Development Initiative and other partners to develop integrated media strategies across components.	Q1 2026
The BCEP GEDSI team should explore opportunities to better engage with the Office of the Development of Women and to include women’s networks such as the National Council of Women to raise engagement to a higher systemic level and increase sustainability. This should re-focus on a broader strategic approach to affecting change for GEDSI, enabling it to build on the current integration primarily at thematic and activity level.	Partially Agree	BCEP GEDSI team will explore opportunities to engage with national women’s institutions and explore strategic alignment opportunities. However, noting existing partnerships and activities under other programs, including with PNG Women Lead, there may limited opportunities to expand engagement.	Q3 2026
BCEP should further support partners to showcase initiatives that give voice to marginalised people, including articulating how these link to wider change processes.	Agree	BCEP will support partners to document and disseminate stories of change, with a focus on inclusion and systemic impact.	Q1 2026
Ensure that partners aiming to achieve gender-responsiveness receive sufficient technical support to implement their strategies, alongside the gender-transformative initiatives of select partners.	Agree	BCEP will look to streamline and amplify existing GEDSI resources to maximise impact. Support will be prioritised for partners requiring technical assistance, noting that some GEDSI partners now operate with greater independence and require less intensive support.	Q1 2026
BCEP should develop a strategy that enables organisations in the wider CSO community in PNG to develop the competencies to adopt successful approaches, including through sharing lessons on capacity building with partners.	Not agreed	BCEP will explore opportunities to share learnings and approaches within existing program budget, however a more systematic strategic approach is not supported in light of likely cost implications.	Q2 2026
Bolster capacity building support in the form of accompaniment as partners implement their own strategies on inclusion, balancing support to responsive and transformative approaches, and considering how to enhance outcomes as well as processes.	Agree	BCEP will continue providing technical accompaniment support and mentoring support for partners implementing GEDSI strategies.	Q1–Q2 2026
BCEP should clarify the process for reducing or pausing support to partners where they have achieved sustainability or where their potential to influence change has diminished. Flexibility is key to BCEP’s underlying theory and there should be guidelines to support hard decisions that enable this. Developing an exit plan	Agree	BCEP will develop a Partner Transition Plan and exit guidelines, including criteria and options for continued engagement. This will approved by DFAT. A review of the BCEP Adaptive Management	Q2 2026

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which could include transition to a different mode of engagement or support, through to graduation from the program, will give clarity and confidence to all parties.		Strategy will also consider sustainability aspects of the partnerships.	
In the interests of ensuring a balance between the cost of BCEP's support to partners and the funding provided to partners to deliver outcomes, BCEP should develop and agree with the AHC an appropriate methodology to calculate an overhead ratio and agree an appropriate target.	Agree	BCEP and DFAT will jointly develop an overhead ratio methodology and agree on a target range.	Q1 2026
The BCEP team should move the focus of its adaptive management towards the component, partnership and issue levels. It should revisit the change strategy process as means to review and revise the strategy and tactics of coalitions and other interventions.	Agree	BCEP will review its Adaptive Management Strategy to ensure it supports adaptive management to specific components, issues and partnerships.	Q2 2026