



AusAID / NGO

Committee for Development Cooperation

A Joint Committee of the Australian Agency for International Development and
Australian Non-Government Organisations

Minutes of the 122nd CDC meeting held on 19 May 2009

Attendance:

NGO Representatives

Rev John Deane

Mr Andrew Newmarch

Ms Diane Kilsby

AusAID CDC Members

Mr Chris Tinning (Chair)

Mr Timothy Church

Mr Nic Notarpietro

AusAID Attendees

Ms Megan Anderson

Mr John Morley

Ms Leanne Newick

Mr Jamie Isbister, ADG, AHPB

ACFID Observer

Mr Alex Oates

1. Minutes

The previous minutes were adopted with minor amendments.

With regard to the issues outlined in the previous minutes, Mr Newmarch raised the issue of technical assistance and the allocation/dispersal of remaining ANCP funds as discussed at the previous session. Ms Anderson clarified that the dispersal of remaining ANCP funds had occurred, however the administrative burden of the process would probably preclude this method being used in the future. Mr Morley clarified that the TA pilot program had been successful and all agencies that were offered assistance were positive of the support provided. The criteria for agencies to access TA would be made available to agencies following the implementation of TA as part of the ANCP reforms.

Rev Deane raised the issue of NGO compliance with the OADGS given that agency audits/reviews do not currently occur. Ms Anderson confirmed that the OAGDS was on AusAID's forward agenda for review.

Mr Newmarch also raised the issue of the government's family planning policy. Mr Morley clarified that AusAID appreciated the CDC's previous advice on possible changes to the family planning criteria (including that criterion F be removed and family planning be incorporated into criterion B), and that options had gone to the Minister. Any changes would be part of the wider accreditation streamlining process.

2. Action items outstanding

Mr Oates outlined the action items outstanding and completed from the previous CDC (121) session including:

- CDC terms of reference – ACFID had made changes as agreed at the previous session however clarification was sought by AusAID on wording. To be discussed at ToR agenda item.
- Accreditation document - noted that it was agreed at the last session that a package of accreditation documentation was to be circulated for CDC consideration, however this had not occurred. To be discussed further at accreditation streamlining agenda item.
- As agreed at the previous session, AusAID would undertake an ANCP briefing to the accredited NGO sector. It had been agreed intercessionally that that this would occur following the ACFID MIFs in May.
- CDC members agreed to give further consideration to the WWF review team's response to WWFs concerns about the accreditation recommendation and report – the CDC considered those concerns intercessionally and agreed to uphold the initial decision to re-accredit WWF at the Base level.

3. Terms of Reference

Ms Anderson presented the CDC ToRs outlining recent changes, including that clarification had been sought from ACFID on the selection and appointment of NGO representatives and how the election process worked. This had now been incorporated into the new version. It was agreed to emend the wording to reflect that a postal ballot process would be conducted by ACFID by the CDC Secretariat.

Rev Deane noted the AusAID amendments to the wording for point three (pg.1) of the role and responsibilities of the CDC to provide advice on CA and Church Partnerships. He clarified that the text should reflect the role of the CDC to address administrative and procedural issues with regard to these funding mechanisms as opposed to policy. All members agreed in principle with the slight wording change in point three to reflect this, pending ACFID final consideration. It was also agreed that the CDC Secretariat should provide papers to all CDC members; to ensure consistency of information across the CDC. Mr Oates agreed that ACFID would give final consideration to the ToR text intercessionally.

Actions – Terms of Reference

ACFID to agree final ToR text on roles and functions.

4. Federal Budget Outcomes

Mr Tinning outlined the Federal Aid Budget for 2009/10 indicating that meeting the target of 0.5% of GNI expenditure on overseas aid by 2015 was still government policy. There had been a consistent increase in NGO funding (currently about 7.5% in this budget) that should continue to rise. Rev Deane noted appreciation that there had been no significant cuts to the Aid Budget.

5. ANCP Reforms

Mr Morley outlined the ANCP streamlining and reform agenda issues as per the handout.

Multi-year funding

Ms Kilsby raised the issue that the NGO sector needs clarity on multi-year funding as soon as possible given that ADPlans are due in June. Mr Morley responded that AusAID was considering risk management and would be announced at the ANCP briefing in May.

Rev Deane appreciated that the ANCP reforms have been progressed to this stage.

6. Accreditation

Mr Morley circulated accreditation documentation for consideration, including a review of the accreditation documentation as prepared by consultant Jo Thomson and a timeline for the NGO accreditation reforms. Mr Morley clarified that a peer discussion of accreditation would take place and include NGOs to reflect on their experiences with the process. Dates of the peer discussion will be determined following the finalisation of the Period Funding Agreement for the new group of accreditation reviewers. A review of the 'Reviewers' Handbook' would also occur and any changes would be signed off after the August CDC.

Ms Anderson commented on the need for improved communication between AusAID and the review teams to ensure CDC decisions/comments were quickly channelled back to reviewers. Rev Deane commented that a consistent approach to accreditation reviews was important for the sector. In regard to streamlining, Mr Notarpietro made the suggestion that consideration should be given to reducing the accreditation burden on long-time accredited agencies as well as those receiving a low level of funding, given that the risk factors for AusAID were significantly reduced for those agencies. He suggested that accreditation for Base could also be made much simpler and be used as a means of providing an opportunity to strengthen systems and gain a track record of good practice. Mr Notarpietro also suggested that examples of best practice in NGO systems that were revealed through the review process should be better promoted within the sector, for example on the ACFID and/or AusAID website to highlight best practice.

Action:

ACFID to consider options to promote best practice relevant to accreditation.

7. Africa

Mr Isbister outlined the Government's current approach to Africa, emphasising the 40% increase in funds as per the 2009/10 Aid Budget. Mr Isbister clarified that NGO consultations on the Africa Strategy would take place in the 2nd and 3rd weeks of June at this stage. Key sectoral areas had been established, including water and sanitation, food security and child and maternal health in line with the MDGs.

Mr Newmarch asked what the approach to climate change would be. Mr Isbister responded that it would be addressed as a cross-cutting issue, for example in regard to water and sanitation and DRR. Further to this, humanitarian funding in Africa would be of further interest to the NGO sector.

Ms Kilsby raised the issue of HIV. Mr Isbister responded that it was not a central focus of the program due to the range of other donors engaged in the sector in Africa and that HIV/AIDs would be addressed as an issue that cuts across a range of MDGs. Therefore, HIV would be considered in this cross-cutting context and NGOs would not be precluded from undertaking HIV projects under the CA for example.

Ms Kilsby raised the issue of the Cooperation Agreement reviews. Ms Anderson responded that this was on the forward agenda and would most likely take place by the end of 2009. AusAID would come to the sector on a broad range of principles. Mr Notarpietro added that Annual Program Performance Reports (APPRs) for Vietnam and Cambodia programs had just been released, which should include discussion of the performance of Cooperation Agreements among other elements of those programs. APPRs are potentially a useful vehicle to improve dialogue between AusAID and NGOs on the performance and direction of individual country and regional programs but it is up to both sides to make use of the opportunities APPRs provide.

8. Accreditation Reports Summary

The CDC discussed accreditation reports for Quaker Service Australia (QSA), Credit Union Foundation Australia (CUFA), The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA), and International Center for Eyecare Education (ICEE).

Quaker Service Australia

The CDC members recommended that QSA be accredited at Full Level.

Credit Union Foundation Australia

The CDC members supported the recommendation that CUFA be re-accredited at Full Level.

The Leprosy Mission Australia

The CDC members discussed the situation of TLMA and after discussion regarding Criterion B2 on evangelism, agreed to recommend re-accreditation at the Full Level.

Out of session outcome

AusAID sought clarification from the Accreditation Review Team Leader re the “suggestions” provided to TLMA as feedback. The review team reinforced their endorsement of the recommendation to accredit TLMA at the Full Level, and recommended further guidance for reviewers on assessing Criterion B2.

International Center for Eyecare Education (ICEE)

The CDC members agreed with the review team’s recommendation that the ICEE be accredited at the Full Level, noting the importance of supporting new technical organisations with access to information on good development practice. The CDC noted that their comments on the reporting should be addressed through upcoming Review Panel Training.

WWF

Mr Morley indicated that AusAID had had a number of meetings with WWF regarding WWF’s recent accreditation. He reported that WWF is acting on accreditation recommendations.

9. Other matters

RDE

Mr Morley presented three issues with regard to RDE that have arisen recently as per the handout provided.

- The CDC agreed with the proposed change to RDE adjustments and IPF reductions for agencies moving from Full to Base level. The CDC also agreed to continue to exclude rent-in-kind from the definition of eligible gifts in kind for RDE purposes.
- The CDC provided advice on proposed change of the wording associated in clause 5 (b) (ii) to include development effectiveness services from international parties, alliances and/or affiliates. Mr Notarpietro commented that any such allowance should be commensurate with program/country expenditure to ensure any claims were reasonable, for example allowing a percentage of program costs for such services, as there would appear to be some scope to abuse the system. Mr Church and Mr Newmarch stated agreement in principle with the proposed approach, however noted that consideration would need to be given to how agencies demonstrate expenditure of funds in the accreditation process/RDE. Rev Deane suggested that the financial systems audit may consider how it could be assessed from that perspective. Mr Tinning agreed that a set of words needed to be agreed upon.

Action:

AusAID to present a set of draft words on this issue to the next CDC meeting.

Monitoring and evaluation

Ms Anderson commented that:

- The M&E update provided at the previous ACFID MIF was well received.
- The ODE is currently closely engaged with the DPC on M&E in regard to what is best practice, particularly looking at service delivery in the first instance. A peer review will take place in July/August on M&E and effectiveness.
- An annual report of the ANCP would be delivered to the CDC.
- AusAID has been engaged in a range of whole of government issues including the Ken Henry Tax Review and the Productivity Commission review of NGO issues. A Not-For-Profit Taskforce will be established to include a broad range of government and community stakeholders. AusAID will liaise with ACFID and CDC on this.