

## **DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROGRAM (CSSP II) IN SAMOA 2016 – 2021**

DFAT commissioned an independent evaluation of the Civil Society Support Program (CSSP) in Samoa in October 2021 to assess the performance of CSSP and the value it has generated for those involved. This review will also assist in informing the design of new investments, particularly the Human Development and Social Inclusion Facility and the Governance and Economic Growth Facility, which may include support to civil society.

In the broad, DFAT supports the findings of this report. DFAT agrees with the reviewers that the CSSP is a well-established mechanism for facilitating small value grants to grassroots beneficiaries. It has achieved significant success in this regard.

However, as the review notes, this has come at the expense of a focus on capacity development of civil society organisations. There has also been a disproportionate focus of DFAT resources on the implementation of grant and project-based activities rather than a focus on outcome level achievements. Overall, a range of structural issues in the CSSP program, including a lack of a focus on M&E resourcing and data collection, making it difficult to assess overall program success. In this regard, we view the ratings in some instances as perhaps generous.

Nonetheless, in principle DFAT remains committed to continuing to support civil society in Samoa. Civil society has an important role in effecting change and supporting the needs of the vulnerable at the community and village level, while also providing an important voice for those same beneficiaries.

DFAT is currently planning two significant, long term investments – the Human Development and Social Inclusion Facility (HDSI) and the Governance and Economic Growth (GEG) Facility – which will form the two key pillars of the Australia’s development program in Samoa. During the design process, these two investments will explore how Australia can best contribute to the structured development of civil society in Samoa, including through future engagement with CSSP, and taking into account core considerations of effectiveness, efficiency, as well as considerations of aid coordination.

The action plan identified in this management response will be progressed by DFAT in consultation with the Government of Samoa.

#### STRATEGIC AND OUTCOME FOCUS

| Recommendations   | Response    | Action Plan  | Timeframe |
|---|-------------|--|-----------|
| Strengthen strategic leadership and cooperation between donors and government including consideration of research, private sector engagement and donor harmonisation in CSSP future objectives. | Post agrees | Post will discuss this recommendation with Ministry of Finance. The role of CSSP as a coordinating mechanism, and the role of research and private sector engagement, will be considered by the design teams for the HDSI and GEG investments, and reflected in final designs. | June 2022 |

#### CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING FOR CSOs

| Recommendations                                      | Response    | Action Plan   | Timeframe |
|--|-------------|---|-----------|
| Strengthen capacity building and networking for CSOs | Post agrees | Post will discuss this recommendation with Ministry of Finance.<br><br>Future DFAT support to CSOs will consider a range of options and alternatives to support capacity development. | June 2022 |

#### OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

| Recommendations  | Response    | Action Plan   | Timeframe |
|--|-------------|---|-----------|
| <p>Streamline and refine Steering Committee and PMU operations through a process review, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to commonise donor reporting and policies</li> <li>- Improve information management systems</li> <li>- Review steering committee terms of reference and operations</li> </ul> | Post agrees | Post will discuss recommendation with Ministry of Finance and the CSSP PMU. | June 2022 |

#### FUNDING DESIGN

| Recommendations  | Response     | Action Plan  | Timeframe  |
|--|--------------|--|--|
| CSSP to find a funding source to support core positions previously funded by DFAT. | Post agrees. | <p>Additional funding for the CSSP has been approved under the GoS budget FY21/22 and its supplementary budget.</p> <p>Future support to civil society will be explored through the design process for HDSI and GEG.</p> | N/A ( <i>HDSI/GEG designs due to be completed in June 2022</i> ) |