



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



EVALUATION OF PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESPONSES IN THE PACIFIC

DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation purpose

This **independently led evaluation** was undertaken by Bernard Broughton and Amra Lee who were contracted by DFAT through IOD PARC. Through the evaluation, **DFAT sought to:**

- Assess to what extent Australia's investments in protection in humanitarian action in the Pacific – through dedicated programming and mainstreamed approaches – have been timely, effective and appropriate;
- Compile lessons and recommendations that can inform DFAT's future investments in – and management of – disaster preparedness and response; and
- Compile lessons and recommendations to inform DFAT's future policy advocacy for protection in humanitarian action in the Pacific.

IOD PARC was engaged by DFAT in **July 2018** and submitted the final evaluation report in **January 2019**.

Reflections on the evaluation report

DFAT thanks the evaluators for the expertise they brought to the evaluation. We recognise the combined **challenges of defining, monitoring and evaluating protection activities**, and appreciate that the report acknowledges many of these challenges.

In developing the action plan, DFAT has adopted a **broad understanding of protection** that considers inclusion issues relating to gender, disability, child protection, minorities and other vulnerable groups. We seek to place affected people at the centre of our humanitarian assistance and apply 'do no harm' approaches in all our engagements. We recognise the importance of **data disaggregated by sex, age and ability** to better understand protection needs within communities and track progress over time, and will continue to advocate for quality monitoring and reporting by our implementing partners. Our commitments are outlined in DFAT's *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework* (2013), *Humanitarian Strategy* (2016) and relevant guidance notes (2017).

DFAT agrees with much, but not all, of the analysis and findings in the final report. DFAT also acknowledges the limitations of the evaluation due to restrictions on time and access. Overall, the report provides a **useful overview of Australia's protection policy and programming efforts** in the Pacific to date, and helpful suggestions for further strengthening our approach to this important thematic priority of the *Humanitarian Strategy*.

DFAT's Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (HPD) intends to undertake a **follow-up evaluation** to review progress in meeting protection objectives beyond the Pacific region, namely in protracted and slow onset crises. The findings of both this protection evaluation and the planned review on protracted crises, as well as an ongoing review of progress against the *Humanitarian Strategy*, will put Australia in a good position to determine what, if any, updates are needed to relevant DFAT policy documents.

The evaluation report makes highly relevant observations about the **global and regional contexts, and associated challenges** for protection in humanitarian action. It highlights that **worldwide the prioritisation of protection in disasters has been a challenge** and, accordingly, evidence of protection results remains uneven and elusive. It correctly notes that **national governments have primary responsibility for protecting populations** within their territory. This is a guiding principle of the *Humanitarian Strategy*. We appreciate the report's mention of **lessons from other donor countries** and intend to further pursue approaches of likeminded donors in implementing our management response to this evaluation.

The report's authors emphasise the **Pacific context is unique** – characterised, in particular, by high cyclical disaster risks, as well as high levels of intercommunal and interpersonal violence in some countries. We would argue that the remoteness of many of the small island communities also poses particular challenges.

As the report notes, protection in the Pacific is further constrained by the unique **humanitarian architecture**. National governments typically lead responses to what are predominantly rapid onset crises, often with low capability to deliver without international assistance, while mandated protection partners that operate globally have a limited presence. Recognising the report correctly identifies the need for a nuanced approach to localisation, Australia will continue to reinforce **local and national leadership** of response efforts in the Pacific and elsewhere. We find parts of the report's narrative assume a 'command and control' relationship from DFAT over preparedness and response activities in the region. This neither exists in practice nor is desirable in reality, given the international community's commitment to humanitarian localisation.

The management response will leverage DFAT's positive engagement with disaster response in the Pacific. For example, DFAT has a positive reputation for **advocating** on particular protection priorities; recently increased its attention to **LGBTI inclusion**; engages productively with national **protection clusters**; rolled-out the \$50 million **Disaster Ready program** that makes an important contribution to preparedness and inclusion; has standing **agreements with UNFPA and IPPF** that mainstream protection of SRHR in preparedness; has made successful long-term multi-year investments in the **Fiji Women's Crisis Centre**; imposes stringent **child protection** reporting requirements; and has established a joint **MFAT-DFAT Humanitarian M&E Framework** for better real-time monitoring. The final initiative provides a structured methodology to support Australia and New Zealand to work together during and after humanitarian responses in the Pacific to address and implement a number of the issues identified in this evaluation.

The report rightly identifies the **prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)** as a critical area of focus for the global humanitarian community. DFAT is in the process of drafting a new policy and approach to PSEA. We anticipate this will considerably strengthen our ability to prevent, monitor, report and address allegations against humanitarian workers and affected populations.

The report claims that DFAT has not taken a strategic approach to protection. We assert that DFAT does indeed **acknowledge that protection is central** to the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian action. Our strategic commitments and approach to the centrality of protection are articulated clearly in our 2016 *Humanitarian Strategy*, where protection cuts across all phases of the disaster cycle from risk reduction through preparedness and response to early recovery. It is also central to our advocacy for a strengthened international humanitarian system. To implement our strategic commitments, DFAT staff are able to draw on practical advice contained in our 2017 *Protection Guidance Note*, as well as thematic guidance developed to assess performance on protection through DFAT's annual Humanitarian Aid Quality Checks (HAQCs).

Finally, DFAT acknowledges the complexity of humanitarian protection work and the need for three levels of action: strategic leadership and policy setting; dedicated programming; and mainstreaming. Noting the rapidly changing humanitarian landscape in the Pacific, DFAT recognises the significant humanitarian systems developments since the release of Australia's *Protection Framework* in 2013 and the need for active engagement. DFAT is committed to **leaving no one behind** in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda for Humanity through improved capacity to deliver on protection commitments, prioritisation of protection in practice, and effective protection-related advocacy and engagement.

DFAT's action plan

Notwithstanding the concerns outlined above, **DFAT agrees with all of the evaluation's six key recommendations** in full or in part. Justification for our responses are summarised in **the following table**. The suggested options for implementation identified in the evaluation report were considered in drafting DFAT's action plan, but have not been formally endorsed.

In identifying feasible next steps, HPD has into consideration existing **human and financial resourcing constraints** and focussed on **four key areas of improvement: (1) DFAT staff capability; (2) Australia's leadership; (3) Investment in, and influence of partners); and (4) guidance, monitoring and evaluation**.

DFAT will adopt this management response as an annex to the existing *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework*. Where there are discrepancies in scope between the documents, this action plan will take precedence. The actions will inform progress updates on implementation of this management response.

Action Plan

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
Recommendation 1: Increase access to timely protection expertise and comprehensive protection risk analysis	Agree in part Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability 	1a. DFAT agrees with the need to strengthen access to protection expertise through contracted technical expertise, where appropriate. DFAT recognises that staff capability in humanitarian protection varies, and that training, coupled with strong application of processes and tools, will assist in developing staff ability to prioritise humanitarian protection issues in their work in Canberra, at posts or on deployment.	1a (i). DFAT will establish a register of external technical protection expertise that can be called upon to advise and contribute to DFAT's protection policy and programming efforts (including potential deployment to humanitarian crises).	From July 2019
			1a (ii). DFAT will strengthen its internal humanitarian protection awareness and capabilities through a review and update of its humanitarian training and pre-deployment briefing materials to ensure protection issues are integrated appropriately for all humanitarian staff, including Crisis Response Team officers.	By Dec 2019
		1b. DFAT recognises the importance of having an informed understanding of protection risks to support Australian Government decision-making in disaster responses. However, primary responsibility for investing in timely and broader protection risk analyses rests with affected states themselves. Thus, DFAT will support national governments, in coordination with UN agencies, other donors and NGO partners, to build their capacity.	1b. DFAT will ensure improved access and utilisation of protection risk analyses to better inform decision-making during crises response. This will specifically include assessment of accessibility and reference to risk analyses conducted by key humanitarian partners, and availability of protection advice during After Action Reviews .	By Dec 2019
Recommendation 2: Recruit and support senior protection champions within DFAT and invest in staff capability	Agree Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability • Leadership 	2. DFAT agrees that a senior protection champion within DFAT would strengthen the focus on protection issues.	2. Australia's Humanitarian Coordinator (FAS HPD) will be appointed DFAT Humanitarian Protection Champion, providing overall strategic leadership to DFAT's protection portfolio in rapid and protracted contexts. They will have an annual workplan of action to support DFAT's protection commitments.	Workplan by July 2019
Recommendation 3: Engage more strategically with national stakeholders on operationalising protection in the Pacific, and identify the most appropriate mechanisms	Agree Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Investment in, and influence of partners 	3a. DFAT recognises there is an ongoing need to review and refine multi-year humanitarian partnerships and policy engagement to ensure they address key protection issues in the Pacific.	3a. DFAT will map Australia's funding to humanitarian partners and policy engagement efforts in the Pacific on protection issues to identify most appropriate partners, networks and mechanisms . DFAT will use this to review future partnerships and response funding to ensure protection is integrated into relevant programming and policy. This will include protection advice during crises response program design processes.	By June 2020

and partnerships to address protection gaps		3b. DFAT agrees more can be done to identify appropriate national protection partners and strengthen their capacity to deliver protection outcomes during crisis responses. DFAT notes a nuanced approach to localisation is necessary to enable an appropriate balance of international and national capabilities.	3b. DFAT will explore options to provide dedicated support to build the capacity of local actors to address protection issues in their respective countries, and support all partners to be able to more effectively monitor, evaluate and report on their activities through sharing knowledge and good practices.	Throughout 2019-2020
Recommendation 4: Review and update DFAT's humanitarian commitments, processes and tools for clarity and coherence and more consistent prioritisation of protection in practice	Agree in part Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Guidance, monitoring & evaluation	4. DFAT agrees that Australia's approach to protection should be regularly reviewed to ensure it aligns with current global standards and reflects DFAT's global commitments. This includes regular review of internal guidance and tools.	4. DFAT will review its key messages and guidance documents, including the Humanitarian Strategy guidance notes, IQR processes, Standard Operation procedures for humanitarian operations, crisis guidelines and planning, and the DFAT/MFAT <i>Humanitarian Monitoring and Evaluation Framework</i> to ensure they appropriately prioritise the centrality of protection and ensure clarity on roles and responsibilities.	By June 2020 and ongoing (annual IQR process)
Recommendation 5: Expand investments in protection activities to support greater preparedness and resilience, and consider opportunities for a more strategic approach through regional and bilateral assistance	Agree Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investment in, and influence of partners	5a. DFAT agrees that investments in preparedness and resilience are key for effective protection during humanitarian responses.	5a. DFAT will revise its disaster risk reduction and resilience (DRR) guidance for investment managers to highlight protection issues as a compulsory consideration in the design and implementation of risk reduction measures.	Throughout 2019-2020
		5b. DFAT recognises the importance of strategic and long-term approaches to principled advocacy and engagement through Australia's Step Up of its engagement in the Pacific.	5b. DFAT will continue to strengthen and prioritise the protection focus of its humanitarian and DRR investments in the Pacific, including AHP and Australia Assists, and explore existing development programs, such as the Australian NGO Cooperation Program or Australian Aid Friendship Grants, to respond to protection needs.	Throughout 2019-2020
Recommendation 6: Commit to taking a donor leadership role on advancing protection in humanitarian action in the Pacific	Agree Focus Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Leadership	6. DFAT agrees that its role as a key bilateral donor in the Pacific presents significant opportunities for advocacy and programming on protection issues, notwithstanding Australia's global commitments to localisation.	6. DFAT will raise humanitarian protection issues during bilateral dialogues with national actors, including government, civil society and communities, where appropriate. Australia will continue to liaise with New Zealand and France to encourage alignment of strategic approaches and advocacy regarding protection issues.	Throughout 2019-2020