

Mid Term Review of the Fiji Community Development Program
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Initiative Summary

Initiative Name	Fiji Community Development Program		
AidWorks initiative number	INK130		
Commencement date	29 August 2011	Completion date	30 June 2017
Total Australian \$	\$20,406,457.73		
Total other \$			
Delivery organisation(s)	Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)		
Implementing partner(s)	Coffey International Development Pty Limited		
Country/Region	Fiji		
Primary sector	Civil society		
Initiative objective/s	The Fiji Community Development Program (FCDP) is a 5 year program supporting service delivery to underserved communities by strengthening and resourcing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Fiji. The goal of the program is to deliver social and economic benefits to the people of Fiji through strengthened CSOs. FCDP will meet this goal through two objectives. The first objective is to mitigate social and economic hardship faced by poor, vulnerable and excluded communities in Fiji by funding the community development work of CSOs. The second objective is to strengthen CSO capacity to deliver relevant and efficient programs in these targeted communities.		

Review Objective:

The purpose of the Mid Term Review (MTR) of FCDP was to ensure accountability in assessing contractor performance for the first 3-year phase of the FCDP program (Phase 1: May 2012-May 2015). The Program is being implemented through a managing contractor, Coffey International. The managing contractor is responsible for distributing and tracking a variety of CSO grants for service delivery and strengthening CSO capacity to deliver effective, demand-driven services.

The MTR was a key independent assessment used by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to determine whether to take the option to extend the existing contract with Coffey International for the next 2-year phase of the program (2015-17). The review was also used to inform DFAT on how to effectively improve program performance for FCDP Phase 2, with a focus on management systems and the quality of the program delivery.

The review sought to capture the extent to which the program was achieving its objectives, the effectiveness of the CSO capacity building activities, the benefits and risks of employing an intermediary (managing contractor) to the relationship between CSOs and the Australian Aid Program and the effectiveness of the program's management systems and field offices.

Review Completion Date: 14 November 2014

Review Team: Keren Winterford, (Team Leader), Ana Laqeretabua and Eleni Levin-Tevi (Local in-country consultants)

DFAT's response to the review report

The review team adequately addressed the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the review and met DFAT's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) standards. Within the given timeframe, the review team did well to reach majority of the FCDP CSO partners and stakeholders including beneficiaries. The MTR methodology was exploratory and used a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative methods to reveal perspectives and views from key stakeholders in relation to the five main areas of inquiry defined through the Key Evaluation Questions in the TOR. The key findings and recommendations of the MTR have been informed by stakeholder responses and were reinforced by multiple (diverse) stakeholder groups across the three locations.

DFAT agrees with all the recommendations in the report, except for recommendation 6 to which DFAT only partially agrees, for the reasons outlined below.

DFAT has agreed to continue to phase 2 of FCDP - the recommendations are relevant and useful for informing programming and effectiveness of this second phase.

DFAT's response to the specific recommendations made in the report

Recommendation 1:

That DFAT extend the existing contract with Coffey International for the next 2 year phase of the Program (2015-17) inclusive of refinement of the strategic approach and program implementation as defined in the MTR recommendations.

Response

Agree. Australia values CSOs as important development partners. The initiatives implemented by FCDP have the potential to continue to significantly impact poor, vulnerable, excluded communities within the two year extension. With the transition to the new DFAT aid policy direction, FCDP currently provides a significant opportunity for DFAT to strategically assist this transition. Based on the MTR findings and recommendations, the extension will include reprogramming to FCDP to ensure program effectiveness.

Recommendation 2:

That FCDP continue to focus on rural and remote communities as the primary focus area for 'mitigating economic and social hardships faced poor, vulnerable and excluded communities in Fiji'.

Response

Agree however the Program needs to have a stronger articulation of its development intent and the strategic approach to achieve its goal, within the framework of strengthening the contribution of CSOs to the development agenda in Fiji. Recommendations 3 and 4 below will bring some focus to this approach. DFAT initiated a Civil Society Sector Analysis in June 2015 to inform the Fiji Aid Investment Plan (AIP) and form the basis of DFAT's development of a Fiji Civil Society Engagement Strategy (FCSES) that will guide DFAT's engagement with civil society in Fiji for 2015 to 2019.

Recommendation 3:

That FCDP develop a strategic capacity building strategy for 'strengthening CSOs'. The capacity building strategy should address the following:

- **orientate capacity building beyond grant management to strengthening the CSO sector as legitimate and valuable partners in development**

- **enhance sector based collaboration of CSOs and encourage consortiums in the implementation of grant supported community development work**
- **focus on partnering with CSOs already engaged with the FCDP to date, including CSOs who requested capacity building support**
- **support replication of the community profiling and community development planning process (CAP) amongst the broader CSO sector following thorough review and revision**
- **prioritise research and learning to scale-up Program and CSO initiatives within the broader CSO community, private sector and GoF and strengthen CSO engagement in partnerships with government and policy dialogue.**

Response

Agree. Given the request for capacity building support for grant management from the CSOs during the design of FCDP and the limited access to capacity building support by other donors, during the first two and a half years of program implementation, a significant focus of capacity building support has been on aspects of grant management including proposal writing, financial management, monitoring and evaluation and reporting. FCDP had identified this as a need and responded to it. There have been other capacity building activities provided by FCDP on a demand basis and mentoring through needs identified from FCDP's snapshot and its own monitoring of project grants. DFAT agrees that the capacity building approach could have been more tailored to the needs of the different CSOs who are on different capacity levels and that the one size fits all approach may not have been relevant for the more established CSOs.

Recommendation 4:

That FCDP develop a Government Engagement Strategy (GES). The GES should address the following:

- **strengthen and facilitate collaboration and partnerships of CSOs with relevant government ministries at national and sub-national level**
- **promote and influence with CSOs scale up of FCDP initiatives and CSO programming within the GoF**
- **explore opportunities with the Pacific Risk Resilience Program (PRRP) and the GoF Ministry of Strategic Planning to align government requirements for community profiling**
- **link and contribute to the Government of Fiji mandate for poverty reduction in line with the established GoF monitoring framework.**

Response

Agree. FCDP has been engaging with Government agencies throughout the first phase. A Government Engagement Strategy will ensure that future programming is in line with government priorities. This strategy will need to identify and align with the Fiji Government's poverty reduction agenda and address how FCDP will ensure that work on the ground is captured by Government reporting.

The Civil Society Sector Analysis that will inform DFAT's civil society engagement framework which will also ensure that the partnership with government is strategic in that it also complements and contributes to the broader country approach currently being considered by DFAT.

Recommendation 5:

That FCDP revise the Program Executive Committee (PEC) Terms of Reference (TOR) to maximise the expertise and experience of the PEC members (external advisors) by expanding their role to provide oversight of the strategic direction and monitor consistently during the remainder of the Program.

Response

Agree. DFAT, as the Chair of the PEC will ensure that the TOR is revisited to clarify the PEC's role and ensure that the TOR is within the capacity of what the community representatives can contribute.

Recommendation 6:

That FCDP revise job descriptions and task definitions for Program Officers, and Finance and Administration positions. The Learning and Development Officers contracts should not be extended for Phase 2.

Response

Partially Agree. DFAT agrees to the review of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Program Officers and Learning and Development Officers. DFAT prefers to keep the positions of the Learning and Development Officers considering the refocus of the capacity building activities and the replication of the CAP process that will see FCDP supporting more Community Based Organisations and Faith Based Organisations who require a considerable amount of capacity building support.

Recommendation 7:

That FCDP develop field office strategy plans taking into consideration the unique characteristics and interests of local CSOs and sector approach and Government/ CSO partnership.

Response

Agree. Shared learning and collaboration are key principles of the Australian Aid Program's engagement with CSOs and the field offices can provide a space for supporting knowledge sharing activities, foster collaboration through the consortium approach and government partnerships.