ANCP India Cluster Evaluation

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The Development Practice Advisory Committee (DPAC) of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has supported the ANCP evaluation process and has encouraged the involvement of the ANGO sector.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) has evolved "from being a funding access point for Australian NGOs who could demonstrate community support to a funding mechanism for NGOs who manifest professional standards in their work."[1] ANGOs demonstrate and verify these professional standards through the AusAID accreditation process, thus indicating they are capable of consistently delivering quality development outcomes.

The goal of the ANCP is to subsidise Australian NGO community development activities, which directly and tangibly alleviate poverty in developing countries. AusAID's Community Programs Section (CPS) manages the ANCP, and in 2006-07 it will provide around $27 million to 43 Australian NGOs for work in over 50 countries.

The CPS uses a range of mechanisms including cluster evaluations to manage risk, to assess the performance of accredited NGOs, to develop performance information on the ANCP, and to report to the Australian Government.

AusAID has conducted cluster evaluations of NGO activities in Southern Africa (2000), Vietnam (2000), Cambodia (2005) and Pakistan (2006). As well as reviewing NGO and ANCP performance, the Cambodia cluster evaluation also developed a cluster evaluation methodology to facilitate comparison of performance information over time. This methodology was used and further developed in Pakistan, and again in this India cluster evaluation.

Aim of the Evaluation

This current Cluster Evaluation in India assessed a sample of four ANGO activities funded under the ANCP. Two of the ANGOs have Full accreditation with AusAID and two have Base accreditation. One of the activities was an early childhood care and development program, and three were integrated community development projects in urban and rural settings. Two of these three used literacy and environmental concerns as entry points, and three used women's Self Help Groups as a key operating method in the work.

The goal of this evaluation is to improve performance measurement of the ANCP through generating primary data on a sample of NGO activities, using and developing a cluster evaluation methodology, thus enabling longitudinal data analysis. This is the fourth cluster evaluation conducted by the CPS since 2000, with plans to conduct two such exercises each year over a five year cycle.

Using the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework[2], this cluster evaluation methodology considers three dimensions of NGO and activity performance:

- Context analysis: the analysis of the context and complexities, NGO capacities to deliver the development response and strategies deployed to ensure quality partnerships;
- Development strategy: adequacy of the activity design process and standard of the activity design;
- Activity implementation: efficiency and effectiveness of the development activity, capacity for learning and continuous improvement and strategies for sustainability.

Summary of Findings

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[1] AusAID, ANCP Review: A Consultative Review of the …ANCP Funding Mechanism 1995-2006, August 2006. p 4
[2] Refer to Annexure E, ANCP Assessment Framework.

The India cluster evaluation, using the methodology referred to above, found three of the four ANCP activities to be at least Satisfactory overall, with one activity assessed as Good Practice and another as Unsatisfactory overall.

The cluster evaluation findings resonate with, but cannot be equated with the NGO self-ratings. It is not possible to directly compare the findings or ratings of the two assessments as they are based on different methodologies and the assessment subject may not be identical. . This issue is explored further in section 3.6 of this report.

Generally all NGOs undertook good contextual analysis, mainly through INGO partners developing and analysing community, issue and location specific data. The one INGO working nationally undertook systematic analysis at a macro level which then informed the ANCP funded local activity.

The quality of the ANCP funded activity had less to do with the Base or Full level accreditation of the ANGO and more to do with the capacity of the INGO. However, when ANGOs were able to work with INGO partners at a strategic level, then capacities across the board were strengthened. Two of the four INGOs were addressing specific challenges about new ways of working or changing strategic directions i.e. from a focus on environmental issues, or a welfare approach, towards more integrated community development. When the ANGO, as a reflection of quality of partnership, could support and actively participate in this process, then project quality was strengthened.

There was a lack of consistent rigour in the design process with all NGOs. Each agency had undertaken a number of positive steps and processes, particularly consultation and community analysis. However, in broad terms these had not been managed or developed in a way that meant the logic of the intervention was robustly analysed. None of the Australian or Indian NGOs clearly articulated and explicitly tested the links between proposed objectives, inputs, outputs, possible outcomes and impact. Similarly, the design processes used did not always encourage NGO staff to adequately think about real risks to the project, or about issues and options around sustainability.

While the goal of the ANCP is clearly about poverty alleviation and associated outcomes, the AusAID formats and procedures highlight activities and outputs. In this operational context ANGOs and their INGO partners have also highlighted project activities and outputs in their analysis and documentation. They have not made the goal and outcomes of their work explicit nor clearly demonstrated the commensurate level of analysis in their planning processes. The standard of the funding proposal or activity design was Unsatisfactory for three of the four activities.

All activities operated clearly and efficiently at an outputs level. They reflected an efficient use of small scale AusAID funds in terms of implementation of planned activities, reasonable cost of inputs, activities conducted on time, within schedule etc. Monitoring and evaluation practices in all agencies focused on outputs and accountability, but did not so readily engender identification of expected outcomes, and opportunities or mechanisms for organisational learning.

In practice all activities were contributing to agreed objectives and so should have positive outcomes, but there was limited articulation and analysis of those outcomes, and hence the potential contribution of the ANCP funded activities to those outcomes is unclear. There were clear positive results from many of the activities, particularly in terms of social organisation, confidence building with marginalised groups such as women, scheduled caste people and others, internal savings and access to credit, small enterprise activities, improved farming techniques and results, increased individual income, skills development in literacy, tailoring, beauty treatments, etc.

The effectiveness of ANCP funded activities may be diminished because the risk analysis is limited in most cases. One activity had addressed the issues of sustainability broadly in the program design, operating across modalities of service delivery, research, advocacy, and policy reform, seeking to strategically strengthen

the demand and supply sides of the ECCD issue across the country. Two other activities had very limited analysis of exit or other strategies around sustainability.

As noted above, all the ANCP funded projects appeared to be working towards implicitly understood outcomes, but the ANGO & INGO had not gone through the professional processes to make these outcomes explicit and to test any underlying assumptions, clarify the logic between objectives and activities, identify risks, options for sustaining benefits etc.

Given this, there was no shared process, mechanism or documentation to help AusAID, NGOs and communities clarify where they were heading, if they were on track, and how they would know when they arrived.

In these circumstances, one of the four projects had remained mired in a service delivery model of work that may challenge achievement of the implicit outcomes, and was likely to maintain community members in a passive role as beneficiaries.

Another project had initially not been aware of the potential risks associated with major village dams. The four ANCP funded activities, even though they all work directly with children, had not ensured that appropriate child protection practices and policies were central to their planning and management.

Three of the four ANCP funded projects were clearly progressing towards the implicitly understood outcomes. However, in the absence of analysis, planning and documentation at the outcomes level, they obviously face significant challenges, a critical one being the constraints on NGOs and communities being able to effectively monitor and evaluate their progress, to be clear about the contribution of the work towards alleviating poverty, to know when outcomes are achieved.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ADPlan	Annual Development Plan
AFTC	Assisi Farm and Training Centre
ANCP	AusAID NGO Cooperation Program
ANGO	Australian NGO
$	Australian Dollar
AUD	Australian Dollar
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAER	Cooperation Agreements for Emergency Response
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CD	Community Development
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHE	Community Health Educator
CHW	Community Health Worker
CBP	Community and Business Partnerships
CPO	Country Program Outline
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPAC	Development Practices Advisory Committee
DRAIDP	Delhi Resettlement Area Integrated Development Project
EC	European Commission
ECCD	Early Childhood Care & Development
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulations Act
FFG	Foundation for Growth
GOI	Government of India
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Service
IDT	Integrated Development Trust
IGP	Income Generating Project
INGO	Indian NGO
IVDP	Integrated Village Development Project
KHG	Kitchen Herb Garden
MC	Mobile Creches
MED	Micro-enterprise development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEEC	Nadukuppam Environmental Education Center
NFE	Non formal education
NGO	Non-government Organisation
PBRC	Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource center
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
QSA	Quaker Service Australia
RDE	Recognised Development Expenditure
Rps	Indian Rupees
SHG	Self Help Group
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRI	System of rice intensification
STEEP	Social Technical Economic Ecological Political
TDEF	Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest
TEAR	Transformation, Empowerment, Advocacy, Relief Inc.
US$	United States Dollar
USD	United States Dollar

1. INTRODUCTION[3]

1.1 Document Purpose

This document reports the process and findings of a cluster evaluation that considered a sample of four of the five eligible non-government organisation (NGO) activities currently funded under the AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) in India.

Observations, analysis, findings and recommendations relevant to each of the four sampled NGO activities are presented in stand alone documents (Appendices A-D). Section 3 of this report presents a synthesis of analysis and findings from the individual activities as they are relevant to the broader NGO sector, and identifies issues relevant to the ANCP as well as implications for the AusAID management of the program.

The ANCP Cluster Evaluation process has been designed to achieve the dual purposes of compliance and quality improvement. It is intended that the sampled ANGOs, AusAID and the broader NGO sector will use this ongoing ANCP evaluative process to improve the quality of their ANCP activities. To this end, this document outlines broad overall findings and agency specific findings.

1.2 Background

The AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) is managed by the Community and Business Partnerships (CBP) in AusAID and provides around $27 million in funding in 2006-07 through 43 Australian NGOs. The goal of the ANCP is to subsidise Australian NGO community development activities which directly and tangibly alleviate poverty in developing countries.

In 2006-2007 five Australian NGOs will provide approximately $450,413 through ANCP funding to partner activities in India. This overall figure is less than in previous years and may reflect the rapid changes being mapped out by the Government of India which may see its graduation from the DAC list of developing countries within the next few years. Previous years ANCP funding for India through the same ANGOs is as follows:

- 2005-06, $518,231;
- 2004-05, $784,760;
- 2003-04, $724,735

Each year AusAID reports to Parliament on the effectiveness of the aid program and there is an ongoing requirement to improve the quality of performance information. AusAID does not directly monitor ANCP activities but relies on ANGOs to self-assess the performance of their own ANCP activity's stated objectives on an annual basis. Currently, over 75 per cent of NGO activities are self-assessed as satisfactory or higher.

The CPS has a suite of performance assessment mechanisms including cluster evaluations, accreditation, spot checks and agencies' own evaluation findings, to enable AusAID to assess the ANCP and other program outcomes, from a variety of perspectives. These assessment mechanisms use different methodologies, assess different aspects of performance and are distinct from each other, so a cluster evaluation does not assess activity performance in the same way as might an ANGO self-assessment, an NGO accreditation exercise, or an individual project evaluation.

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[3] This report builds on previous AusAID work, and is meant to be one part of a continuing exercise that enables AusAID and NGOs to develop a longitudinal review of performance of the ANCP, comparing findings and developing performance information over time. To facilitate that longitudinal review, this report reflects the structure and draws on the explanatory text of two previous AusAID cluster evaluation reports:
- ANCP Cambodia Cluster Evaluation Report, June 2005;
- CAER Cluster Evaluation, Pakistan Earthquake, July 2006;

There have been four cluster evaluations undertaken since 2000. These have considered ANCP and bilateral NGO projects in Southern Africa (2000) and Vietnam (2000), ANCP projects in Cambodia (2005), and the HES Cooperation Agreement projects (CAER) in Pakistan (2006). The next cluster evaluation is scheduled to consider ANCP funded activities in Indonesia in early 2007.

The sample of four ANGOs taking part in this India Cluster Evaluation is diverse in terms of size and scope of the NGO, the nature, location and sector of activities and a number of other factors. Therefore the evaluation exercise examines individual NGO activities and their contribution to the ANCP Scheme. It does not attempt to determine the impact of all NGO activities working within the ANCP in India, nor can the findings be extrapolated to reflect on each ANGO's broader program.

The Indian context in which these ANCP funded activities are implemented is complex and challenging. For example, the development NGO sector in India is very large and significant in terms of funding, staffing, sectoral & geographical coverage and relationships with government and industry. It encompasses recent and innovative approaches to development work such as participatory rural appraisal, coalition building and advocacy, and new forms of partnership that emphasise transparency, accountability and empowerment of stakeholders. At the same time the NGO sector has a long tradition of welfare work that provides limited impetus for innovation, does little to promote community self determination, and reinforces existing power structures. The NGO sector in India is much more established than in other countries such as Cambodia or Indonesia and yet many Indian NGOs are still managed by their founders, have not developed strong boards that are responsible for the governance of the organisation, as distinct from directors managing the day to day operations.

It is beyond the scope of this cluster evaluation to provide an analysis of the NGO sector in India, and how the ANCP funded INGOs are located in that sector. But it is noted that the welfare – development tension resonates in the service delivery approach of one of the activities, and that three of the four INGOs have founder/directors very active in the CEO role. Two of the four ANCP activities are very localised, small-scale, community development projects that seek to address local needs, while the other two activities seek to integrate direct local service delivery with research, networking and advocacy to achieve broader policy changes and wider outcomes at a state or national level.

1.3   Scope of the Evaluation

The objectives of the cluster evaluation are:

- To evaluate a sample of ANCP activities in India
- To assess the contribution of sampled activities to the overall ANCP objectives
- To verify the efficacy of ANGO self-assessment processes of the sampled ANCP activities
- To review the methodology developed for ANCP cluster evaluations
- To review action taken on recommendations from the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation

As noted earlier, this cluster evaluation is one element of an ongoing and broad performance assessment process within AusAID's NGO programming. The intended use of the evaluation report includes the following:

- To contribute to meeting AusAID's accountability requirements to the Australian Government
- To contribute to the performance information on the ANCP Scheme
- To enhance opportunities for learning and performance improvement by AusAID and the NGO sector
- To further refine the cluster evaluation methodology and tools.

To address the evaluation objectives the team considered four projects funded through the ANCP. The ANGOs, the project titles, location and partner Indian NGO (INGO) managing or implementing the work, are as follows:

- **TEAR Australia**: Delhi Resettlement Area Integrated Development Project (DRAIDP), implemented in Delhi by the Muneer Social Welfare Society
- **Quakers Service Australia (QSA)**: Poverty Reduction and Empowerment of Rural Women in Tamil Nadu, implemented in Nadukuppam, Vandipalayam and surrounding villages in Tamil Nadu by the Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre, an NGO established within the Auroville International Community;
- **Assisi Aid Projects India Inc. (Assisi)**: Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP), implemented in Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu by the Integrated Development Trust (IDT), a subsidiary of the Assisi Farm Training Centre (AFTC);
- **Plan International Australia (Plan):** Strengthening ECCD in India through advocacy, capacity building and research. The project is managed by Plan International India, and implemented by 4 subsidiary partners in 3 states. The evaluation considered one element of the project, implemented by Mobiles Creches, Delhi, with a cursory briefing about another element implemented by FORCES Delhi.

1.4   The Evaluation Team

The team is comprised as follows:

- Team Leader: Jo Thomson, an independent consultant. Jo acted as the NGO representative on the previous Cambodia Cluster Evaluation and has many years senior management and operations experience with Australian NGOs, as well as extensive consulting experience and expertise in evaluation, review, accreditation, training and other work with AusAID and NGOs.
- Team Member: Jessica Jordan Hoverman is currently the Manager of the NGO Programs Unit in Community and Business Partnerships, AusAID. She has direct oversight of the AusAID NGO accreditation process, the ANCP funding scheme and is a member of the Committee for Development Cooperation. She has extensive experience within AusAID in the areas of procurement, contact negotiation and design appraisal.
- Team Member: Stephen Morrow is an independent consultant. Stephen has many years experience managing NGO country programs in various African countries and in India. He has extensive consulting experience in evaluation, review, accreditation, interim management and other work with AusAID, NGOs and other agencies.
- Team Member and translator: Mr Tiruchirappalli Vishwanathan from the AusAID Post in Delhi acted as logistics coordinator, translator and colleague for three of the four project visits in India
- Advisors: Dr Paul Crawford and Dr Frank Thomson, team members from previous cluster evaluations have generously acted in an advisory capacity to the current team.

2.   METHODOLOGY

2.1   Approach

AusAID has adopted a 'cluster evaluation' approach as one means to assess the performance of its ANCP activities. The ANCP scheme funds the projects of ANGOs which contribute to the direct and tangible alleviation of poverty. As per the ANCP Guidelines[4], projects may contribute to the overall goal through a broad range of sectoral approaches as determined by the ANGO. A cluster evaluation approach is particularly relevant in this context as projects represent different sectors and are implemented in multiple sites while all having a common goal of poverty alleviation[5].

The evaluation of a geographical cluster of ANCP projects allows significant cost and time efficiencies. Examining projects with different sectoral foci but operating within a common context enabled a rigorous and meaningful comparative analysis and opportunity for learning. The evaluation of a sectoral cluster of ANCP projects may be undertaken in the future but it would pose significant challenges to logistics, time and cost.

The approach acknowledges the complexity of issues surrounding performance measurement of international aid activities. These issues include the lack of agreement on absolute measures of performance and definitions of concepts such as impact, quality etc., as well as the difficulty of attributing change to individual activities in complex environments. In a cluster evaluation, these complexities are compounded by the need to use rapid appraisal techniques and the difficulty of accommodating diverse agency structures, contexts, objectives and stages of implementation.

2.2   Sampling

A three-stage purposive sampling process was carried out to select the cluster of four activities to be evaluated.

The first stage of sampling involved country selection. India was selected based on the following criteria:

- a minimum of 5 NGOs implementing ANCP activities from which to draw a reasonable sample;
- an acceptable security situation in-country;
- countries outside of South East Asia (the location of the previous Cambodia Cluster Evaluation);
- The AusAID post willing and able to support the cluster evaluation.

While other countries were canvassed within AusAID and with DPAC, India met all these considerations.

The second stage of sampling involved selection of the agencies for evaluation. Both Base and Full agencies were considered. Four of the five agencies supporting ANCP activities in India were chosen, largely based on the location of their activities and the logistics of conducting the field work. The ANGOs sampled and their Indian partners are presented in the table below.

ANGO	Indian Partner Organisation
Assisi Aid Australia	Assisi Farm and Training Centre and Integrated Development Trust
Plan Australia	Plan International India, Mobile Crèches and FORCES. (additional partners in other states of Orissa and Rajasthan)
Quaker Service Australia	Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre
TEAR	Muneer Social Welfare Society

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[4] AusAID *NGOPI: ANCP Guidelines.*
[5] Chelimsky, E. Shadish, W. (xxxx) *Evaluation for the 21st Century, A Handbook.* Sage Publications London p 397.

Figure 1: Sampled ANGOs and their Indian partners

The third stage of sampling involved selection of the individual activities to be evaluated. Where partner agencies implement more than one ANCP-funded activity in India, the selection was made by AusAID. This selection considered the duration of each activity and ease of logistics.

The table below provides a brief overview of the sampled activities. More details, including evaluation findings for each ANGO activity, are presented in Appendices A-D.

ANGO	Activity name	Funding allocation (ANGO & AusAID)
Assisi Aid Australia	Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP)	$66,051
Plan Australia	Strengthening ECCD in India through advocacy, capacity building and research	$279,237
QSA	Poverty Reduction and empowerment of rural women in Tamil Nadu	$60,772
TEAR	Delhi Resettlement Area Integrated development Project(DRAIDP)	$34,600

Figure 2: Overview of sampled activities

For each ANGO sampled, the following stakeholders were interviewed:

- ANGO program staff (e.g. Program Manager, Desk Officer);
- Indian organisation program staff (e.g. Country Director, Program Manager);
- Activity implementation team members (e.g. Activity Manager, technical/field staff);
- Activity beneficiaries, community representatives, self help group members etc.

2.3 Assessment Framework

The ANCP Assessment Framework (attached at Appendix E) used in India was developed for the Community and Business Partnerships (CBP) as a result of lessons learned during the 2005 Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. It draws on the three assessment frameworks used in the Cambodia Cluster evaluation: AusAID's NGO Quality Assessment Framework (QAF); ACFID's NGO Effectiveness Framework and the STEEP Framework[6].

An AusAID peer review of the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation acknowledged the merit of taking a broader perspective on activity performance to include organisational and contextual analysis. The Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation and the AusAID peer review recommended that the three frameworks be integrated into a new single evaluation framework.

The resultant ANCP Assessment Framework considers three dimensions of performance: context analysis; development strategy; and activity implementation. The Assessment Framework identifies 9 indicators of performance which are informed by 51 quality standards. A qualitative approach is used to assess each activity. The quality standards and indicators are used to guide analysis and a four level categorical rating system[7] is applied.

The ANCP Assessment Framework is further supported by the use of the ANCP Assessment Question Guide (attached at Appendix F) developed by CBP for the Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. It was used to guide all interviews and focus group discussions. Drawing the Question Guide from the ANCP Assessment Framework minimises the likelihood of omitting important lines of inquiry and ensures a

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[6] The STEEP Framework is a generic context analysis framework. STEEP: Social, Technical, Economic, Ecological, Political.
[7] GP: Good practice, S: satisfactory, US: unsatisfactory and HS: highly unsatisfactory

consistent approach by subsequent evaluation teams thereby facilitating transparency and trend analysis.

The development and refinement of both tools involved consultation with ACFID through its Development Practices Advisory Committee (DPAC). The use of these tools ensures that the process of analysing activity performance is rigorous, systematic, transparent and comprehensive, and will help to address some of the long-standing problems associated with incorporating activity context in NGO performance evaluation.

These tools have since been trialled in the 2006 CAER Cluster Evaluation in Pakistan and were found to be effective[8].

2.4 Methods of Inquiry

The broad methodology employed was qualitative. The particular methods of inquiry included:

- Document reviews;
- Key informant interviews;
- Focus group discussions;
- Observation.

Data was collected and triangulated at three levels:

- In Australia with ANGOs and AusAID: orientation through a desk review of all relevant documents determined by AusAID and furnished by the sampled ANGOs, key informant interviews with relevant ANGO staff as determined by the ANGO;
- In India: interviews with AusAID Post, Indian NGOs and Indian implementing partner organisations;
- At project sites in Delhi and Tamil Nadu: interviews and focus groups with project implementation teams, community representatives and project participants.

Orientation involved a desk review of all relevant documentation[9] furnished by the ANGOs including ADPlans, activity design documents, progress and monitoring reports and partner agreements. Documents were reviewed using the 9 indicators of the ANCP Assessment Framework. The evaluation team consolidated the salient issues from these documents to gain an overview of the sampled activities and to orient the evaluation team to the broad issues for consideration.

The Question Guide drawn from the ANCP Assessment Framework was used to inform the inquiry at all stages of the evaluation. The use of the Question Guide was context driven. Different emphasis was applied and it was used in a structured way or more organically as appropriate.

ANGO inquiry involved key informant interviews with ANGO program staff from the four agencies. Using the Question Guide to guide the interviews, there was an emphasis on strategic issues such as the coherence of the sampled activity within broader strategic plans, planning processes, partnerships and the ANGO perspective of intended impact.

Indian implementing partner organisation inquiry involved key informant interviews with Indian program staff in Delhi, Auroville and Vadanallur in Tamil Nadu. The focus of these interviews was on tactical issues such as needs identification, context analysis, monitoring and evaluation etc. In addition, semi-structured conversational

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[8] CAER 2006 Cluster Evaluation Pakistan Earthquake Report and conversations with Team Leader Dr Frank Thompson and M&E Specialist, Dr Paul Crawford.
[9] Following a recommendation from 2005 Cambodia Cluster Evaluation, ANGOs were asked to provide a specific set of documents.

interviews were continued with implementing partner organisation staff throughout the two day visits to each project site.

Field inquiry involved a mix of key informant interviews and focus group discussions with project participants, community representatives and implementation staff as appropriate to the context. The focus of these interviews was on operational issues with the implementation staff and formal and informal evidence of any changes in beneficiary lives.

At all levels of inquiry and observation, the evaluation team members took extensive individual notes during the interviews. These were consolidated and triangulated at the end of each day.

2.5   Analysis and Feedback

At the conclusion of each two day field visit, observations and brief preliminary findings were fed back to the leadership of the implementing partner organisation.

The evaluation team then carried out analysis against the ANCP Assessment Framework of all data collected including interview transcripts, observations and any additional material provided by recipients. The data collated from this process formed the basis for the Agency Specific Findings Reports (refer to Annexures A-D). The ANGOs were provided with detailed verbal feedback against each of the 9 indicators by telephone following the evaluation team's return to Australia.

The Agency Specific Findings Reports were submitted for review by each of the sampled ANGOs to ensure fairness and accuracy of reporting before inclusion in the final version of this report. It is hoped that the ANGOs will use these reports to provide detailed feedback to their implementing partner organisations in India and to facilitate learning and improvements to the projects.

The final report will be distributed to the relevant sections of AusAID, the sampled ANGOs and ACFID. It will also be made available on AusAID's website.

More generalised analysis and findings will be presented to AusAID and ACFID (through DPAC) to facilitate learning in the NGO sector and AusAID.

2.6   Limitations Encountered

In general, the evaluation proceeded smoothly. Nevertheless, several methodological and practical factors were encountered that may have affected the integrity of the findings. Recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the methodological and practical aspects of the evaluation process are outlined in section 3.7 of this report.

Limiting factors:

- The amount of time allocated to each of four NGO operations within the two weeks in-country was relatively limited. This placed a practical limit on the depth to which the evaluation team could investigate issues;

- Two days spent with each project limited the ability of the evaluation team to refocus lines of inquiry in particular areas of interest or concern following analysis of the data collected against the 9 indicators of the Assessment Framework. The absence of a "go-back" mechanism with each NGO limited the robustness of the observations and findings.

- The evaluation team had no control over the activities sampled or the particular sites visited. The activities sampled were chosen by AusAID based primarily on logistical efficiencies. The sites visited by the evaluation team (and hence the beneficiaries interviewed) were at the discretion of the ANGOs and the implementing partner organisations. Hence, the findings compiled in this report must be taken as indicative rather than representative. It can be assumed that NGOs acted rationally in presenting the 'best' aspects of activities;

- The comparability of agency-specific findings across the evaluation cluster was limited by variability in the sectors of intervention, geographic and cultural variability, and the various agency structures and approaches employed.
- The short lead time to prepare for the evaluation limited the opportunity to organise and meet with external sources in the field which would have strengthened the triangulation of data. For example it would have been helpful to meet with bank representatives regarding loans to SHGs, a representative from the Women's Development Corporation, community leaders and community members not directly involved in the projects.

3. FINDINGS

This section addresses each of the objectives of the India ANCP Cluster Evaluation as outlined in the Evaluation's Terms of Reference (TOR attached at Annexure H) Recommendations of the Evaluation Team are listed within the relevant sub-sections.

3.1 Overall Assessment

75% of activities assessed were found to be satisfactory or above. The evaluation team found three of the four NGO activities to be at least satisfactory overall. One of these three was found to be good practice. The fourth activity was found to be unsatisfactory.

As identified in the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework (Appendix E), the NGOs were assessed against three performance dimensions: Context Analysis; Development Strategy; and Activity Implementation. These three performance dimensions were further elaborated by 9 indicators and 51 quality standards which guided the analysis of data and observations. The evaluation team reached consensus on the rating for each indicator using a subjective four point categorical scale[10], which then informed an overall assessment for each activity.

Agency / Indicator		Plan Australia		TEAR		Assisi Aid Australia		Quaker Service Australia	
Context Analysis	1. Analysis of context and complexities	GP		S		GP		S	
	2. ANGO capacity to deliver development responses	GP		US		S		GP	
	3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships	GP		US		S		S	
Development Strategy	4. Adequacy of design process	S		S		US		S	
	5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design	S		US		US		US	
Activity Implementation	6. Efficiency of activity implementation	S		S		S		GP	
	7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement	S		US		S		S	
	8. Effectiveness of development response	S		US		S		S	
	9. Strategies for sustainability	GP		US		S		US	
	Overall Assessment	GP		US		S		S	

Figure 3: Evaluation team ratings

Recommendation

> 1. Where an ANGO's activity is assessed by the Cluster Evaluation process to be unsatisfactory or worse, another activity of that ANGO should be included in a Cluster Evaluation within 2 years.

3.2 Context Analysis

Context analysis involves analysing and responding appropriately to the context. This includes the external environment and internal factors such as the agencies own

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[10] Good practice (GP), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly unsatisfactory (HU)

capacity and that of its partner. The following three indicators were used to assess each agency's performance in regards to Context Analysis.

- Analysis of context and complexities
- NGO capacity to deliver development response
- Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships

The contextual analysis of the external environment undertaken by each of the four agencies was found to be of a high quality. All ANGOs had many years experience working in the Indian context. While they were not directly involved in project implementation, there were numerous examples of the ANGOs broad knowledge of the Indian context influencing project decisions. For example the ANGOs were reasonably consistent in the depth of their knowledge of Government of India and State legislation enabling and constraining project implementation. The three projects which were assessed as satisfactory or above appeared to be well linked with external services such as state bank loans and were actively responding to changes in government legislation such as the management of SHGs. TEAR's activity which was assessed as unsatisfactory overall tended to be operating more independently where for example TEAR's project partner Muneer, was managing all SHG loans rather than linking SHG members with State banks.

Three of the four activities were localised interventions and context analysis tended to be appropriately localised. The exception to this was Plan International India. The Plan activity was being implemented across 3 States and involved a national level advocacy campaign. Plan and its implementing partners had collectively undertaken systematic analysis at the macro level with an 8 State initiative which then informed the program of which the ANCP activity was part. Overall each of the four agencies and their implementing partners had undertaken satisfactory or strong context analysis and there was evidence of agencies responding appropriately to this data.

It was observed that where an activity matched the implementing agencies' specialty, the context analysis was more effective and the project itself was of a higher quality. Implementing partners were able to draw on past experience, networks and existing skills to enhance project development and implementation. This is not to suggest however that agencies should limit themselves to their historical sectors of expertise. On the contrary, agencies should seek to expand their skills and adapt their approaches relative to the context and communities with whom they work. Where this is the case, as it was with the QSA project, agencies must be particularly vigilant that their historical approaches and specialities do not overwhelm emerging development processes.

As a child-centred agency, Plan and its implementing partners remained focused on this speciality and were able to demonstrate a high level of expertise and leadership. Assisi's project was a small localised community development activity and suited very well their history as a community development agency. As its names suggests, the Muneer Social Welfare Society is historically a welfare agency trying to make the transition towards a community development approach. While some elements of their work reflect this, the context analysis and project design is nonetheless influenced and hindered by the existing welfare approach. QSA's partner, PBRC is an environmental centre of excellence. While their activity has been designed as a community development initiative, the context analysis which has inevitably influenced project design and implementation has a predominantly environmental focus rather than a poverty analysis or people-centred community development focus.

The evaluation team observed that the nature of relationships between ANGOs and Indian partner NGOs was influenced by a diverse range of administrative relationships and varying spheres of influence. A representation of these structures is presented below. The elliptical representations offer some broad, albeit simplified insights into the diversity of structure and varying spheres of influence of the agencies. This representation does not attempt to reflect the subtle differences accurately. For instance Plan International Australia and Plan India International are

two independent organisations however they have been represented as one elliptical shape across strategic and tactical areas to demonstrate their mutual influence.
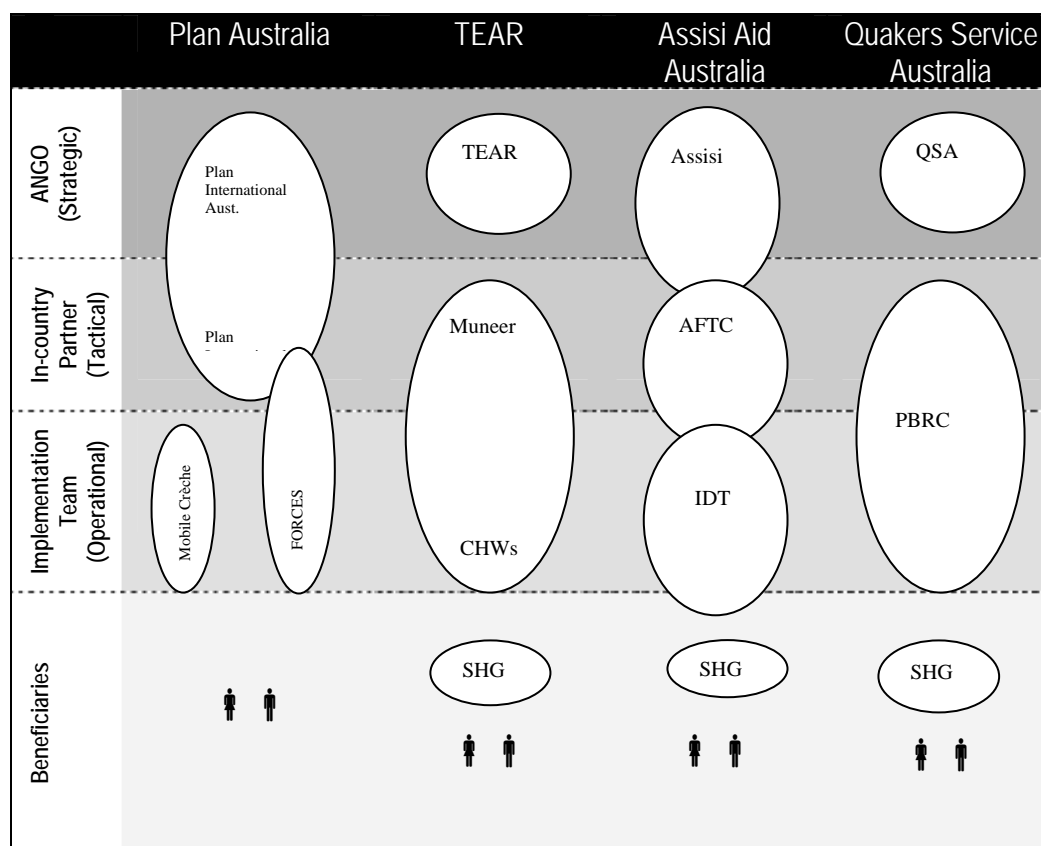
Figure 4: The diversity of organisational structures and spheres of influence

The 'y' axis describes the areas of potential influence and structural arrangements that underpinned the partnerships within each of the four ANGOs. The ANGOs are presented along the 'x' axis. Elliptical shapes represent the scope of responsibility or sphere of influence of discrete entities within the partnerships.

At the top of the matrix, ANGOs act in a strategic capacity establishing partnerships, setting broad directions, as sources of funding, and collegial support. In the case of Plan Australia, it inputs to the strategic thinking of Plan International India and vice versa. It is the only one of the four ANGOs which contributes significantly to the strategic direction of its Indian NGO partner. Plan Australia and Plan International India while two distinct legal entities and independent organisations, are part of the Plan global network sharing operational systems, standards and cultures. There are existing mechanisms which both demand (systems, formats etc) and foster (culture, shared values) cooperation. While this characteristic does not on its own account for the high quality of the Plan ANCP activity, it does enhance the coherence of the Plan program. Assisi Aid Australia contributes to a smaller degree to the strategic direction of AFTC and it is likely that this has also positively influenced the coherence between the two organisations objectives and approaches.

In all cases, the ANGO takes no tactical or operational responsibility for the project or its implementation. In all four cases project implementation is the direct responsibility of the Indian partner and in the case of AFTC, operational responsibility has been further devolved to its subsidiary the Integrated Development Trust and by Plan to its partner Mobile Creches and FORCES. In three of the four activities, beneficiaries are explicitly mobilised through community-based Self Help Groups. In two cases these SHGs are supported by representatives of the Indian NGO who were recruited from

within the communities. In these cases the Indian NGO has direct influence within the beneficiary groups.

Two of the ANGOs are accredited at the Full level and two at the Base level. Interestingly, the performance of the agencies did not consistently reflect their accreditation status nor did it directly influence the quality of the development intervention. The quality of the project was more closely linked to the capacity of the local implementing partner. In the case of QSA which is a small, almost voluntary agency (one part time paid staff member only), it has partnered with PBRC - a well established, highly experienced and skilled Indian organisation. While PBRC are currently developing their community development expertise, they nonetheless demonstrated a strong organisational capacity, able to manage a project of greater complexity, size and quality than might otherwise have been expected for a Base ANGO. Paradoxically TEAR as a Full Accredited agency had partnered with a small Indian NGO of somewhat lower organisational capacity and the quality of its activity was indicative of this, rather than TEAR's accreditation status. It is important to note that this is a valid approach and one TEAR activity should not be taken as representative of its other projects.

Overall three of the four ANGOs were operating at a level which could be expected given their accreditation status. As a Full agency however, TEAR should be contributing more to the project and partnership at a strategic level and responding more effectively to concerns it had previously identified of partner capacity and philosophical approach. Plan Australia as a large Full Accredited agency, Assisi Aid Australia and QSA as Base Accredited agencies were operating appropriately for their accreditation status and the capacity of their partners.

Three of the four Indian organisations were managed by strong, visionary Founder/Directors. As an international NGO, Plan was the exception to this. In all cases the ANGO was aware of the strengths this offered and the risks this posed. For each of these Indian agencies having a strong visionary leader was an advantage although it nonetheless posed challenges for operations and sustainability. An element of any capacity building from an ANGO or other partner, could include information, awareness and strategic planning and management around 'founders syndrome'[11] to support the INGOs to effectively transition through the stages of an organisation life cycle.

In all cases, the issue of child protection was inadequately addressed by the ANGO and implementing partners. As a contractual requirement of AusAID it is the direct responsibility of the ANGO to ensure this issue is proactively managed by implementing partners rather than just reactively. As a leader in the field of child-centred development, it was particularly evident that Plan Australia and Plan International India did not have stronger systems in place in this regard, however it is noted that Plan Australia has recently appointed a Child Protection Officer and intend to significantly upgrade this area of operation.

The four partnerships observed were supported by documented agreements and frequent communication. While all partnerships exhibited friendly relationships and regular communication, the depth of engagement varied. It was observed that where the engagement involved strategic influence, this correlated with improved project quality perhaps due to the greater coherence between the ANGO and the Indian partners program and approach.

The Evaluation Team observed that in developing the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework following the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation, the need to explicitly consider the organisation capacity of each agency and ensure this is taken into account in the overall assessment vis-à-vis expectations, has been diminished. To ensure the diversity of agency structures and capacities are intentionally considered in future evaluations, it is recommended that this first performance dimension focus

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[11] Lewis, H.D, Founders Syndrome: An affliction for which there is rarely immunity, June 26 2002. Nonprofit Boards and Governance Review, (www.charitychannel.com)

solely on the organisational capacity[12]. This issue is considered further in section 3.7 and recommendation 9 of this report.

3.3   Development Strategy

This performance dimension encompasses both the design process and the quality of activity design documentation.

The design process was led in all cases by the Indian implementing partner. The ANGOs played a minimal role in the design process, offering only suggestions to design concepts prepared by the Indian agencies. Overall the design processes undertaken for each of the four activities appeared to be participatory and well conducted reflecting current development principles and practices. Needs analysis was undertaken using recognised tools such as community and household surveys collecting base line data and PRA techniques. In all cases, participation of community members / project participants appeared to be strong.

The speciality of the implementing partner organisation influenced the approach taken to needs analysis and subsequent project design and implementation. PBRC's needs analysis whilst of a high quality was nonetheless focused on the environment rather than broader poverty analysis or people-centred community development needs. AFTC/IDT as a community development organisation and the smallest organisation, had undertaken thorough poverty and community needs analysis. This was probably helped by the fact that the project was small, simple and localised. Without significant experience in the environmental sector, it had however failed to carry out any environmental analysis of a significant water initiative which involved the construction of two large catchment dams with obvious implications for the water table, villages and land below. This point serves to further demonstrate that agencies conducted good quality needs analysis where the project matched their sectoral expertise. Assisi advises that this process will soon be undertaken at its urging.

There are two characteristics of the ANCP funding scheme which the Evaluation Team suggest may hinder the design process and the quality of design documentation. The first, which encourages ANGOs to use ANCP funds to contribute to their broader program, is a strength of the funding scheme and paradoxically also a constraint. ANGOs may select components within broader programs for inclusion in the ANCP. The benefit of this for AusAID and projects is that it can significantly broaden the impact of limited ANCP funds. It can however lead to the practice of "cherry picking" an activity within a broader program. It is likely that it is the broader program for which a thorough design process and design document has been prepared rather than just for the ANCP activity. This is more likely with larger agencies and was the case with the Plan Australia activity in India.

The other notable characteristic is that the documentation required for the ANCP is annual and has a simplistic activity and outputs focus. The ANCP formats and administration do not provide any imperative to operate at the outcomes or impact level. This of course should not prevent ANGOs from planning more comprehensively to the outcomes and impact levels however it nonetheless seems to engender a reductionist approach to project design.

The design documentation for three of the four activities was assessed as unsatisfactory. The key reasons for this are the limitation of documentation to the outputs level and the absence of any design documentation by the ANGOs. Correspondingly, the thinking and analysis which underpins the design documentation was also found to be somewhat deficient. It is expected that the ANCP funding proposal should be a summary of a more comprehensive project design developed by the ANGO and/or implementing partner.

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[12] The Assessment Framework used in the Pakistan CAER Cluster Evaluation reflected this approach and can be readily used to modify the ANCP Assessment Framework. The 3 performance dimensions in CAER Assessment Framework were: Organisational Capacity; Planned Response; and Implementation Performance.

The effectiveness of a project is inevitably compromised by a lack of comprehensive thinking and documentation which considers the coherence of the objectives, activities and anticipated outcomes, the testing of assumptions and the systematic analysis of risk. Akin to the findings of the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation, risk analysis was found to be generally inadequate. For all activities, it tended to be limited to external and generic risks such as drought, flood or fire. In all cases there was little attention given to internal risks specific to the projects and therefore few strategies had been developed to mitigate and manage the risks.

The ADPlan is predominantly focused on activities considering targets at the outputs level. There is an expectation that the ANGO and/or the implementing agency will have considered the development response more fully, including the articulation of intended outcomes, accompanying indicators, how progress will be verified and anticipated impact. In the absence of such analysis and documentation, there is a risk of diminishing the potential of the development process and the project impact. From a management perspective, with no clear definition of what the outcomes of the project will look like, the ability to know how the project is progressing is compromised. Equally as important is the ability to know when the project is not progressing and therefore being in an informed position to respond to this.

Limiting operational tools to the activity and outputs level fosters a compliance/ accountability approach to monitoring, hindering reflection and learning. In organisations with Founder/Directors, where so much knowledge is held by individuals and there is an ambitious vision, systematic design thinking and comprehensive documentation is all the more important. The three implementing partner organisations with Founder/ Directors would benefit from strengthening this aspect of their approach.

In regards to the development process, the lack of this type of thinking and documentation ideally developed with the project participants, limits the role of participants in the project. Rather than facilitating participants to engage and drive the development process themselves, they become mired in the role of "beneficiary" uninformed and therefore unequipped to determine and drive the development process. The impact of limiting the role of the beneficiaries was most acutely felt in the TEAR/ Muneer activity where participants were undoubtedly benefiting from project activities however they were functioning in a very immediate and reactive sense.

Recommendation

> 2. ANGOs should not rely on the ADPlan as a design document. ANGOs need to extend the analysis and documentation of activity design to include the outcomes and impact levels.
>
> 3. AusAID should clarify misunderstandings with the sector which have developed since the recent revision of the ADPlan format regarding an activities/outputs approach vs an objectives/outcomes approach.
>
> 4. AusAID should harmonise the ADPlan format and other administrative requirements such as report formats to engender rather than hinder a programmatic approach by ANGOs.

3.4 Activity Implementation

This performance dimension involves the actual implementation of the project at the different levels of efficiency and effectiveness, how an organisation reflects, learns and responds to issues throughout implementation and finally their approach to enabling sustainability of the activity outcomes. The following indicators were used to assess each agencies performance in regards to activity implementation:

- Efficiency which focuses on inputs, activities and outputs.

- Effectiveness which focuses on objectives, outcomes and impact
- Capacity for learning and continuous improvement
- Strategies for sustainability.

All four agencies and their partners had undertaken good planning up to the outputs level, generating adequate operational documentation and tools. This was seen in the use of budgets, activity schedules, output reporting processes and basic guidelines for SHGs. PBRC's operational tools and documentation were of a particularly good standard. This ensured that even in the absence of higher order thinking and documentation as discussed in the section above, activities were generally being implemented efficiently. It is possible that the quality of operational documentation and resultant efficiency (as distinct from effectiveness) of implementation had the paradoxical effect of limiting the imperative for higher order thinking and documentation.

All agencies exhibited the culture and capacity for learning and improvement of their work. This desire was hindered however because the monitoring and reporting systems did not stimulate a balance between accountability/compliance and learning and quality improvement. As discussed in the section above, design analysis and documentation was limited to the outputs level. This superficial approach was reflected in monitoring processes and reporting formats which engendered a 'compliance' approach which whilst ensuring accountability, did not facilitate reflection, learning and responsive decision making. Nevertheless, all agencies had processes in place to collect project data and to report to their ANGO partners. AusAID reported that all four ANGOs satisfactorily met their reporting requirements. It is alarming to note however that all of the ANGOs depended on the ADPlan with none developing more comprehensive activity designs to guide their own oversight of project progress or to manage the analysis and application of data collected to facilitate responsive decision making.

There was a clear commitment to organisational reflection and change amongst the agencies. On the basis of an external evaluation PBRC had adapted its approach by moving outside of the Auroville sphere of influence to other rural villages in Tamil Nadu. It had recognised the need to take a more comprehensive approach and while PBRC was still developing its community development expertise, it had nonetheless adapted to lessons learned in the evaluation and was actively seeking out local expertise. AFTC and Plan International India also demonstrated their ability to respond to external and internal factors. AFTC made changes to their activities and management in response to new legislation governing the funding of SHGs in Tamil Nadu. Plan International India had recently reassessed its organisational strategy and partners and was actively seeking new partners and developing exit strategies for others. The exception to this is TEAR, which had accurately identified as a concern the continuing welfare approach of partner Muneer two years ago, and as yet had failed to respond effectively.

All the activities were effective in a general sense, contributing in varying degrees to the achievement of all or some of their stated objectives. Observations and discussions with project participants demonstrated positive outcomes and indicated potential for lasting impact. However as no agency had analysed or articulated how effectiveness would be identified or measured at the outcomes and impact level, it was difficult for the Evaluation Team to verify this. So while there were good indications of project effectiveness, the full potential for this is probably being diminished in each of four activities due to the lack of more comprehensive design thinking and design documentation.

As noted earlier, risk analysis was inadequate in each of the four activities. While generic external risks had accurately been identified, little effort had been made to identify and analyse internal risks such lack of motivation or time for SHG members or organisational issues. This poses a potential threat to effectiveness which should be addressed by the ANGOs.

The quality of strategies for sustainability of the four activities varied significantly. The Plan International India activity performed very well in this regard as it is inherent in

the project design. The Plan ECCD project works with local specialist NGOs across all layers of the system thus creating demand, improving supply and creating an enabling legislative and financial environment through advocacy of government and the private sector. Interestingly, the project also utilised ANCP funds for capacity building in the area of resource mobilisation of their key implementing partner. This is an astute strategy as it develops their capacity to fund raise and also ensures the future of a Indian NGO as a leader in the area of ECCD.

Two projects used a 'model' approach which can be highly effective in terms of sustainability as the model demonstrates the benefits of the project to a much wider audience with the intention that it will be replicated elsewhere. Plan International India as already mentioned undertook this with focused service delivery combined with a comprehensive, well planned and strategic approach to lobbying and advocacy. PBRC also adopted a 'model' approach working with one high school. There is no doubt as to the positive impact of the demonstration school in the local area. The advocacy efforts while described as positive tended however to be opportunistic and driven by an individual rather than a clearly articulated strategy.

The other two activities which were also similar in their integrated community development approach were more localised although within very different settings, one being rural and one being urban. The philosophical approach of each NGO was a clear determinant of sustainability. Muneer is endeavouring to make the transition towards a community development model however its service delivery approach will undoubtedly diminish the likelihood of sustainability. AFTC's project was small, simple and very localised. This design combined with their strong community development expertise should facilitate the sustained benefits from project outcomes.

Recommendation

5.	Encourage ACFID to undertake a session with ANGOs to facilitate quality improvements in response to the findings of the Cluster Evaluations.

3.5 Contribution to the ANCP

The ANCP is unique as a funding mechanism within AusAID. It allows ANGOs to prioritise their own activities within the framework of an agreed goal, overarching Government policies, and broad administrative and management parameters. The ANCP has developed dynamically as an AusAID funding mechanism, reflecting different Government priorities and industry standards over time. For example, the introduction of accreditation has meant that it continues to reflect community support to NGOs in terms of funding allocation, but only with those NGOs that are able to address agreed professional standards.

The goal of the ANCP is to "subsidise Australian NGO community development activities which directly and tangibly alleviate poverty in developing countries." The ANCP does not have specific objectives but does have sectoral areas of focus outlined in the ANCP Guidelines as follows:

- basic education and training;
- primary health care;
- water supply and sanitation;
- income generation;
- rural and other poor; disadvantaged groups particularly women and children;
- good governance and promoting civil society;
- strengthening local NGOs;
- management of the environment and natural resources on a sustainable basis;
- renewable energy and appropriate technology.

In this cluster evaluation, three of the four sampled activities were integrated community development projects that addressed poverty by working across a number of the ANCP priority sectors. For example, TEAR, QSA and Assisi all worked with partners on savings, loans and access to credit to strengthen income of poor rural and urban women. The projects also incorporated other components e.g. the TEAR supported project included community-based TB treatment and care, Assisi's partner engaged in community water and sanitation, and the QSA partner had a primary focus on resource management and biodiversity. The PLAN project focused on early childhood care and development, working directly with disadvantaged women construction workers and their children, and dovetailed this work with broader work on basic education, strengthening civil society, and good governance.

AusAID's financial exposure with the ANCP is low, owing to the relatively small amounts of funding expended on individual activities. In India it ranged from A$23,544 to $111,938 in 2006-07, with the average being A$54,390. The matching fund feature of the ANCP means that activities often have a larger impact than the monetary value of the AusAID subsidy, as occurs when ANGOs combine Australian government funding with community and with other international donor support.

Two of the four activities used ANCP funding combined with other funding to achieve broader impact, and hence to secure significant value-for-money for the Australian Government. For example, PLAN used ANCP funding for elements of a larger national ECCD program, with synergies developed between neighbouring country programs and Australian expertise and networks. It also built the organisational capacity of a local ECCD specialist organisation, thus strengthening its capacity to provide ECCD technical expertise to the Government of India's national ICDS program.   So Australian Government support is acknowledged on a wider stage.

Similarly, QSA used small scale ANCP funding ($29,000 in 2005-06) in concert with EC and other funding to enable PBRC to continue to develop an integrated approach to community development using environmental issues as a platform, and again Australian Government support is widely acknowledged. In the case of PBRC the program is also used to leverage other Australian community funding, to facilitate technology transfers between Australia and India and to extend technical and personal networks. PBRC has an extensive sphere of influence thus taking the impact of a very small ANCP investment much wider than the figures would indicate, and the results of the work are clearly greater than the sum of the individual ANCP funded parts.

The ANCP allows AusAID to have an impact in areas not normally supported by the bilateral program, in identified key sectors. The ANCP allows AusAID to work in partnership with ANGOs in countries that are not covered by bilateral programs or where the program is limited, thus enabling the Australian Government to have a link that can be scaled up if necessary. This was the case for example after natural disasters such as the Asian Tsunami and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake. AusAID was financially supporting and connected to NGOs on the ground when the tsunami hit for example Assisi Aid's support of the Assisi Farm and Training Centre. The AFTC was used by a number of Australian and international NGOs as their base in the days immediately after the tsunami.

The ANCP also enables AusAID to partner with ANGOs working on local, often small scale activities with civil society organisations that aren't normally included under bilateral programs, but which are critical in the realisation of demand-led-governance. For example, an element of the PLAN project improved aspects of the government ICDS, the largest child development program. At the same time the main focus of the Plan activity was with local NGOs who worked with communities to increase their awareness of ECCD and of ICDS services, thus strengthening demand-led-governance when these communities worked more collaboratively with the ICDS to achieve quality early childhood education. The TEAR and the Assisi projects also assisted local communities to access local government services in resettlement and rural areas. The QSA project worked with government education services to develop

models of good practice, and with local community groups whose children benefited from those services. While all ANCP funded activities were focused on community work, they all strengthened to varying degrees, community awareness of governance issues and their support and demand for better governance.

The ANGOs have invested enormously in establishing themselves locally in terms of relationships, infrastructure, and other projects and therefore track record and reputation. Funding these types of community based projects In India through the ANCP allows AusAID a connection with places, people, agencies and projects that it may not otherwise enjoy and without significant financial exposure. It positions AusAID and Commonwealth funds and potentiates the small ANCP budget.

The ANCP subsidies are based on annual national budget allocations to the aid program, and an ANGO's annual RDE figures, and therefore the ANCP is managed on an annual planning cycle. Even with the constraint of a 12 month cycle, the ANCP framework should enable ANGOs to establish long-term partnerships, which in turn should increase the likelihood of sustainable development outcomes achieved through well designed multi-year programs/projects with implementing partners. Three ANGOs had made an in-principle commitment to the INGO for a 5 or more year funding program i.e. QSA and PBRC, TEAR and Muneer, Assisi and AFTC. However, the ANGO did not articulate or clearly document a medium-term program, and the link/contribution of the short term activity to that program, i.e. a more strategic plan that articulated a goal, identified target participants and outcomes, as well as the 12 month activities/outputs in the ADPlan, and which adequately analysed risks and assumptions etc.

The nature of the ANCP, the relative stability of funding, the medium term time lines albeit with a 12 month cycle, should enable ANGOs to undertake more effective capacity building with their INGO partners. Capacity building has occurred organically, and at times intentionally in the sampled activities. QSA's multi-year partnership has supported PBRC while it has steadily gained community development skills to complement high level environment and other technical skills already on board. The flexibility in the ANCP funding allowed PLAN to combine it with other funding to bring together ECCD practitioners, policy makers, and academics from India, the region and Australia to strengthen technical knowledge and networks. Plan was also able to provide a significant boost to the sustainability of a local leading NGO in ECCD with internal capacity building in the area of resource mobilisation. AFTC and Assisi were able to strengthen an emergency response capacity to coordinate the work of other international agencies in response to the tsunami, on the basis that its core work and team were continuing with steady ANCP funding.

Recommendation

6.	ANGOs should be encouraged to take a longer range view of planning given that ANCP funding is flexible and remains relatively stable even though it is managed on an annual cycle.

3.6 Review of ANGO Self Assessments

AusAID is required by legislation to provide performance information on the quality of the aid program. The quality target, set in AusAID's performance information framework, is for 75 per cent or more of funded activities to achieve an overall rating of satisfactory or higher.[13]

The findings of the India ANCP Cluster Evaluation are generally consistent with this target, with 75 per cent of activities being satisfactory and one of those demonstrating

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[13] The AusAID NGO Quality Rating System: 1 - weak, 2 - marginally unsatisfactory, 3- satisfactory overall, 4 - fully satisfactory and 5 - good practice. Refer to the NGOPI for a full explanation of the five levels.

good practice, when assessed using the cluster evaluation methodology and the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework.

Agencies are expected to self-assess their ANCP activities at two points in the annual funding cycle. In April an interim report assesses the likelihood of achieving their stated objectives. A final report is submitted in October after the completion of the ANCP annual activity. ANGOs apply a five-point numerical rating scale[14] to self-assess their activities. The capacity of ANGOs to assess their programs and to knowledgably use the AusAID/NGO Quality Rating System is then verified during Accreditation.

The ANCP Cluster Evaluation cannot readily verify the efficacy of the ANGO self assessment except perhaps in cases of significant disparity. There are a number of limiting factors. AusAID requires ANGOs to self-assess their activities using only one indicator of performance and a 5-point numerical rating scale. The ANCP Cluster Evaluation Assessment Framework is a comprehensive tool using 51 indicators to analyse the contributors to project performance. It uses a 4-point categorical rating scale. In other words, comparing activity performance using the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework and the self-assessment process is akin to comparing "oranges and apples".

Another limiting factor is that ANGOs have been required to include all ANCP funded activities and partnerships in each country as one ADPlan (or annexure). Each ADPlan has just one set of Objectives against which ANGOs self assess and report to AusAID. However each set of Objectives may encompass a number of different activities, locations and partners and not all Objectives are necessarily shared by each activity included in the one ADPlan. The Cluster Evaluation process can only feasibly consider one activity and its distinct objectives, rather than all ANCP funded activities within an ANGOs country specific ADPlan , as was the case with TEAR.

These anomalies have no doubt contributed to the difference in TEAR's own assessment of its broad India program with 5 partners and numerous activities, and the cluster evaluation's rating of just one of those activities.

The ANCP self assessment process considers only the likelihood of achieving objectives. This corresponds most closely with indictor 8.1 of the ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework – only one of 51 indicators. Nevertheless, if a comparison is made between the ANGO self-assessments and the Evaluation Team's findings for indicator 8.1, all four ANGOs have made a reasonable self-assessment with Plan Australia undervaluing its progress. While there is a discrepancy between TEAR's self assessment and the overall findings of the Cluster Evaluation, if TEAR's rating is compared to the Cluster Evaluation's assessment for indicator 8.1, the results are comparable. In a very general sense, the ANGOs self assessments are not inconsistent with the Evaluation Team's findings.

The self assessment process as an indication of performance is of questionable value. While Accreditation has verified that ANGOs undertake the self assessment process with integrity, the process as outlined in the NGOPI is confusing and contradictory, casting doubt on the validity and usefulness of the self assessments. The indicators against which ANGOs are expected to self-assess their activities are not clearly outlined in the NGOPI, shifting between a request to assess the objectives, the project and/or the outcomes for each ADPlan or annex which represents an entire country. Each ADPlan may include a number of activities with common or differing objectives, and these are summarised into one set of Objectives. Given this, a self-assessment resulting in a single numerical rating does not have significant meaning.

Constraints relating to the comparability of assessments were also identified in the Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. The Evaluation Team recommends that the self assessment process be reviewed and at the very least, harmonised with the rating

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[14] The AusAID NGO Quality Rating System: 1 - weak, 2 - marginally unsatisfactory, 3- satisfactory overall, 4 - fully satisfactory and 5 - good practice. Refer to the NGOPI for a full explanation of the five levels.

system used more broadly in AusAID and the indicators against which performance is considered, be clarified and improved.

Recommendation

> 7. AusAID should review the validity of the current self assessment process and consider other ways of determining project performance. At the very least AusAID should harmonise the self assessment indicators and rating system with others used in AusAID and the Cluster Evaluation methodology.

3.7   Review of Methodology

Methodology

An objective of the ANCP evaluation in Cambodia was to develop a replicable methodology. This was achieved and the larger action research process has continued through the subsequent Pakistan CAER Cluster Evaluation and now this India ANCP Cluster Evaluation. The latter specifically including an objective relating to reflection on the methodology.

The reflections and recommendations that follow in this section are based on the assumption that while the "cluster evaluation" approach as a distinct methodology has inherent strengths and limitations, it has been accepted as the methodology of choice to meet the particular purposes of AusAID in cost effectively collecting performance data across a large number of NGOs with a diverse range of sectoral and geographical foci.

The approach and methodology adopted for the Indian ANCP Cluster Evaluation proved to be effective in achieving its objectives. Using a "cluster" evaluation approach does present challenges, many of which relate to time restrictions. As such the efficiencies of conducting the ANCP cluster evaluations could be improved and the Evaluation Team has a number of practical recommendations in this regard.

This type of rapid review allows the collection of indicative information and analysis about individual activities of the ANGOs. Findings cannot be extrapolated to represent the ANGOs full breadth of projects or in fact their practices in other contexts or times.

A cluster evaluation generates indicative information and generalisations which in the case of AusAID's ANCP evaluation strategy will be particularly useful in trend analysis. It does not allow an exhaustive collection of data or analysis of all facets of the projects. Any expectation that a cluster evaluation will generate this type of data or enable this depth of critical analysis will be disappointed. It is nonetheless a relevant and valid qualitative evaluation methodology in the context of ANCP projects with their common goals and AusAID's need for a cost effective process to gather performance information across a large number of accredited ANGOs.

The Assessment Framework.

The ANCP assessment Framework was found to be a useful and comprehensive tool which ensured a consistent, transparent and thorough framework for analysis. A vast amount of data was generated through document reviews, interviews, focus groups and observation. The four projects reviewed had many differences and some similarities, the contexts varied greatly and the diversity of organisations was significant. Against this backdrop, the use of a common analytical tool was all the more important to catalyse some areas of analysis, and to corral others. It proved effective in forcing the Evaluation Team to thoroughly consider all aspects of performance and to do so in a consistent manner for each of the four projects.

There is one important aspect of analysis which the Evaluation Team felt had been lost in the process of synthesising the three frameworks used in the Cambodia ANCP

Cluster Evaluation. That is, the aim of ensuring that each NGO's particular organisational characteristics and capacity are explicitly considered in the analysis of the activity performance. This was especially pertinent in the India Cluster evaluation where 2 of the agencies were Full Accredited agencies and 2 were Base Accredited. In this situation it was important that the Evaluation Team modified its expectations of agency capacity and therefore performance depending on agency accreditation status.

The Evaluation Team is of the opinion that this aspect would be better addressed if the organisational capacity of the ANGO, implementing NGO and their partnership were analysed in a more explicit way. As such it is recommended that the three performance dimensions be modified to address this[15]. All the current indicators should remain; they should simply be rearranged to force a more intentional and distinct analysis and therefore consideration of organisational capacity.

The ANCP Question Guide was found to be a useful and efficient tool to guide data collection. Its application was context driven. Different emphasis was given to strategic, operational or impact issues depending on the stakeholders. Its application varied from structured interviews to a more organic application again depending on the context. This was and should continue to be done at the discretion of the Evaluation Team members. The use of the Question Guide could be strengthened through the identification of core questions/issues which must be covered with each stakeholder group regardless of the degree of informality of varying interview styles of evaluation team members.

Practical Considerations.

Time limitations presented the greatest single challenge to the effective and efficient conduct of the evaluation. Some additional time and more efficient use of the three member evaluation team would undoubtedly improve the effectiveness of the evaluation process. The evaluation team's ability to triangulate the data collection could be improved by additional interviews with relevant government departments, interest groups or other NGOs. It would also be beneficial to ensure adequate time and arrangements to meet with community leaders and members who are not direct beneficiaries of the activities. These interviews could be readily conducted with additional lead time prior to the field trip to enable the necessary arrangements to be made and by splitting up the evaluation team to allow a greater number of interviews to be undertaken. This would require some additional time at each activity to ensure information sharing amongst team members.

The absence of a "go-back" mechanism to the NGOs and project participants once fuller analysis has taken place using the ANCP Assessment Framework was considered to be a limitation for two reasons. Following initial analysis, the Evaluation Team found the need to refocus its inquiries where there was a particular area of concern or when certain issues had not been explored sufficiently. In addition it is important as an additional method of triangulating the data collected to minimise misunderstandings and strengthen the validity of data. In future evaluations it is recommended that this be incorporated into the schedule for each activity. This can be achieved simply by allowing a reasonable amount of time mid way through each activity visit, to analyse data collection using the Assessment Framework and then to follow this with a further day of interviews or a refocusing of the stakeholders required for data collection.

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[15] The Assessment Framework used in the Pakistan CAER Cluster Evaluation reflected this approach and can be readily used to modify the ANCP Assessment Framework. The 3 performance dimensions in CAER Assessment Framework were: Organisational Capacity; Planned Response; and Implementation Performance.

Recommendation

8.	Identify core questions within the ANCP Assessment Framework Question Guide which must be followed by all Evaluation Teams regardless of individual approaches.
9.	To ensure organisational capacity is more intentionally considered (such as the distinction between Base and Full accredited agencies) the first dimension of the ANCP Assessment Framework should deal solely with these aspects of performance. Shift indicator 1 to Performance Dimension 2 (Design Strategy). Rename Performance Dimension 1 – Organisational Capacity.[16]
10.	Increase lead time for preparation prior to the field work to approximately 3 months to allow identification of a broader range of key informants to further triangulate data.
11.	Allow time with each activity to revisit key informants or refocus the line of inquiry based on an initial analysis using the Assessment Framework ie increase the time spent at each activity by an additional ½ -1 day.
12.	There are a number of practical recommendations which should increase the efficiency of the evaluation process which will be communicated directly to CPS.

3.8   Review of Recommendations from 2005 Cambodia Evaluation

The following table lists the recommendations made by the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation and comments on action taken.

Recommendation	Action taken
NGOs should investigate strategies for increasing in-country collaboration in a manner that enables information sharing to improve development outcomes	Communicated to ACFID and DPAC who in turn communicated it to the sector.
NGOs should broaden their M&E approach to encompass both compliance and reflection & learning	Communicated to ACFID and DPAC who in turn communicated it to the sector.
NGOs should review approach to risk analysis, risk planning and risk mitigation methods and tools and strengthen this element of project design and management	Communicated to ACFID and DPAC who in turn communicated it to the sector. ACFID has subsequently conducted training workshops in risk analysis, planning and mitigation funded by AusAID.
AusAID should consider revising the ADPlan format to increase clarity between multiple activities and to foster improved risk analysis.	A major revision of the ANCP ADPlan format was undertaken in 2006 however the aim of this revision was to clarify the individual projects being implemented in each country. The issues raised in the Cambodia evaluation do not appear to have been addressed. Discussions with ANGOs during the Indian evaluation indicate a serious misunderstanding of the new format. It appears to have increased the focus on activities and outputs rather than promoting a programmatic approach. AusAID is currently revising guidance documents for the ADPlan to clarify that a programmatic approach is preferred.
AusAID should move to a three year ADPlan	The ANCP Review assessed the

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[16] Refer to the Assessment Framework used for the Pakistan CAER which reflected this logic.

cycle	implications, benefits and risks of multi-year ADPlans. AusAID is continuing with an annual cycle.
Future cluster evaluations should establish a standard set of documents required for the desk assessment process	A standard set of documents was requested from each ANGO participating in the India cluster evaluation. It has been revised for the next Cluster Evaluation.
AusAID and the NGO sector through ACFID, should establish definitions of terminology for concepts such as impact, quality, performance etc.	AusAID is in the process determining how it will internally define these concepts. Once this process is complete consultations will begin with ACFID and the broader NGO sector to refine the definitions further.
Future cluster evaluations should confirm expectations with stakeholders (AusAID) of depth of research of activities and ADPlans i.e. Objectives level or outputs level	With the endorsement of the new ANCP Assessment Framework and a repeat of the "cluster evaluation" methodology, AusAID has provided tacit confirmation.
Review the AusAID QAF and incorporate key elements of the steep framework and the ACFID NGO effectiveness framework to create one refined analytical framework for future NGO cluster evaluations	The ANCP Evaluation Assessment Framework was developed and endorsed by AusAID and ACFID/DPAC in 2006. It has since been used in the Pakistan CAER and the Indian ANCP Cluster Evaluations and found to be effective.
Tighten the focus of the cluster evaluation question guide with specific reference to stakeholders' perspectives on impact and how it will be measured.	The ANCP Assessment Framework Question Guide was revised at the same time as the new Assessment Framework in 2006. Following feedback from DPAC and AusAID, it was further refined.
In collaboration with DPAC, investigate the use of the question guide for use in sector specific evaluations	Sector specific evaluations have been put on hold while AusAID progresses a strategy for Country evaluations and considers the logistics of carrying out sector specific evaluations.

Figure 5: Recommendations action taken from Cambodia Evaluation

APPENDIX A: ASSISI AID AUSTRALIA REPORT

ANGO	Assisi Aid Projects India Inc.(Assisi)
Implementing Partner(s)	Integrated Development Trust (IDT), Vadanallur, Tamil Nadu
INGO	Assisi Farm and Training Centre (AFTC), Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu
Program Title	Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP)
Budget – AusAID /ANGO	$40,000/$26,051 = $66,051
Beneficiary Target	Approximately 4,430 women members of Self Help Groups(SHG) in Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, and 32 families living in Nagamalai village.
Major Development Objective	• To reduce indebtedness and increase economic self-sufficiency in the project area; • To improve health and sanitation in a disadvantaged village on a sustainable basis; • To improve educational opportunities of children, the youth and adults (in the disadvantaged village);

Background:

The organisations

Assisi is a small NGO located in Bendigo, Victoria. It has Base accreditation with AusAID and is governed and supported by a network of volunteers with two part-time employees. Assisi was established around 20 years ago specifically to support the work of the Assisi Farm and Training Center (AFTC) in Tamil Nadu in the south of India after Sr Stella, the AFTC founder, had worked in Victoria for some 6 months.

AFTC is a relatively small, locally focused, faith based NGO established in 1978 in Kanyakumari, the southern most district in Tamil Nadu, India. Its focus is community development with poor and marginalised communities, originally using agriculture and livestock as a means of addressing poverty, but about 10 years ago AFTC began to focus on women's Self Help Groups (SHG) as a platform for community development and poverty alleviation. It currently works with around 1400 SHGs.

In 1994, after receiving a donation of land in the north of Tamil Nadu, AFTC established **IDT** as a distinct local NGO in Vadanallur, Kanchipuram District. IDT operates as a subsidiary of AFTC, with senior strategic management conducted through AFTC in Kanyakumari, while operational management and a staff of 4-5 are located in Vadanallur. It has its own Board (with AFTC membership), and a network of around 30 local community based Animators. The organisation's vision is "a society based on values of love, peace and justice". The mission is "to build up the potentials of the poor, marginalised, unorganised sections of society, victims of calamities and exploited, for their sustainable development through establishing community based organisations (CBO)"

The context

As with AFTC, IDT works with people who are marginalised by social class/caste or other determinants of poverty in rural and peri-urban village settings. Previous ANCP funding has supported IDT to provide 12 months training to 30 women as community development workers (Animators), and then another 12 months training of SHG Leaders under a project entitled Foundation for Growth (FFG). Current ANCP funding supports a project titled Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP) which continues the FFG work, with those Animators and around 300 SHGs across the district, associated savings and loans and income generating projects (IGPs). It also conducts a demonstration/model community development project in Nagamalai village, as well as other health awareness and community development activities.

A. Context Analysis

1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities

The analysis of the geo-political context and complexities has significant strengths and represents **good professional practice**. At the macro level Assisi is aware of the possible change in India's

status on the DAC list of developing counties, and is considering relevant constitutional and other adjustments in response to this. Assisi members visit the projects regularly and while their inputs as volunteers may at times be uneven, they seem to provide critical review, questioning & encouragement, as well as a range of opportunistic support measures e.g. some guidance on compliance issues. Given Assisi's status as a small, voluntary NGO it does rely primarily on AFTC and IDT for the analysis of the national, state and local community context, but it appears to add value to this analysis through robust discussion and awareness of changing international factors like the DAC status.

AFTC and IDT operating as a combined entity have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the development context. At a local level in the project area, IDT has consulted with formal and informal leaders at the village level, and conducted household surveys in 25 villages. It used the results of these exercises to target and shape the project design e.g. the selection of Nagamalai as the location for a model community development project. At a broader level, IDT is aware of and uses relevant industry standards and guidelines on SHGs that have been issued by the State Government Women's Development Corporation. It has also considered lessons arising from previous work in Tamil Nadu e.g. effectiveness of traditional livelihoods such as agriculture and livestock when supporting Income Generating Projects (IGP). IDT monitors the geo-political context and seeks to adjust the project design accordingly e.g. recent State Government regulations have clarified acceptable financial arrangements between Animators and SHGs, and IDT is adjusting its approach to ensure compliance with the regulations, ongoing support to Animators who are themselves local village women, as well as maintaining strong links between SHGs and Animators. IDT's parent body, AFTC, has adjusted its operations, scaling up significantly after the Tsunami to provide logistical support to international NGOs and to forge new partnerships with them.

2. NGO capacity to deliver development response

The NGO capacity to deliver a development response is **satisfactory**. It is commensurate with the scope and scale of the project reviewed, and with the size and nature of the organisations in Australia and India.

Assisi was established specifically to support AFTC's work some 20 years ago, so it has significant past involvement and relevant experience with AFTC, which in turn has extensive experience in community development in Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu. AFTC, and Assisi through its ongoing support, have now extended this work into Kanchipuram district in the north of the state through the establishment of a directly managed subsidiary NGO, IDT, which draws on the experience and lessons from the AFTC work.

The management procedures and practices appear to be satisfactory. Animators and SHG Leaders and members maintain records of meeting, registers of internal savings and loans, bank pass books and other registers, and these are verified by IDT. Animators have comprehensive and well used reference materials to facilitate consistent and reliable practice. There is a logical hierarchy of data collection about project activities, from the village and SHG level to local area Animators, to IDT at a project level, and then to joint IDT & AFTC monthly management meetings where information and issues are reviewed, and plans outlined for the following month. AFTC is a registered NGO with an FCRA number, it provides quarterly and other reports to Assisi, and there is a steady flow of email and phone correspondence between the two, with AFTC facilitating relevant communications between Assisi and IDT.

Assisi has been established and is managed by two part time employees and volunteers. Assisi seeks to identify and deploy volunteer experts to assist AFTC in implementing activities, but as this depends largely on goodwill as much as planning, it may tend to be 'supply' rather than 'demand' driven. There is a risk that Assisi may not be able to respond to AFTC/IDT requests for support, or that Assisi volunteers may not be aware of limits to their technical support. A recent example of highly qualified technical input by an Assisi volunteer was the development of guidelines for herbal medicine use in IDT and AFTC. While clearly this was a special interest area of the volunteer, the research process undertaken was throrough and the resulting guidelines appear to be a positive contribution to the partner, the project and its participants.

AFTC staff, who are normally based in Kanyakumari, facilitated most of the meetings and village visits during this evaluation as a key IDT staffer was unwell. The woman who has had charge of IDT as it developed from a bare patch of donated ground ten years ago to its current state as a local

NGO, has just been transferred to do the same in another remote district. So, while the AFTC staff and community Animators who are responsible for this project in Kanchipuram district have, or in the case of Animators and SHG Leaders continue to develop the technical, organisational and social skills to implement the project, it wasn't possible to consider this to any significant degree with the main IDT management staff.

Animators and SHG Leaders received twelve month formal training under previous project phases, and continue to receive training inputs now. These had theoretical and practical components, were conducted in classrooms and villages, used comprehensive and widely accepted training and reference materials and qualified trainers. This work formed the foundation of the current project activity. Animators in village settings appeared confident and competent in their work.

The Evaluation team notes that IDT works directly with children in village settings in this project, Assisi & AFTC fundraise through sponsorship of childrens groups, and AFTC & IDT operate an orphanage/hostel for children. . IDT does reactive individual case work in villages where Animators are located. However, there is limited awareness of international standards or approaches to child protection issues for NGOs working with children e.g. there is no reference to child protection in the partnership agreements between Assisi and AFTC, nor evidence of any broad child protection policies in the organisations.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *Assisi should take a lead in supporting AFTC to develop clearer awareness, practices and policies on the issues of child protection so that children's rights are secure, and also to address any potential to undermine the capacity of IDT and Assisi's work to achieve the objectives.*

3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships

The strategies deployed by Assisi and IDT/AFTC to ensure quality partnerships are **satisfactory.** Assisi's mission and raison d'etre is to provide support to AFTC, so there is clear compatibility between the goals of the two NGOs, and practices have been developed organically over 20 years and consolidated into more formal procedures as appropriate. The partnership has benefited from many years of positive personal contact and cooperation.

The operational arrangements between the partners have been developed and described in a number of letters, faxes, emails and phone conversations over the years. These have been drawn upon to develop a more formal 2004 *Letter of Understanding*, which is meant to be an "evolving document that can be referred to as an operating code" between Assisi and AFTC (and hence IDT), and which can be updated by mutual agreement from time to time. The partnership agreement includes mechanisms to facilitate periodic visits to India and Australia (biennial) by representatives of each NGO, for fundraising, education and promotion, project review and assessment, as well as assistance in developing strategic directions. It also includes standard reporting and other roles and responsibilities.

A limit to the partnership is that AFTC substantively manages all stages of the project cycle and while Assisi participates in that as a funding partner, critiquing proposals and reports, as a volunteer based NGO it can only engage more substantively when and if individual members are available in Australia or when they can fund their own visits to the project, and this necessarily will be an uneven process. Assisi seems to have a realistic assessment of AFTC's capacity and the strengths and weaknesses of key staff members. They are aware of the vulnerability of an organisation with a Founder/Director and the challenges of succession planning.

B. Development Strategy

4. Adequacy of design process

The design process has some significant strengths e.g. the household surveys and use of results to select target groups. This is notable especially for a small NGO. However overall the design process is considered to be **unsatisfactory** because there are tensions between AusAID policies and the absence of an environmental assessment of a dam constructed under this project, and also limited awareness and policies around child protection. These two issues are potential risks that could undermine the capacity of the activity to achieve its objectives.

IDT has used standard social assessment tools very effectively to map out the situation in the project area. They used the results to identify needs, vulnerable and marginalised groups such as scheduled caste members, remote villages, children in schools with poor government services and others. As well as these PRA methods, IDT consulted formal and informal leaders and wider community members in a methodical and systematic manner. They then used this data to determine where and with whom to work. Context and risk has been considered to a reasonable degree, with the notable exception that IDT had not undertaken an environmental impact assessment of major water installations built as part of the activity. Assisi advises that this process will soon be undertaken at its urging.

Assisi is involved in activity design as a funding partner, reviewing draft proposals, providing critical feedback and working with IDT to develop subsequent drafts through email correspondence. Assisi had raised the issue of environmental assessment of the village dams in the 2006/7 ADPlan, but then not pursued it during a subsequent monitoring trip. IDT/AFTC staff noted the water tables and wells had been affected positively around the dams, but had no analysis of the affects on wells below the dams. They were aware of risks to houses and families immediately below the village dam wall and were planning work to address this.

The current activity design benefits from synergies with other activities undertaken by IDT e.g. it builds on training provided to Animators and SHG leaders. It also builds on other work done by AFTC in Tamil Nadu e.g. SHG and IGP work in Kanyakumari. Given Assisi's mandate to support AFTC as its sole partner, the activity is certainly coherent with Assisi's development strategy. It is also, in general terms, consistent with AusAID's policies but the absence of an environmental assessment of the village dams, and an analysis of child protection issues and moves towards clear child protection policies and practices in the partner agency, are both significant gaps that could undermine the capacity of the activity to achieve its objectives.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *IDT should undertake an environmental impact assessment of the two dams it has constructed under this project.*

5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design

There is a range of very good operations level documents describing roles, responsibilities, activity schedules etc. There are also a number of design type documents e.g. partner proposal with good demographic data and a partially completed summary logframe, an original and a revised ADPlan, and an IVDP Performance Assessment Framework. These documents are not always consistent with each other e.g. activities and objectives vary to some degree, and they have not been consolidated into a clear, logical design document that adequately describes the project activity. Given this, the standard of the funding proposal or activity design is **unsatisfactory**.

A key issue is that Assisi considers the activity design is captured in the ADPlan. Assisi write-up the ADPlan on the basis of concepts, proposals and phone and email discussions with AFTC/IDT, send a copy back to the partner AFTC and then consider the ADPlan to be "the guiding document". However the ADPlan is a brief summary document and does not for example identify the project goal, target beneficiaries, or outcomes. The ADPlan is not an adequate activity design document and assumes that there is a more robust planning process and an underpinning activity design document.

In practice IDT does have implementation strategies summarised in operational tools such as responsibilities of staff, monthly activity schedules, budgets, reporting formats and other documents. These seem to be clear, workable and indicate that the activities are achievable within the planned period. The documents relating to the activity design, particularly the ADPlan, do not clearly articulate the M&E arrangements. In practice there are clear monitoring practices with a logical hierarchy of data collection and analysis by Animators, then project staff and then the senior team in AFTC and Assisi.

The documents describing the activity design don't adequately identify risks such as environmental impact and construction safety of village dams, or child protection in after school and child care centers, and so does not present strategies for managing them. In practice a number of risks are identified and addressed by project managers e.g. loss of newly trained staff or Animators to other NGOs which is addressed by supporting some SHG Leaders to develop their skills and to work as Assistants to Animators.

Similarly, the ADPlan and the other design type documents do not incorporate sustainability strategies. In practice IDT does consider sustainability of the project benefits and promotes sustainability in the way the activity structured e.g. Animators and Leaders are from local villages where they continue to work; IDT support is intense in the first two years then gradually stepped back over the next three year period so that local initiatives take the lead.

Recommendation:

In future ANCP funding, Assisi and AFTC/IDT should develop a more reasonable activity design document that builds on the planning processes that they have already undertaken, the subsidiary documents and practices that already exist, including a better assessment of risks, and an analysis of sustainability. It should then summarise the key elements in the ADPlan summary format.

C. Activity Implementation

6. Efficiency of activity implementation

The efficiency of the IDT activity implementation is generally **satisfactory**. Project activities are planned and reviewed/revised on a regular basis at the village, project area and broader program levels, and finances are reported and monitored regularly. Given this level of planning and monitoring, it is likely that activities will be achieved within schedule and budget. Project inputs such as training materials for Animators and Leaders, and guidelines for SHGs, are based on the State Government reference materials, seem to be comprehensive and of good quality, and are certainly valued and used by the local Animators.

IDT has a systematic approach to activity/output reporting, collecting data through agreed formats and procedures at the village level and then consolidating that at the project level before reviewing it at a broader agency/program level. There is some analysis of outcomes referred to in various reporting documents, but this is not consistent and needs to be strengthened.

The technical aspects of the community development work are generally very sound. As noted above, IDT uses qualified trainers to impart well established community development theory, practices & practical guidelines to locally based Animators and SHG Leaders, who in turn work with peers in their own village settings. Overall this appears to be a tightly focused community development project that uses industry standards and guidelines for SHG work, and also looks back to previous practice to identify lessons and to adapt the work accordingly. However the water component seems to be a departure from standard practice and has not been as efficiently planned as the CD components, particularly the absence of an environmental and risk analysis. This was noted in the ADPlan but not followed-up during a subsequent Assisi project visit and, a noted in a previous recommendation, should be addressed immediately to address any problems and to ensure lessons can be taken forward.

7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement

The capacity for learning and continuous improvement in Assisi and AFTC/IDT is **satisfactory**. A systematic approach to outputs monitoring is strong and certainly has the potential to facilitate changes in project work, and organisational learning. It would be useful if the current formats and mechanisms explicitly articulated issues emerging, decisions or actions to be addressed, so that staff are encouraged to be analytical rather than just descriptive, and so that change management processes were strengthened.

The monitoring practices focus on outputs and are implemented regularly and reliably, readily addressing questions of compliance and accountability. There is a monthly management meeting which should allow analysis of the outputs data, identification of any major issues or trends, and planning for subsequent periods. It should also facilitate organisational learning as exemplified when the IDT activities drew on the SHG experience in the south of Tamil Nadu e.g. about traditional livelihoods for IGPs, or the value in the linking Animators incomes to SHGs.

There are examples of poor monitoring or follow-up e.g. the failure of Assisi and IDT to address the environmental assessment of the village dams. These failures did not appear to be widespread and may have related to the fact that the water project was not part of the standard set of organisational

activities. But then if this was the case, there is an added responsibility on Assisi and IDT to pay particular attention to this project component.

The strength and length of the relationship between Assisi and AFTC, developed over some 25 years, seemed to engender significant trust and openness between the two NGOs. Respect as well as robust discussion about differences and points of mutual agreement featured in interviews with staff in Australia and India. While Assisi's purpose is to support AFTC, they demonstrate capacity to change as they consider constitutional and other changes to address the likelihood of India's changing DAC status. The fact that Assisi has employed a part-time staffer with financial skills may lead to an emphasis on compliance and financial probity, rather than improving technical practice or other aspects of the work, which could have occurred if they had employed a development specialist. There may be opportunities for Assisi to employ different technical skills at different times, and thus bring varying expertise to the partnership in a planned way over time.

8. Effectiveness of development intervention

The effectiveness of the development intervention is **satisfactory** because while the design documents are incomplete or at times inconsistent, in practice the activity design is a relatively straightforward community development project, using industry accepted training materials and models to contribute to progress towards objectives. As noted earlier, there are varying objectives in various documents, however they are summarised in the ADPlan, as:

- To reduce indebtedness & increase economic self sufficiency in the project area;
- To improve health & sanitation in a disadvantaged village on a sustainable basis;
- To improve educational opportunities of children, the youth & adults;

The outputs observed by the team, trained Animators, established SHGs with track records of bank savings and internal loans, and the discussions with project beneficiaries, all indicated that outputs have fostered the anticipated benefits. Of particular importance to women was the increasing social confidence to organise themselves, to pursue their local government representatives for access to relevant services for their families and communities e.g. increased classes at school, and their decreasing reliance on moneylenders for the families basic needs like education and other standard costs.

The design documents did not articulate the outcomes of the project very well but instead focused on outputs. That said, the inferred outcomes such as improved health status for women and children, improved family income and better quality services, appear to be achievable as women sustained their own SHGs, and as the project activities progressed over a several year period. Given the consultations with community members and local government, and the central role of women in the activities, improvements are likely to occur in women's participation in community life as they liaise with their husbands and their community to organise meetings, set up local savings and other activities. One woman, an IDT Animator, had recently been elected to the Panchayat, the local level of government. Similarly, as internal savings and loans and IGPs are sustained, and access to credit through banks is consolidated, improvements are likely to occur in poverty reduction as women have more control over family incomes and costs. However, failed IGPs are a potential threat to people's livelihoods e.g. some Animator's IGPs failed when state government prices for ration rice were slashed, and these key people still have significant debts to manage. It was evident that project staff did not have thorough livelihoods assessment tools, or other risk analysis processes, nor a repertoire of tactics available to them when risks emerged and posed significant problems to local livelihoods.

9. Strategies for sustainability

The strategies for sustainability deployed by this project are **satisfactory** in practice but could certainly be better articulated in project documentation. Some project documents, and most discussions with staff, indicated that in order to ensure continuation of benefits after IDT involvement ceases, IDT is engaged in a 5 year process with project beneficiaries. This comprises selecting Animators form local villages, an initial two year training period for key community members, with theoretical work accompanied by practical community development work in their communities forming SHGs, coordinating health awareness activities and so on. This is followed by a further year of close work between those trained people, IDT and wider community members, and then another two years of a gradually reducing role for IDT as local Animators increasingly take on the community

mobilisation and development roles. Unfortunately Assisi and AFTC/IDT did not capture this strategy in a key design document, and the summary ADPlan format does not elicit such information.

AFTC/IDT is well aware of established and emerging risks to sustainability of the work e.g. the higher risk of non-traditional IGPs, and changes in state government guidelines that require changes to their model of working with SHGs and Animators. They are addressing these risks through a focus on agriculture and other traditional livelihoods, and through developing options to accommodate these guidelines changes. The model of direct linkages between SHGs and banks to access credit, rather than through the NGO, means that SHGs should be able to continue independently of IDT even during the envisaged five year project cycle.

Overall Project Quality Rating: Satisfactory

Summary

Performance Dimension A Context Analysis	Rating	Performance Dimension B Development Strategy	Rating	Performance Dimension C Activity Implementation	Rating
Indicators		Indicators		Indicators	
1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities.	GP	4. Adequacy of design process.	U	6. Efficiency of activity implementation.	S
		5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design.	U	7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement.	S
2. ANGO capacity to deliver development response.	S			8. Effectiveness of development intervention.	S
3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.	S			9. Strategies for sustainability.	S

Quality Ratings: GP=Good practice; S=Satisfactory; U=Unsatisfactory; HU=Highly Unsatisfactory.

APPENDIX B: PLAN AUSTRALIA REPORT

ANGO	Plan Australia
Implementing Partner(s)	Mobile Crèches, FORCES,URMUL (Rajasthan) and CYSD (Orissa)
INGO	Plan International India
Program Title	Strengthening ECCD in India through advocacy, capacity building and research
Budget – AusAID /ANGO/counterpart NGO	05/06: $162,942/ $104.773/ $11,772 = $279,487 06/07: $111,938/ $120,000 / $47,299 = $279,237
Major Development Objective	• Develop/ demonstrate enhanced models of ICDS/ ECCD services in difficult contexts (Orissa, Rajasthan and Delhi) • Strengthen the capacity of civil society to advocate for ECCD

Background

The Organisations

Plan Australia is a member of the international network of Plan organisations. They are closely bound by shared values, governance and operational policies and procedures. As such Plan International India and Plan Australia share the same comprehensive standards of governance, management and operations. Plan Australia is Fully Accredited with AusAID. Plan International India is a large NGO with a significant resource base and highly qualified staff. Plan International India's implementing partners range from small community based organisations to long established and influential national organisations. The ANCP activity is implemented by three local partners, CYSD in Orissa, URMUL in Rajasthan and Mobile Crèches in Delhi. The advocacy component is undertaken by Mobile Crèches, FORCES and Plan International India.

The presence of Plan International India could reasonably be expected to limit the role played by Plan Australia. While this is borne out in relation to project design and operations, Plan Australia nonetheless makes a quality contribution in a more general sense to ECCD strategic direction and collegial support and development. Project implementation and partnership management is clearly undertaken by Plan International India on behalf of Plan Australia.

The Context

The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) activities being funded through the ANCP are implemented by Plan International India in partnership with local organisations in Orissa, Rajasthan and Delhi. The Evaluation Team reviewed only the Delhi and advocacy components of the ANCP activity. The three geographical areas were explicitly chosen by Plan International India as difficult contexts. Orissa is a largely tribal area, Rajasthan representing remote rural populations and the Delhi component being implemented with transitory, migrant urban construction site workforces. The advocacy component of the ANCP funded project, managed in Delhi, takes a multi-level, integrated approach involving other NGOs, the media and various levels of government.

While progress has been made in ECCD, India still faces significant challenges in this area. On a positive note, intense advocacy efforts have succeeded in including under-sixes in the Right to Education. This was followed by continued pressure to universalise the ICDS in the election manifesto and further, to ensure that issues concerning Early Childhood continue to be raised at Ministry level, National Advisory Council level and in the grassroot Campaign of the Right to Food.

A. Context Analysis

1. Analysis of context and its complexities

The analysis of the context and the resulting relevance of this activity design represent **good practice**. Each of the main players in the Delhi component of this activity, contribute in different and important ways to the analysis of the context. Mobile Crèche is a key player in the ECCD environment in India and is actively engaged in numerous critical forums at all levels with families and children, government, employers, NGOs and academia. A key feature of the Mobile Crèche

strategic direction is to manage a tightly focused involvement in service delivery to maintain its relevance and reputation and to accurately inform its advocacy and education work.

Plan International India has chosen its partner Mobile Crèche and directed its support, strategically. Mobile Crèche is well equipped and well positioned to analyse the context and to influence change in ECCD in India.

Plan Australia while not involved directly in project implementation; nonetheless make a contribution to the academic rigour and theoretical thinking about ECCD. It keeps abreast of current international thinking and practice and engages in important collegial dialogue with Plan International India and the implementing partners.

In 2001 Plan International India ran a project entitled the "8 States Initiative" with the specific intention of conducting a situational analysis and gathering base-line data on the nature of available services for children in 8 Indian states. Following an evaluation of the 8 States Initiative, Plan International India developed a five year strategic plan containing roughly 30 corporate indicators and 15 specific national indicators to form the baseline against which its performance will be measured, peer and client reviewed, over a period of five years. India, due to its size, has been divided by Plan International India into 20 defined geographic areas. For each of these areas Plan International India has developed a specific County Program Outline (CPO) drawn from the lessons of the 8 States Initiative, the Plan International India Strategic Plan and the Plan network's thematic program outlines.

The very nature of this activity, with its integrated and multi-level engagement from service delivery through to lobbying government for changes to legislation has ensured the advocacy efforts are well informed by current grass root needs and gaps in existing practice. It facilitates robust analysis and constant triangulation of context research and analysis. This is achieved through the participation and leadership by Mobile Crèche and FORCES in a number of critical advisory bodies to government such as a Committee contributing to the 11TH GOI 5 Year Plan, the Construction Workers Welfare Board and the Right to Food Campaign to name just a few.

The Plan International systems facilitate relevant context analysis at a strategic level. Before undertaking each cycle of strategic planning, Plan International India have an established practice of reflecting on the previous planning period, analysing progress and identifying new base line data. These reflections then inform the next strategic planning period.

2. NGO capacity to deliver development response

Overall, the agencies and partners demonstrated a high level of capacity and as such, collectively they represent ***good practice*** to deliver the development response. Plan Australia and Plan International India demonstrated a high degree of experience and capacity relevant to managing the ECCD program. Plan International India and the implementing partners in Delhi have many years of experience in India and in ECCD. Long standing staff members of Mobile Crèche and FORCES appear to be leaders in the sector holding numerous influential positions in related government and civil society forums as already referred to above. Newer staff are well qualified academically and were able to demonstrate a strong technical understanding of the sector and their areas of operation such as research and advocacy. In choosing to partner with the child advocacy group FORCES, Plan International India has increased its capacity to influence a network of some 47 organisations, trade unions, universities, women's organisations, NGOs and media champions.

Plan Australia is a Full Accredited agency with AusAID. As a large international NGO network, Plan International has standardised and comprehensive policies and procedures adhered to by Plan Australia and Plan International India. Staff in Plan Australia and Plan International India responsible for the ECCD program, are highly qualified in the technical area and were able to demonstrate an analytical and dynamic engagement in the sector. In recent years Plan International India has increasingly taken a child-centred approach. While this seems somewhat overdue for a specialist agency and in relation to international trends, the shift is nonetheless being embraced with a sense of urgency. Of note, Plan International India is endeavouring to change its monitoring and evaluation approach and systems to reflect a stronger focus on impact. Examples of recent evaluations conducted by Plan International India demonstrated a commitment to participation of partners and beneficiaries and were of a high quality. The systems though comprehensive, do however run the risk of creating a formulaic approach.

Documentation from Mobile Crèches and Plan International India makes frequent reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child however in practice; neither organisation was sufficiently conversant with minimum standards in regards to child protection. As a child centred agency, Plan should be providing leadership on this issue.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *Plan Australia should take a lead in supporting Plan International and implementing partners to develop clearer awareness, practices and policies on the issues of child protection so that children's rights are secure, and also to address any potential to undermine the capacity of implementing partners' work to achieve the objectives.*

3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships

Of particular note in this partnership, is the multidirectional flow of expertise. This aspirational but somewhat uncommon dynamic amongst NGOs represents **good practice.** The various partner relationships appear to be characterised by mutual respect. The partnership does not reflect a typical donor/beneficiary dynamic. For instance Mobile Crèche acts as both recipient of funds and operational knowledge, and donor of technical knowledge to Plan International India and its other implementing partners. Similarly Plan Australia and Plan International India provide critical analysis and rigour to each others analysis. Relationships between each level appear to be robust and based on mutual respect and collegial engagement.

Plan Australia and Plan International India appeared to apply a solid level of rigour and critical analysis to their decision making. While respect for Mobile Crèche's significant expertise was evident from Plan International India, this was accompanied by a reluctance to critique their work because they were seen as the "experts". While there is no suggestion by the Evaluation Team that this has had any negative impact, it nevertheless diminishes constructive critical analysis – an important feature of a robust partnership.

As members of the same INGO, Plan Australia and Plan International India share goals, policies, management procedures and practices. Interviews with key staff revealed regular communication with different aims: formal and structured to address Plan International's comprehensive formats/systems, informal collegial sharing and technical analysis.

The high degree of collegial engagement facilitates the critical analysis of existing practice and the growth of new ideas. Plan Australia recently funded key staff from Plan International India, Mobile Crèches and FORCES to join Monash University for an ECCD workshop.

Plan Australia regularly assesses the capacity of Plan International India. It has identified a need to strengthen the project design process and practice of Plan International India, an opinion supported by the Evaluation Team. Plan International India has also assessed Mobile Crèches capacity and together they have strategically identified a need to strengthen its organisational capacity and financial sustainability. ANCP funds have contributed to the development of a resource mobilisation strategy and increased capacity within Mobile Crèches. Both examples demonstrated direct responsive action to capacity assessment.

A culture of participatory partner relationships was evident in recent evaluations undertaken of the ECCD activities. The review involving CYSD in Orissa and an overall evaluation of the ECCD program demonstrated the participatory approach and active involvement of the implementing partners in the process.

Plan International India takes an assertive approach to partner identification and choice. This process has been informed by the recent shift towards a more child-centred and rights-based approach and the subsequent need to reassess the relevance of some partners. Partnerships are clearly influenced by the organisations strategic direction and intentional decision making. Plan International India has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of existing partners and selection process for new, more closely aligned partners resulting in the completion of some existing relationships and focused capacity building of others.

B. Development Strategy

4. Adequacy of design process

The ANCP funded project has emerged from a broader design process undertaken by Plan International India. While the ANCP activity has been "cherry picked", the design process itself is solid and represents ***satisfactory*** practice. The design process demonstrates good needs analysis, consultation and participation of stakeholders, risk analysis and gender analysis. The ANCP activity contributes to 3 geographic CPOs and 2 thematic Pos, namely education and health.

Situational and needs analysis as outlined in indicator 1, is strong. At a macro level, Plan International India has chosen the geographical focus of the ANCP funded project to contribute to needs in particularly difficult contexts. At a micro level, Mobile Crèches have intentionally identified sub groups such as migrant construction workers who are able to contribute minimal funds to the ECCD centres.

The design process undertaken by Plan International India and its partners for their broader programs is thorough. The design process undertaken specifically for the ANCP funded activity however should be strengthened and the responsibility for driving this sits with Plan Australia. Plan International India undertakes comprehensive planning processes with its implementing partners. Detailed objectives for each five-year period are formulated through 20 Country Program Outlines (CPOs). These are developed by the implementing partners on a geographical basis. In addition, five thematic POs are developed addressing education, health, habitat, livelihoods and building relationships.

At the operational level, Plan Australia has limited involvement in the design process except as a professional sounding board. At the strategic level however, Plan Australia does contribute to the agency wide thinking and planning around ECCD. In fact, Plan International India considers Plan Australia to be the key "ECCD" member agency within the Plan International member network. CPOs developed in India, inform Plan Australia's Country Strategic Planning process. Of particular note and referred to earlier, each strategic planning cycle is systematically informed by the results of the previous planning period – an important step often overlooked in strategic planning processes.

The broader role of Mobile Crèches as the implementing partner in Delhi, provides some distinct advantages to Plan Australia and in turn to the ANCP funded activity. Mobile Crèches intentionally keeps involved to a limited degree in service delivery in order to stay in touch with beneficiary needs to inform ongoing programming and advocacy efforts. In terms of impact of the relatively small ANCP activity, this synergy allows the ANCP funds to have a broader impact.

The ANCP activity is consistent with AusAID and ANCP guidelines however the fact that child protection has not been considered explicitly in a project which establishes child care centres of particularly vulnerable populations on construction sites is a serious oversight which should be remedied immediately by Plan Australia (see recommendation under indicator 2).

5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design

The standard of the activity design overall is ***satisfactory.*** The lack of any cohesive design documentation specifically relating to the ANCP activity represents a weakness in this area. This weakness is however counteracted by the comprehensive and systematic design process and design documentation undertaken by Plan International India with its implementing partners for their broader programs. As such, this weakness does not present an immediate risk to the success of the activity. The activity would however benefit significantly from an improved activity design, in particular the ongoing assessment of impact and subsequent refocusing of its objectives. Plan Australia should undertake this continuation of the design process and use the completed design documentation as management tool.

The project proposal prepared by Mobile Crèches is good quality however it also stops short of an activity design. Defined objectives clearly link through to those in the ANCP ADPlan. It contains a good analysis of the development need and sets out the vision for Mobile Crèches as an organisation to contribute optimally to this need. It is clear and well argued. As a broader strategic direction paper it is good. Its application is limited however as a management tool with no detail of *inter alia*, expected outcomes, risk analysis or implementation schedules. It does not outline the internal logic of the project plan, test assumptions or set out a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Plan Australia and Plan International India have well established monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Mobile Crèches have monthly meetings to reflect on progress and raise issues of concern. Monthly reporting is provided to Plan International India who in turn report to Plan Australia on the ANCP activity. There are however two key elements missing from this system. The quarterly reports provided to Plan Australia are superficial, repetitive and compliance oriented. Similarly, without clearly articulated intended outcomes, the ability of the various stakeholders to assess progress towards objectives is diminished.

Risks are analysed and articulated at the broader CPO level. This represents a significant leap from the ANCP activities in the ADPlan and is therefore of limited use when it comes to managing the risks to the AusAID funded activity. The point being, that while Plan International India develops broader CPOs, these are of limited use as a responsive management tool for the ANCP activity.

Recommendation:

Plan Australia should support Plan International India to work with implementing partners to undertake analysis of intended outcomes and impact and this information should be used within monitoring and evaluation processes.

Plan Australia should lead a design process to produce a design document which specifically relates to the ANCP funded activities.

C. Activity Implementation

6. Efficiency of activity implementation

The efficiency of activity implementation is generally ***satisfactory.*** Plan International India has a comprehensive system of procedures and formats to manage the implementation of projects at an outputs level. Discussion with project staff and observation of a sample of activities in Delhi demonstrates timely activity implementation. While the CPOs cover broader programs rather than specifically the ANCP activity, they are adequate to enable efficient implementation. The systems and level of documentation should deliver the planned inputs and outputs on schedule.

Mobile Crèches and Plan International India communicate regularly and hold monthly progress meetings. Financial reports are provided in a timely manner, enhancing the likelihood of achieving project activities within budget. The budget prepared by Mobile Crèches is reasonable. Monitoring procedures are adequate and clear. While information generated is superficial and outputs oriented, it is adequate to enable efficient implementation of activities within budget.

Training materials for teachers/carers developed by Mobile Crèches were creative, engaging and informative, generally being of a high standard. Similarly, the material developed for community awareness raising and education was relevant and of a high standard. Materials observed in use at the child care centres was age appropriate, creative and of a high quality.

As the implementing agency, Mobile Crèches is well placed to ensure a high standard of technical implementation in relation to ECCD. Staff and materials for training and child care are of a high standard. Significant investment is being made to further improve the quality of research and data available for advocacy efforts of Mobile Crèches. The inadequate approach to child protection represents the main limitation in terms of technical standards.

7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement

Plan Australia, Plan International India and Mobile Crèches have a ***satisfactory*** capacity for learning and continuous improvement although there are aspects which could be strengthened. The existing capacity coupled with Plan's standardised operational systems and a shifting organisational culture and approach should facilitate continued progress in this area.

At a macro level, the strategic planning process reviews progress from previous plans and updates base line data to inform future plans. This process is well supported and informed by the existing monitoring and evaluation systems. It is an institutionalised method of ensuring that lessons learned inform future planning.

In a general operational sense Plan International India has recently undertaken a process of review of all partners in response to its shifting geographical and developmental approach. These shifts were identified through the strategic planning process and then the necessary changes were operationalised. This illustrates the organisations commitment to change which was well informed by its rigorous partner selection process.

At a project level, the current Plan International systems generally limit reflections to an outputs level which tends to foster a compliance and accountability orientation. This approach is changing, with the recent development of new formats which will enhance opportunities for learning by broadening monitoring to outcomes and impact. It is important to note however, that a change in formats will not in itself change practise. This should be followed up with considerable capacity building with implementing partners and Plan staff.

The organisational culture seems to favour academic reflection and engagement. The strong sense of mutual respect between Plan Australia, Plan International India, Mobile Crèches and FORCES has fostered an informal system of collegial dialogue. This informal practice enables regular sharing of ideas, new approaches and lessons.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *Plan International India should consider supporting the recent introduction of impact analysis and reporting with an investment in similar capacity building for staff.*

8. Effectiveness of development intervention

The approach taken by Mobile Crèches and Plan International India is excellent in regards to facilitating lasting change and real impact. The multilevel and integrated approach addressing both supply and creating demand is a highly effective method of broadening the impact and ensuring its lasting effect. However the effectiveness of the development intervention can only be *satisfactory* due to a key weakness in management. The effectiveness must be diminished by the lack of either clearly articulated or systematically reviewed outcomes. In the absence of a clear road map towards intended outcomes and impact, the ability of Plan International India or Mobile Crèches to analyse progress and the continual changes needed to achieve optimal progress, is compromised.

The ANCP activity involves the development and demonstration of quality child care centres in difficult contexts and multi level advocacy efforts to improve the governments and employers responses, the quality of services and increase community demand. The Evaluation Team was able to observe and review just one of the three contexts, namely construction sites in Delhi and gain an understanding of the advocacy efforts. The sample observed and reviewed appears to be effective in its impact. The child care centres would serve to demonstrate that a high quality service in a difficult context with the cooperation of employers is possible and the immediate benefits to the children and mothers are clearly evident.

The strong focus on advocacy in this project is strategic and will enable far broader impact from the demonstration model and service delivery components. While attribution in regards to advocacy is difficult, there is no doubt that the advocacy efforts of Mobile Crèches, FORCES and Plan International India have had a positive impact on improving the situation of ECCD services in India.

9. Strategies for sustainability

This activity by virtue of its design has an inherent strategy for sustainability and as such represents *good practice* in this regard. The sustainability of program outcomes and organisational issues are addressed in the design of this activity.

At a program level, Plan International India's approach to addressing the ECCD needs is multi-levelled and well integrated. In the Delhi context, Mobile Crèches takes a multi-faceted approach, working with all levels of government, law and policy makers, employers, other NGOs, carers, mothers, and children. The project addresses both the improvement of supply and quality of services whilst at the same time increasing the demand for those services through education, sensitisation and demonstration. This is demand led governance in practice. The program also works to ensure an enabling legal and policy environment.

Intense advocacy efforts have succeeded in including under-sixes in the Right to Education. This was followed by continued pressure to universalise the ICDS in the election manifesto and further, to ensure that issues concerning Early Childhood continue to be raised at Ministry level, National Advisory Council level and in the grassroot Campaign of the Right to Food.

At a partnership level, the ANCP activity addresses the sustainability of Mobile Creches as an organisation. The current program plan for Mobile Creches has identified the need to increase its focus on advocacy in order to have a greater impact on ECCD services. This recognises the strong reputation of Mobile Creches and intends to positively exploit that through its advocacy efforts. The need for financial sustainability as an organisation is also addressed with ANCP resources being invested in strengthening Mobile Creches general organisational capacity and specifically its resource mobilisation capacity.

Overall Project Quality Rating: GOOD PRACTICE

Performance Dimension A Context Analysis	Rating	Performance Dimension B Development Strategy	Rating	Performance Dimension C Activity Implementation	Rating
Indicators		Indicators		Indicators	
1. Analysis of context and complexities.	GP	4. Adequacy of design process.	S	6. Efficiency of activity implementation.	S
2. ANGO capacity to deliver development response.	GP	5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design.	S	7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement.	S
3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.	GP			8. Effectiveness of development intervention.	S
				9. Strategies for sustainability.	GP

GP = Good practice; S = Satisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly Unsatisfactory

APPENDIX C: QSA REPORT

ANGO	Quaker Service Australia
Implementing Partner(s)	Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre
INGO	N/A
Program Title	Poverty Reduction and empowerment of rural women in Tamil Nadu
Budget – AusAID /ANGO	06/07: $42,079/ $18,693
Major Development Objectives	• To reduce poverty among women in the area of the program • To develop strong and sustainable groups of rural women • To enable women farmers to establish and maintain food and herb gardens • To raise awareness of general health and nutrition in the communities of the program area

Background

The Organisations

Quaker Service Australia (QSA) is a small, faith-based Australian NGO. It has recently been reaccredited with AusAID at the Base level. It is governed by a Management Committee. Its one part-time professional staff member and one permanent volunteer are supported by a network of other volunteers. QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

The Pitchandikulam Bio-Resource Centre (PBRC) commenced its early work in 1970's as part of the Auroville international community in Tamil Nadu. The founder, Joss Brooks continues as the Director. PBRC's core business is that of environmental education, Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) revegetation, the growth of traditional medicinal plants and strengthening the relationship between the TDEF and local communities. Since its establishment it has worked to restore the TDEF within Auroville and also in surrounding areas. It aims to bring together ecological knowledge and traditional village wisdom.

The Context

This ANCP project continues to build on earlier work in Tamil Nadu of the PBRC supported by QSA through ANCP funding. Earlier work saw the establishment of women's self help groups, farmers groups, the establishment of the Nadukuppam Environmental Education Centre (NEEC), development of the Nadukuppam Primary and High Schools, the nearby Women's Centre and purchase of land to develop a demonstration agro-forestry farm.

The location of most of the work in ecological restoration centres around the Kaluveli Bio-Region. This area extends from Pondicherry to Kadapakkam. Beyond Auroville, the ANCP funded work of PBRC works with Nadukuppam, Vandipalayam and other surrounding villages to implement an integrated rural development project.

A. Context Analysis

1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities

QSA and PBRC have *satisfactorily* analysed the context and its complexities. In terms of the environmental context, PBRC have conducted excellent analysis. Poverty analysis and consequent people-centred planning has been achieved to a lesser degree. PBRC is very well networked and linked to the many layers of government and other environment NGOs. PBRC is considered to be a centre of excellence in its specialty. The Director and staff have extensive experience in the Indian context and an excellent understanding of associated issues.

The fact that this project was borne out of an evaluative exercise reflecting on earlier work and the desire to move beyond the Auroville sphere of influence is indicative of an organisation prepared to self-reflect and adapt. In this regard, PBRC is insightful of its own internal context.

It is important to note that PBRC analyses and engages with its external context through a very specific lens, that of environmental restoration, organic farming and traditional herbal medicine. While this does not detract from the success of the ANCP activity, it nonetheless provides a different analysis than if the predominant perspective was poverty alleviation and people-centred community development. For instance, the PRA exercise undertaken with villages, collected bio-resource information and assessed the environmental needs of the area/villages. There is no suggestion that this information is not crucial; however there does not appear to have been such a deep focus on poverty analysis or people-centred issues. A combination of all these areas would elicit an improved analysis and understanding of the complex context.

One implication of this analysis perspective is that lesser attention has been given to poverty analysis in the villages or on issues which might fall outside of the project focus. For example there has been little analysis of the potential changes to labour patterns and mobility due to changes in rice cultivation being promoted where poor landless women gaining seasonal weeding work may be negatively impacted. Another implication is the engagement with the schools involved. With a predominantly environmental perspective, analysis of obvious sustainability challenges such as school running costs, likelihood of gaining future teachers or of keeping newly trained ones funded by PBRC, has been limited. In short, for groups or issues outside the primary environmental focus of the project, there has been limited analysis.

Monitoring reports prepared by QSA over the past few years are detailed. QSA's analysis of the broad context is adequate however these also lack a focus on poverty analysis or sustainability issues for instance.

2. NGO capacity to deliver development response

As a bio-resource centre of excellence, PBRC is extremely well placed to manage this project. Its capacity therefore represents ***Good Practice***. The collective knowledge of PBRC represents many years of relevant experience and significant expertise. Being part of Auroville, PBRC also gains from Auroville's broader knowledge and expertise such as alternative building technology, water management and renewable energy. In relation to people-centred community development, PBRC's involvement over the past 5 years or so has been more recent and this is evident in the project.

QSA has many years of experience supporting projects and partners in the Indian context and in the environmental and community development spheres. While QSA staff and contracted monitors change regularly, significant effort is invested during monitoring trips into understanding the context and therefore strengthening current staff's capacity to engage meaningfully in the development process. This is evident in reports from monitoring visits conducted by QSA in 2004 and 2005.

The management systems of QSA and PBRC are clear, systematic, accountable and transparent. QSA has management systems of considerable quality and has recently been reaccredited with AusAID at the Base level. While the predominant focus of reporting is descriptive and outputs based there is some analysis at the outcomes level which is positive. Recent QSA monitoring reports are very detailed and of good quality however it is interesting to note that most recommendations deal with administrative issues and do not reflect on deeper outcomes level issues or challenges to sustainability etc.

PBRC has very strong technical skills and knowledge in forestry, education, finance, agriculture and social research; however people-centred community development as discipline is a newer area for PBRC.

The importance of child protection is covered in partner agreements between QSA and PBRC. While key staff in PBRC should be more conversant with international standards required in this area, there are efforts being made at the project level in this regard. For instance training for SHGs covers the rights of the child and there is a commitment to non-violent discipline in schools. However given that this project engages with hundreds of children in schools, PBRC and QSA should take a more proactive approach to ensuring child protection.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *QSA should take a lead in supporting PBRC to develop clearer awareness, practices and policies on the issues of child protection so that children's rights are secure, and also to address any potential to undermine the capacity of PBRC and QSA's work to achieve the objectives.*

3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships

The strategies employed by QSA and PBRC to ensure quality partnerships are *satisfactory.* The relationship between QSA and PBRC began 20 years ago. The relationship is characterised by personal friendships, mutual respect and a strong sense of the others' value. The value of the partnership is seen by PBRC as much greater than just funding support. The Australian connection, historical links and potential for professional linkages are highly valued by PBRC.

As noted by QSA in a recent monitoring report, the values of Auroville and PBRC are not at variance with those of the Quakers. PBRC's core focus of environmental sustainability is shared by QSA and is encompassed in its strategic plan.

As the implementing partner, PBRC drives the project cycle with QSA engaging as required. This an appropriate arrangement particularly given the size and accreditation level of QSA. The project was developed through negotiation between PBRC and QSA. Frequent email communication demonstrates dialogue regarding the project but the approach tends not to engender analysis of risk, challenges to sustainability, the articulation of intended outcomes or aspirational impact. In 2006, PBRC sent QSA a list of possible actions which QSA in turn responded to asking very specific questions. While adequate, this approach will not facilitate analytical dialogue about the development needs or the development process. It limits the role that QSA can play in consideration of the project design.

QSA assesses PBRC's capacity during monitoring visits. Reports indicate detailed discussions pertaining to project management at the office and in the field. The project is appropriate to PBRC's capacity and as PBRC's people-centred community development experience deepens with time, so should the quality of the project. Recommendations in the QSA monitoring reports tend to focus on administrative issues perhaps overlooking some issues relating to community development practice such as the need for greater outcomes analysis and obvious challenges to sustainability.

PBRC is extremely well networked with government departments and other environmental NGOs. The Director is clearly able to maximise the benefits of these networks, linking different initiatives and identifying opportunities, resulting in numerous synergies. Linkages with other community development NGOs, specialising in working with SHGs may be beneficial. PBRC is liaising with the Women' Development Committee in Tamil Nadu and using its resources for the development of SHGs which is an important linkage.

PBRC and QSA's ability to plan for the medium to long term is reasonable. QSA has committed to support PBRC's work for 5 years. QSA plans to explicitly consider the future of the funding in 2007.

B. Development Strategy

4. Adequacy of design process

The design process for this project is *satisfactory.* The motivation for this project came initially from an evaluative process of earlier work by PBRC. Amongst other things this process of reflection identified the need to take the work of PBRC, which relies on the demonstration of models, outside of the Auroville sphere of influence to rural Tamil Nadu.

As discussed in relation to context analysis (indicator 1) the situational and needs analysis have been done from an environmental perspective. The environmental needs of villages were assessed using bio-resource information collected through standard social analysis methods such as PRA exercises. The various methods used by PBRC to collect and analyse this information were done in a participatory manner fostering the input of key groups in the villages

such as village leaders, traditional healers and women. From descriptions provided by PBRC and QSA, these consultation processes seem to have been done well.

Dialogue between PBRC and QSA about project ideas could be strengthened with more information and analysis. PBRC provides a list of ideas and very brief activities to QSA. While QSA does engage in discussion and negotiation, it is limited by the brevity of the information provided by PBRC. While this is satisfactory for a Base level agency, QSA could be in a position to contribute greater community development experience.

The design of this project essentially uses an integrated rural development model with a strong environmental focus. Community development in a sense is the medium through which the environmental priorities of PBRC are facilitated. Poverty reduction, the first objective in the ANCP ADPlan, is therefore a by-product of successfully encouraging SHGs to undertake environmentally sustainable activities. This is a perfectly valid approach; however PBRC will need to remain vigilant to maintaining the balance between its own priorities and those of the participants. One very important feature of the design which will assist in this balance is to support the growth of strong and independent SHGs (Objective 2). It is excellent to see this concept drawn out as an explicit objective in the project. It is PBRC's belief that the SHGs should decide themselves when they are ready to move away from PBRC's support. This is an excellent concept however in practice, it needs to be negotiated with the SHGs in a more intentional way. That is, the SHG members themselves need to consider and articulate what the SHG will "look" like in the future and how they hope to achieve this. This process should be facilitated by PBRC as a priority.

The project has clearly considered the context within which it is being implemented. The surrounding areas were either directly or indirectly affected by the tsunami and this project and other PBRC work has responded to these particular needs. There is evidence of long term planning and reflection/learning and modification of approaches. For instance, earlier IGP activities focused more on direct income generation whereas now PBRC sees that through assisting the transition to organic practices the income of farmers and women will be indirectly improved. More recent IGP activities are predominantly made up of agricultural assistance in the form of organic soil additions, sustainable agricultural practices and integrated pest management. While this demonstrates an organisation and processes which allow for reflection and change, it also raises the question of who's needs are being met with the new IGP activities and whether they generate adequate funds to maintain loan repayments and savings.

While the needs analysis and community consultation processes appear to have been done well, there are some weaknesses in the actual design of the project. The design is the coherent analysis of the objectives, activities and anticipated outcomes, the testing of assumptions and the systematic analysis of risk. Applying the discipline of project design is all the more crucial in a specialty organisation such as PBRC to ensure community needs and priorities are balanced with those of the organisation. It also provides an important management tool in an organisation where so much knowledge is held by individuals and there is an ambitious vision.

The design process has not adequately analysed some significant risks. The most obvious being the risk to sustainability of the Nadukuppam schools. While the creation and demonstration of successful models is an excellent development approach, and PBRC is working within the existing government structure, the replication of changes made at the Nadukuppam School will present challenges in other government schools without permanent outside donor assistance. Similarly some of the changes at Nadukuppam School itself will struggle to be sustained without PBRC funding and control. There is a danger of creating a parallel system within a government school.

Gender analysis appears to be of a high standard. Initial contact with the villages came through women healers. The position of women in the village structure has been considered and the predominant role of women in the project is positive. The construction of the Women's Centre in Nadukuppam and meeting places for groups in other villages indicates an understanding of gender issues, constraints on the physical participation of women and has led to project design which engenders the participation of women.

The project is clearly coherent with QSA's development strategy and organisational goals. There are possible synergies which could be better utilised. QSA is working with the Women's Federation in Tamil Nadu on SHGs and there may be lessons which could be shared between the two projects. The project is consistent with AusAID's policies and guidelines.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> - *PBRC should undertake a more deliberate project design process.*
>
> - *PBRC should consider learnings from a similar integrated rural development project in Cambodia in which the SHGs have mapped out their own development plan and will determine when they "graduate" from the NGOs support (contacts to be supplied by the Evaluation Team)*

5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design

The standard of the activity design for this project is **unsatisfactory.** While there are some strengths in terms of operational documentation, the weaknesses in the design thinking and documentation have the potential to undermine the achievement of the projects full potential. It is expected that the ANCP funding proposal should be a summary of a more detailed project design developed by the ANGO or implementing partner.

PBRC has very good operational documents such as detailed activity schedules and a monitoring schedule which clearly facilitates the efficient management of the project as outlined in more detail below in indicator 6. The effectiveness of the project however may be compromised by a lack of more comprehensive thinking and documentation which considers the coherence of the objectives, activities and anticipated outcomes, the testing of assumptions and the systematic analysis of risk. A project of this scale should have a cohesive design document to facilitate its effective implementation and management.

The objectives of the project as outlined in the ADPlan are clear and should contribute to PBRC's goal. The ADPlan however only considers targets at the outputs level. There is an assumption that the ANGO and/or the implementing agency will have considered the development response more fully, including the articulation of intended outcomes, accompanying indicators and how progress will be verified. In the absence of such analysis and documentation, there is a risk of diminishing the potential of the development process and the project impact. With no clear definition of what the outcomes of the project will look like, the ability to know how the project is progressing is compromised. Equally as important is the ability to know when the project is not progressing and therefore being in an informed position to respond to this. On a management level, limiting operational tools to the activity and outputs level fosters a compliance/ accountability approach to monitoring, hindering reflection and learning.

The monitoring schedule is of a good standard providing guidance for regular discussion and feedback to the project staff to guide project implementation. Each activity area has a list of monitoring criteria which capture output and a few outcome level issues. This is the closest that PBRC's documentation comes to articulating project expectations at the outcomes level. Monitoring against these criteria does contribute to the effective management of the project however outcome criteria are still minimal.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> *PBRC and QSA should consider the current projects design more fully, in particular the analysis of intended outcomes and how these will be demonstrated and verified. In future ANCP funding, QSA and PBRC should develop a more reasonable activity design document that builds on the planning processes that they have already undertaken, the operational documents and practices that already exist, including a better assessment of risks, and an analysis of sustainability. It should then summarise the key elements in the ADPlan summary format.*

C. Activity Implementation

6. Efficiency of activity implementation

The efficiency of PBRC's activity implementation represents **Good Practise**. The standard of operational processes and documentation is very high. Processes such as monitoring guidelines and weekly and monthly meetings are clearly outlined and seem to be followed in a disciplined manner. Weekly meetings involve all field staff and are held at the project site while monthly

meetings focus more on organisational issues and involve the management staff team. Documented monitoring guidelines engender a consistent and transparent line of inquiry and reporting, albeit predominantly at the activities and outputs level. Staff members keep diaries of their work and action sheets from meetings ensuring timely follow up. Financial management and monitoring appears to be of a high standard. QSA reviews financial and administrative practices during its annual monitoring visits and there is evidence in reports of cooperative efforts to streamline these practices.

Given the operational, administrative and financial systems in place and documented evidence of their application, the project activities should be achieved on time and within budget. This has been impacted from time to time by external issues such local elections and this constraint is well documented.

The technical aspects of project are of a high standard with particular regards to sustainable environmental management. The management of the SHGs also appears to be of a satisfactory standard, using current and local Tamil Nadu resources and guidelines.

7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement

The agencies' capacity for learning and continuous improvement is *satisfactory.* There appears to be organisational commitment by QSA and PBRC to enable learning and change. The new direction taken by PBRC into SHGs and villages outside of Auroville is indicative of an organisation able to self-reflect and adopt new practices. However the lack of a design document and the underlying analysis which would create such a document, means that PBRC are vulnerable to failing to tease out the medium to long term outcomes and the attendant risks and assumptions.

Good quality monitoring systems ensure timely information flow. The weekly and monthly meetings appear to be adhered to with discipline. The use of criteria for each activity guides and informs discussions in a consistent manner. The monitoring systems definitely foster accountability and compliance. Responsive decision making from this process is effective with actions decided upon each week and followed up. Criteria relate to a range of outputs and a few outcomes and this apparent confusion may diminish PBRC's responsiveness and potential to reflect and continually improve their work.

PBRC has observed that the best results of the agricultural programme have come from small group interactions between staff and the farmers and women themselves. The large workshops tend to receive a lot of interest, but as time passes information is forgotten and without some form of motivation, either through direct contact or through the SHGs themselves, initiatives remain unused. In response to this observation, PBRC will support the further training of SHGs which are smaller and combine these with exposure visits to organic agricultural practices.

PBRC has plans for a mid-term evaluation to ensure that all objectives are being properly implemented.

8. Effectiveness of development intervention

The effectiveness of PBRC's development intervention is *Satisfactory.* The project activities will contribute to the stated objectives but as the expected outcomes are not defined, the degree of attribution will be difficult. The development of strong and sustainable SHGs (Objective 2) will be crucial to the effectiveness of the other objectives as it is the means to sustainability for other objectives.

The most significant constraint to effectiveness of this project is the lack of clear outcomes analysis and definition. Ideally this process, at least in relation to the development of strong and sustainable SHGs, should be undertaken with the participation of SHG members. In the absence of clearly defined outcomes, the ability of PBRC and the SHGs to understand progress or constraints and therefore be meaningfully engaged in the development process is compromised.

The project should contribute to lasting change for the participants. Focus group discussions and observation of the project activities revealed positive changes to the lives of participants and improvements in poverty reduction. Livelihoods of the participants were generally supported either through direct income improvement or by increasing efficiencies of household expenditure and farming practices. Improvements included: increased income and access to credit to manage

short term expenses; improved farming skills with accompanying increased incomes and efficiencies; increased confidence to engage with authorities to access services; improved health of children from the use of medicinal herbs and understanding of some health issues.

Gender analysis undertaken by PBRC appears to be satisfactory and the likelihood of improvements in gender equity is high. The project was initially begun in cooperation with women healers. Women are involved at all levels of planning and participation. Numerous examples were described during the course of focus group discussions of individual women's lives being improved in terms of their position in the family, the community and engaging in political processes.

Elements of this project rely on the demonstration of successful models, for example the Nadukuppam High School, herbal kitchen gardens and the agro-forestry demonstration farm. As a method of increasing and broadening the impact of a project, demonstration models are an excellent concept. However the effectiveness of this approach is diminished in the absence of a well targeted advocacy strategy. The demonstration models appear to be well utilised amongst project participants and some government representatives through exposure visits. The full potential of the models would be strengthened if a clear and strategic plan to target advocacy efforts was developed.

Another feature of the "models" approach is the need for successes. While this is usually a positive feature, there is a risk of creating artificial models and of repeatedly rewarding the "successes" with further support at the expense of marginalised community members unable to engage so effectively in project activities.

9. Strategies for sustainability

PBRC's strategies for sustainability in relation to some key project outcomes are ***unsatisfactory.*** There is no doubt the project will support the sustainable use of the environment, in this regard PBRC is a leader in its field. However the ANCP activities this year and in previous years have also worked to improve educational standards at the Nadukuppam schools and to establish strong and sustainable SHGs amongst other things. In the absence of improved analysis and inclusion of ways to address obvious challenges to sustainability, the effectiveness and long term impact of interventions relating to both of these areas is at risk.

The approach of PBRC is characterised by the development and demonstration of high quality models. An evaluative exercise a few years ago, led to the establishment of the project in Nadukuppam in recognition that Auroville was a special context which could not be replicated in standard rural Tamil Nadu. Vandipalayam, Nadukuppam and other villages were chosen in part because they represented rural Tamil Nadu. The "model" approach is absolutely valid and can be a highly effective method of development, however the impact of a model is diminished unless it is accompanied by a strategic plan of education and lobbying. It must also be feasible to replicate it or elements of it otherwise all that has been achieved is the establishment of another controlled environment.

PBRC's analysis, articulation and management of sustainability issues and challenges is inadequate. Significant improvements have been made to the Nadukuppam School which have undoubtedly improved the quality of education for current students, however requirements such as continued donor funding for additional teachers and support of meals for students pose real challenges to sustainability and diminish the value of the school as a replicable model.

On a more positive note, the project has contributed significantly to capacity building of participants in areas such as group management skills, changing farming practise, increased budgeting and small business management skills and linkages to government services such as banks. PBRC as an organisation is building its capacity in the area of community and people-centred development. It would benefit further from specific skill development in relation to project planning and design and strategic planning

QSA has a strategic plan, has made a 5 yr commitment to PBRC and intends to consider its exit strategy in 2007. PBRC has not developed exit strategies for its work. It has aspirations and hopes that others will take up elements of its models and practices and replicate them but this is not planned in a systematic or strategic manner. QSA and PBRC are aware of the strengths and challenges which face an organisation led by Founder/ Director in terms of its sustainability.

> *Recommendation:*
>
> - *PBRC would benefit from undergoing a strategic planning process which would include consideration of its long term plans with project communities.*
>
> - *The effectiveness and impact of "models" would be enhanced by the development of targeted educational and advocacy strategy.*

Overall Project Quality Rating: SATISFACTORY

Summary

Performance Dimension A Context Analysis	Rating	Performance Dimension B Development Strategy	Rating	Performance Dimension C Activity Implementation	Rating
Indicators 1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities.	S	Indicators 4. Adequacy of design process.	S	Indicators 6. Efficiency of activity implementation.	GP
		5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design.	US	7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement.	S
2. ANGO capacity to deliver development response.	GP			8. Effectiveness of development intervention.	S
3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.	S			9. Strategies for sustainability.	US

GP = Good practice; S = Satisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly Unsatisfactory.

APPENDIX D: TEAR REPORT

ANGO	TEAR Australia
Implementing Partner(s)	Muneer Social Welfare Society
INGO	Muneer Social Welfare Society
Program Title	Delhi Resettlement Area Integrated development Project(DRAIDP)
Budget – AusAID /ANGO	$23,544/$11,056
Beneficiary Target	Members of ~ 23 SHGs in 3 resettlements areas, plus families and members of wider community
Major Development Objective	2006/07 ADPlan • People(especially women) in project communities will be economically and socially empowered in order to improve their quality of life Partner proposal…. • To increase literacy levels of adults • To increase awareness of why disease occur and how to prevent them, so as to reduce the incidence of common illness • To reduce average family size • To increase employment opportunity for young women through skill training • To provide opportunity for residents to establish their own businesses by offering training and small loans through a micro-enterprise scheme • To build up a self dependant and governed community

Background

The organisations

TEAR Australia (Transformation, Empowerment Advocacy, Relief) is located in Melbourne. It is a mid sized, faith based NGO with Full level accreditation with AusAID. It works through partner groups which are working holistically with poor communities in development, relief and advocacy. TEAR only works through other Christian groups, it does not directly implement projects, and in India as at July 2006 TEAR works with 28 implementing partners and supports their work in some 47 projects, to a value of approximately A$2,350,000.

Muneer Social Welfare Society was founded in 1992 by Mr Asad Masih, and then registered as an NGO in May 1995. It is a relatively small faith based NGO based in Delhi, with a wide geographic spread of work, and projects in adult literacy, health education/awareness, health camps, family planning, community organisation, micro-enterprise development/SHGs, & NFE.. It has been a TEAR partner since 1998, and as at 2003-04 Muneer had 109 staff working in 4 states, Delhi, West Bengal, Assam and Uttar Pradesh, and an annual income around Rs6,640,000 (~A$196,000), 90% of which is from international donors.

The context

Muneer works in Delhi state in illegal squatter settlements and in legal re-settlements areas, accompanying communities when they are re-settled. The current ANCP funded project activities are in 3 re-settlement areas on the outskirts of Delhi, Bhalaswa (pop ~25,000), New Goutampuri (pop. ~ 57,000) and Madanpur Khaddar (pop ~ 48,000). There are particular challenges with the work because urban resettlement communities are more fragmented along language, ethnic, religious and other lines, less cohesive and more suspicious, and more transitory than rural communities. They exist in more volatile city settings, usually on the margins, where legal rights and responsibilities can be notoriously difficult to clarify and secure.

A. Context Analysis

1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities

The appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities is considered to be **satisfactory**. TEAR has supported poverty alleviation work in India for many years, currently through some 28 partner organisations. TEAR does not have a particular geographic or sectoral focus in its India program, but rather organises its resources and activity support around two main purposes:

- To continue to identify and resource projects & programs which have positive impacts in poor communities,
- To continue to build partnerships with local organisations that support effective implementation of projects and programs.

TEAR's analysis of the context is primarily relationship driven. It draws on a base of Christian values shared with local organisations, information and references from existing partners to highlight issues or new partners, and then an assessment of fit between a new organisation and TEAR's purposes as articulated in formal documents. Muneer was introduced to TEAR by an existing partner around 1996 and funding support commenced some time soon after that.

TEAR develops an oversight and analysis of the broader situation in India e.g. the potential change in the country's DAC status and then takes this into account in its partnership arrangements, encouraging partners to broaden their funding base. TEAR relies on the partner organisation to develop an analysis of the local context and communities, so a strength is that the analysis of geo-political context and complexities is very much location and issue specific.

Muneer had worked with communities when they lived in illegal squatter areas, so already had a significant understanding of the community and relevant issues. It conducted community meetings in January 2003 in the new legal resettlement areas and then conducted household surveys in March, with staff going door to door in each project area. Staff members had to interview about 40 households. They then collated and analysed the results of the surveys, convened further meetings with the people, and through a process of consultation and feedback identified the most needy sections and priority interests within the resettlement areas. The surveys identified the language, geographic background, social group and other characteristics of community members, as well as the demand for literacy training, particularly from women. Surveys, and hence Muneer's analysis of the development context, are repeated and updated annually. The activity design reflects the findings of these consultations and surveys, particularly the role of literacy training as an entry point for community members and Muneer, the inclusion of other work on health awareness, and the phased introduction of SHG internal savings and loans activities, and then MED loans.

2. NGO capacity to deliver development response

There are clear strengths and capacities in both TEAR and Muneer, however there are also weaknesses, and overall the NGO capacity to deliver the development response is considered **unsatisfactory**. TEAR has extensive experience in India, working with a large number of partner organisations, on community development, health, education and other sectors, so it is able to develop knowledge and analysis from varying sources and perspectives.

The Evaluation Team did not review management procedures and practices in any detail, but it seems that standard management procedures and practices are in place: TEAR is a Full accredited NGO, Muneer is a registered NGO, has an FCRA number, a Board and a clear staffing structure, is audited annually, and publishes an annual report with basic data about the organisation. There is regular 6 monthly financial and narrative reporting from Muneer to TEAR which enables both to monitor project progress. There are basic guidelines about some of the project activities e.g. the savings and loan scheme has a 9 bullet point outline, but these are not documented comprehensively enough to enable clear analysis. Communications between TEAR and Muneer are conducted through regular reports, email and biannual visits, with limited phone contact because the Executive Secretary at Muneer and the Project Officer at TEAR are not sufficiently confident in English/Hindi.

TEAR staff clearly have strong respect and affection for the Executive Secretary of Muneer, and for the organisation, but it was not always clear if and how this respect and affection informed rigorous professional practice. For example, a TEAR monitoring visit format (Nov 2004) includes a review of the partnership aspects of the work, using criteria or prompts about "levels of acceptance, frankness

during discussions, openness to ideas and so on and so forth". That same report also indicates that the Executive Secretary "expects a degree of openness that is reflected in the TEAR partner relationship also." These are important capacities in activity management. However in its briefing in Melbourne TEAR staff cautioned the Evaluation Team to tread particularly carefully around Muneer and in the resettlement areas, giving a general impression of fragility, and that Muneer has limited understanding, awareness and openness to outsiders. The Evaluation Team certainly developed an impression of a more robust NGO, one receiving funding from 11 international agencies for work in 4 states across the country, and with the apparent capacity, as an implementing partner, to manage an external evaluation exercise. This example raised questions about the capacity or sensitivity demonstrated by TEAR staff in managing this exercise within the project cycle.

There may be gaps in TEAR's knowledge of some technical aspects of the project e.g. a November 2004 monitoring visit report recommends that TEAR pursue better understanding of the way in which Muneer manages the savings and loans of community groups, and then an October 2006 monitoring report only follows-up the issue in a cursory manner. In mid 2005, TEAR had identified that linking SHGs to local commercial banking services was "crucial to the … sustainability" of another partner program in India, so it would be useful to understand why these linkages with banks are not an element of the way Muneer manages the savings and loans activity. Muneer was not able to provide the Evaluation Team with a clear, detailed description, or to refer to comprehensive written guidelines about how the savings and loans are managed and operated.

Muneer staff received training at orientation and there are moves to introduce monthly training during project implementation. Local staff are drawn from local communities, and there was certainly a strong positive rapport between community members and all of the Muneer staff during field discussions.

TEAR has had concerns about Muneer's emphasis on service delivery as a means of community development, rather than other models that promote community governance and management of the activities, and thus facilitate the community to undertake its own 'community development'. This was noted in several monitoring visit reports and in discussions with TEAR staff. The issue continues to provide a challenge to the work and the partnership, and is reflected in various aspects of the project such as when regular community meetings identify problems and then Muneer staff identify the solutions, instead of facilitating community efforts to resolve problems. It is also evidenced in the savings and loans component of the project where Muneer acts as a bank for SHGs and individual community members rather than facilitating direct linkages between them and banks. The latter option would enable them to continue to gain access to credit after Muneer's role ceased however unfortunately there are apparent difficulties with this approach in the Delhi setting due to a lack of interest from the local banks. While Tamil Nadu is not Delhi, and resettlement communities are much more fragmented and challenging than settled, cohesive rural village communities, state government technical guidelines for SHGs in Tamil Nadu resonate with the current situation and include:

> …NGOs or federations *should NOT enter into the area of lending to SHGs*, …. lead to undesirable dependence on NGO/federation, leading to non attainment of sustainability… SHGs should *immediately open bank accounts on formation* in order to ensure safe and transparent transactions [17]

The proposal from Muneer to TEAR states "though children will not be direct beneficiaries of this project but they will be an important part of it…." (p 10). However Muneer works directly with children as well as adults. Girls as young as 11 and 13 participated in SHG activities and discussions with the review team. Some of these SHGs and individuals have loans from Muneer, and some younger children have savings accounts with Muneer. While not directly supported under this project, Muneer also operates a children's hostel. The TEAR – Muneer partnership agreement includes a reference child protection but it would seem that guiding policies and practices have not been clearly developed. The degree of direct work with children indicate that TEAR should work within international standards [18] to support Muneer to develop clearer awareness, practices and policies on the issue, to ensure children's right to protection and to address any present or potential risk.

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[17] Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd. Mahalir Thittam, Working Manual, 2000. p 38 & 39
[18] Tearfund & NSPCC, Setting the Standard, A common approach to child protection for international NGOs, 2003.

Recommendation:

TEAR should take a lead in supporting Muneer to progress Clause 6 in the partnership agreement, to develop awareness, practices and policies on the issues of child protection so that children's rights are secure, and also to address any potential to undermine the capacity of the community development work to achieve the objectives.

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3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships

TEAR holds motivation and partnership as underlying principles in its guidelines for development and relief assistance. However, the strategies deployed in building the partnership between TEAR and Muneer may not strengthen the quality of the partnership and appear to be **unsatisfactory.** The two NGOs have been working together since 1998 and both affirm a shared values base as a positive and important foundation on which they are building the partnership.

While these shared values obviously provide a level of compatibility between the NGO's overarching philosophies, a reliance on them as the primary building block in the partnership may also hinder more robust critiquing of professional policies and practices, including development strategies such as service delivery vs. community empowerment approaches, or operational matters such as documentation of savings and loans schemes. As noted earlier, TEAR highlighted the apparent fragility of the organisation and the resettlement areas, the religious persecution of the Executive Secretary (ES), his commitment and the sacrifices he has made in his work with poor people, and cautioned the Evaluation Team to tread very gently during the evaluation exercise. While acknowledging the worth of the Muneer team, and personal commitments and sacrifices they have made, it was possible to perceive this advice as inconsistent with a partner NGO that works with a range of strengths and weaknesses across 4 states in India, and which in 2003-04 received funding from 11 international donors, employed around 109 people, and implemented 13 projects that worked directly with around 30,000 people.

There are existing mechanisms such as partner concepts and proposals, email discussions and recrafting of the proposal into an ADPlan summary, regular reporting and email follow-up, and biannual TEAR field visits, all of which should facilitate joint decision making during project implementation particularly at the operational level. But there is clearly a divergence between TEAR and Muneer about the approach and the strategic directions of the work, with TEAR emphasising community development principles that would see increasing community governance and management, and Muneer being accustomed to a more service delivery approach. TEAR monitoring reports in November 2004 and October 2006 indicate that there has been interest on the part of the Muneer leadership team in the issue, but that there hasn't been significant progress on this issue in that period. There is no indication that the monitoring reports were shared and then formed the basis of robust discussions and development of a common way forward, or agreeing to disagree about elements of that way forward i.e. managing differences. These aspects raise questions about compatibility between the NGOs with regard to approaches, philosophies or goals.

Muneer manages the project cycle and the development processes, with inputs from TEAR as a valued funding and philosophical partner. TEAR certainly assesses Muneers capacity as an NGO, identifying strengths and some weaknesses e.g. the focus on service delivery rather than CD. They currently provide support for consultants to work with Muneer e.g. on staff development, proposal writing, translations etc., but Muneer and TEAR do not appear to have developed a shared analysis of Muneer's organisational capacity, nor a shared vision or plan of where the NGO wants to go, how it will get there etc. TEAR advise they may include direct capacity building components in future ANCP funded activities, but without this shared analysis, plan, and commitment from Muneer, any capacity building work faces the same challenges and risks as does the service delivery work in the community, with particular problems about sustainability.

Muneer liaises with some other NGOs. It was introduced to TEAR through EFICOR a major partner in India, and EFICOR has provided some support to the agency. Muneer has visited the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and advise that they draw on some of their guidelines to develop formats or practices in some aspects of the savings and loan activities. This seems to be done on a needs basis which may at times be ad-hoc, so that there isn't a clear set of operational guidelines, and some forms are printed in English and some in Hindi, without an apparent rationale in each case. There are some

problems coordinating with other NGOs that work in the resettlement areas, different approaches to work and the community highlight competition rather than collaboration. This is a common challenge in many parts of India and TEAR is aware of the issue, and is encouraging Muneer to coordinate with local NGOs as best it can.

B. Development Strategy

4. Adequacy of design process

The adequacy of the design process is **satisfactory**. When the people moved from illegal squatter communities to resettlement areas, Muneer used standard social analysis tools such as consultation meetings and household surveys to identify community characteristics and priority needs and interests. Regular, annual updates of the community survey is a strength that can be drawn on in further design processes. All community members including the most vulnerable and marginalised can join literacy and other project activities such as community meetings, health camps and so on, but the poorest or most marginalised may not be able participate in the SHG savings and loan activities because they may not have a social network of like minded people, or a minimal capacity for regular savings.

The project design is culturally appropriate – a particular strength is that Community Health Educators (CHEs) and trainers are recruited from the local area, so know the community members, and are known and have a strong rapport with the community. Some external risks to project progress such as fire, floods, electricity supply and migration have been noted, but other risks such as defaulting on loans; organisational reliance on a key person who is the founder/director; and risks for children participating directly in the project work, don't seem to have been considered in developing the project.

The design process seems to reflect a satisfactory gender analysis, in that it specifically focuses on women as participants, but also includes men in some activities and importantly in consultation processes, thus acknowledging and working with community patterns of decision making. This approach also provides support for women to reduce the risk of loans being appropriated by their husbands. Income generating activities such as beauty treatment skills and tailoring can support women's incomes even if they are still restricted to their homes.

The activity is coherent with TEAR's broader development strategy including the underlying principles of motivation and partnership, and a focus on documented priority development themes. There are challenges about approaches to development work, but there may also be opportunities for synergies between Muneer and other TEAR partners in India, particularly about community development approaches and operational guidelines for SHGs and MED loans. The activities are consistent with AusAID's policies but awareness of child protection, and developing appropriate practices and policies to ensure children's rights to effective protection should be strengthened by TEAR and Muneer.

As noted earlier Muneer certainly consults the target communities through regular meetings and through initial and follow-up surveys. There is community participation in the project activities, with local women and men working as staff and a large number of community members engaging in activities such as meetings, literacy and skills training, SHGs and savings and loans. But both TEAR and Muneer seem to recognise that there is limited community management and governance of the work and TEAR is certainly wrestling with this issue.

Using the survey and meeting results, Muneer develops an initial draft proposal, and TEAR, using email and sometimes short term consulting support, negotiates with Muneer to craft that proposal into a project design document and ADPlan submission. Broad lessons have emerged over the partnership period, particularly the differing approaches to community development, and TEAR recognises this as a major challenge in it's partnership with Muneer.

Overall the design process is strong on community consultation and feedback, and a systematic approach to data collection.

5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design

There is an activity design that is captured in several documents. There is a Muneer project summary funding proposal to TEAR for the period 2003 – 2008, which provides the basic outline of the project design. TEAR then works with Muneer and summarises this into the ADPlan summary format. Muneer develops annual action plans e.g. Delhi (Phase II) Action Plan 2006 – 2007. Overall, the standard of the funding proposal or activity design is **unsatisfactory** because it indicates that there hasn't been the planning process that would facilitate Muneer and TEAR to consider project outcomes. The activity designs are outputs focused, which is consistent with the service delivery approach.

The project is a coherent set of activities, based on community consultation and surveys. As noted, Muneer has an action plan that effectively describes activities and outputs, and it is reasonably clear at the outputs level, noting numbers but does not include indicators of quality or time within the annual period, and there is limited clarity on process and outcomes. Beneficiaries have been identified through surveys and meetings, with Muneer targeting the poorer blocks within the resettlement areas. The work may not include the poorest and most marginalised for reasons noted earlier. Also TEAR intentionally excludes high risk interventions or longer term projects like working with the poorest or most marginalised from its ANCP program because of the AusAID requirement to identify results in a 12 month period.

The activity budget support from TEAR is relatively small, some $23,000 under ANCP funding and $11,000 from TEAR. It is mainly staffing and training and other material costs and seems reasonable. Funding for SHG and individual loans are not included in the current TEAR budget support. TEAR advises that it provided Muneer with a loan fund a number of years ago. This fund has been used to provide loans which have been repaid to Muneer over the years. No further loan capital has been sought by Muneer so it assumed that these repaid funds continue to fund ongoing loans however it was difficult to obtain a clear explanation from Muneer in this regard.

TEAR has suggested undertaking an evaluation soon, to inform further planning in the partnership. The monitoring arrangements in the project are clear and effective to outputs level. Data is collected systematically on classes and meetings conducted, numbers attending various activities, savings deposited, withdrawals made, loans issued, loans recovered, interest paid and so on. There are clear formats for capturing this information e.g. Report of SHG; Monthly Transaction of S.G.H. Delhi.

The partner proposal identifies some external risks such as fire, floods, electricity supply and migration which would all have an effect on the project and the beneficiaries, but they haven't identified internal risks such as capacity to repay loans, reliance on Muneer for delivering services, limited community capacity for management, decrease in donor funding etc. Some clearer analysis in this area could strengthen the activity design.

Associated with this risk analysis, there are significant problems around sustainability of the project. For example, Muneer is considering moving out of Delhi and focusing on rural villages, but with the limited community management and governance work they have done in resettlement areas, it is unlikely that community groups could maintain project activities or benefits beyond Muneer's involvement. Similarly, if SHG loans are externally funded, which still has to be clarified, and if Muneer has not facilitated direct linkages between SHGs and banks, then the activity design means that community access to credit is necessarily not sustainable beyond Muneer's involvement.

C. Activity Implementation

6. Efficiency of activity implementation

The efficiency of the activity implementation is generally **satisfactory**. There is a committed local staff team demonstrating strong links and rapport with local communities, and there is a good system in place to capture outputs data. There is a 2006-07 action plan which, while it does not include indicators of quality or time, does cite sub-objectives, activities and outputs, and could readily serve to develop monthly work schedules. Muneer's annual reports are reviewed by a wider TEAR team, and the TEAR Project Officer receives 6 monthly financial and narrative progress reports, and liaises about any proposed or actual variation from plans. The TEAR funding is about 60% of the total project budget, with the balance coming from Muneer, other donors and from the community. Main

budget items are staff costs and materials and both appear to be reasonable. TEAR's budget monitoring is regular and any variations above 10% have to be authorised beforehand.

Some components of the project use existing technical materials and standards e.g. the literacy training uses standard texts and the some of the health activities employ a qualified doctor following standardised TB treatment regimes. SHG groups producing tailored goods indicated they were of a sufficient quality to sell in local markets, and beauty trainees reported reasonable income from their work. However the technical aspect of the savings and loans component was not clear or adequate. Muneer did not have an analysis of the overall cost of the scheme, and hence of the viability of Muneer or the community continuing it beyond external funding. There aren't comprehensive guidelines and formats in Hindi (or English) so that staff, the community and others can readily track the operations of the savings and loan scheme e.g. the criteria for SHG membership, the expected timing of internal savings activities, and internal loans, eligibility for Muneer loans, decision making processes etc. Some formats are in English, some in Hindi and there isn't a comprehensive or accessible set of documents that would signpost the overall process. Some SHG members had very limited understanding of the period of the repayment of the loan, the interest rates and other details. Under these circumstances discretionary decision making occurs, which can be reasonable, but it wasn't clear whose discretion was applied, when, within what range etc. This presents a risk and a challenge to the project.

Recommendation:

To ensure transparency and encourage accountability, Muneer should develop a comprehensive and user friendly operations manual that outlines the who, what, when, where, how and why of the savings and loans element of the project, and make it available to staff, community members and others, so that all stakeholders have access to adequate technical information about a key project component.

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7. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement

The apparent capacity of the NGOs for learning and continuous improvement is **unsatisfactory**. The information flow at outputs level is timely and adequate, but it was not clear that it consistently led to responsive decision making. For example, when we considered examples of loan periods and repayment amounts with SHGs and Muneer, decisions were made on a case by case and discretionary basis, rather than with reference to the outputs data of the particular group, or the set of SHGs, and it was not clear how the systematic approach to data collection supported responsive and consistent decision making.

Muneer captures monthly activity information, and compiles this into 6 monthly progress reports and this facilitates activity planning, compliance and accountability to a certain level. But the absence of comprehensive operational guidelines about the SHGs and savings and loans leaves a lot of room for discretionary decision making, and this does not strengthen transparency, accountability and shared compliance to commonly agreed standards. Trends are identified in anecdotal ways, and with individual case studies, and while this is fine to a certain point, if the planning and monitoring focused more on outcomes it would facilitate more reliable assessment of trends and the impact of the work, and provide a platform for both Muneer and TEAR to consider lessons about the work. Communications between TEAR and Muneer are regular and supportive but it's not clear that they include sufficiently robust discussion and questioning about lessons emerging, mistakes as well as successes, issues and risks for the project and options about the way ahead.

The partnership is clearly valued by both TEAR and Muneer, it reflects a strong commitment to shared values, so it should provide a strong base from which to identify problems, lessons emerging and options for innovation. For example, TEAR has identified issues around Muneer's organisational capacity and approach to community development, but then it isn't clear that there has been subsequent discussions and exercises with Muneer, including mutual assessments of organisational capacity, shared analysis of strengths and weaknesses (or agreement to disagree about some elements of that), and some common plan including agreed indicators about where they want to go, how they will get there and so on. Hence the same issue about service delivery compared to facilitating community management and governance recurs in the two most recent TEAR field monitoring reports, with no indication of progress during that two year period. In this particular example, it is difficult to see how the policies, structures and cultures of the two NGOs favour change or willingness to innovate in response to lessons learned.

8. Effectiveness of development intervention

The effectiveness of the development intervention is **unsatisfactory**. There are clear strengths in the project including the consultation with the community, the focus on women while acknowledging the role of men and attempting to include them appropriately in the work, the response to community requests for literacy training, and the use of literacy training to promote health awareness and community mobilisation to access government services. These are all positive elements of the project. However, the expected outcomes of the intervention are not well articulated, and indicators around them haven't been developed. Community members will most likely continue to participate in activities, but with very little shared understanding about where the project is going, and if and how the community itself might take it forward in time. The current focus on outputs rather than outcomes encourages Muneer to maintain a service delivery approach to the work rather than a more community empowerment approach.

The project activities should contribute to at least 5 of the 6 objectives cited in Muneer's 5 year proposal, the exception being the objective about building self-dependent and governed communities, but in the absence of meaningful indicators it is not possible to assess the degree of contribution. Certainly the project identifies output indicators in terms of numbers and the outputs seemed to have fostered the anticipated benefits amongst community members and positive responses from beneficiaries consulted during this review. Given that outcomes and indicators are not well articulated, it is not possible to assess if the work contributes to significant and lasting changes in the communities. The absence of meaningful outcomes encourages the project to continue working with community members as 'beneficiaries" rather than as 'decision-makers'. Literacy training group members and trainers spoke often about being able to recognise bus numbers after the 6 and 12 month literacy course, but other than this, the degree of literacy, or outcomes for the trainees weren't identified.

Improvements have probably occurred in poverty reduction at an individual level. Some beneficiaries of loans were on their 4th, 5th or 6th loan, so for them access to reasonable credit was clearly proving to be positive. Other people had accessed particular government services like birth registration, or medical treatment. However given that Muneer has not facilitated linkages with banks, and that the community is fragmented along religious, geographic, caste and other lines, unlike a more cohesive rural village, and the project hasn't sought community management and governance processes as an outcome, it is unlikely that the community would be able to take the work forward at all, and so maintain any improvements in poverty reduction.

Women participate in all components of the project, as employees, SHG members, skills trainees, savings and loans participants, and as members in community consultations, so their visibility and role in the community is widened, and options for training and at times income generating are strengthened. The tailoring, beauty and craft training provided safe opportunities for girls and women to engage in activities beyond their homes, and for many to take skills and income earning opportunities back into their homes during and after the training. However women, just as with other members of the community, were not involved in developing the management or governance arrangements of the project, and generally participated as "beneficiaries" rather than as decision makers working with others to manage their own steps forward.

9. Strategies for sustainability

Strategies for sustainability are **unsatisfactory**. On the positive side, TEAR is supporting Muneer to broaden its funding base to address the eventuality that India's DAC status changes and TEAR funding reduces; Muneer staff certainly seem to have a strong rapport with community members and that foundation of goodwill would facilitate continuing work. However, Muneer's model of work is characterised by a service delivery approach, with high community reliance on Muneer for delivery of various goods and services and for solution to problems that have been identified by community members. At the same time, Muneer is considering scaling down its work in Delhi and concentrating on rural villages where there are fewer NGOs working, and where rural poverty fuels urban poverty. If Muneer does leave these project areas, it is difficult to see how the current suite of benefits would be maintained by the community.

Muneer's project proposal asserts that the project will be sustainable because of the degree of support and participation of the community, and through charging for some services. TEAR's two field monitoring reports over a two year period identify that the lack of community participation in the project management and governance arrangements limits the prospects of the benefits being sustained in the medium term, and here has apparently been limited progress from Muneer in analysing and addressing this. There appears to be a disjuncture between Muneer and TEAR's understanding of this key facet to sustainability, and the issues don't seem to be analysed and monitored in a systematic way. Some activities and benefits may be sustained beyond the current project e.g. individual or group tailoring activities and beauty treatments that have been achieving income for participants may be continued if individuals can maintain the supply of inputs. The savings and loan activities have been set up to be totally dependent on Muneer acting as the bank, rather than facilitating direct linkages between individuals and SHGs and commercial banks, so this access to credit is unlikely to be sustained beyond Muneer's presence in the community.

The project is likely to add to the capacity of Muneer indirectly if only through continuing work with international funders, and also because TEAR emphasises partnerships and is looking to develop direct capacity building activities with Muneer in future years. However for community beneficiaries, while there is strong local participation in operations e.g. Muneer staff are from the local area, and individuals and some SHGs are developing capacity to continue the work and secure benefits in the medium term, there is very limited community involvement in the management and governance of the project, and while Muneer supports community members to access government services and they may be able to continue doing so in the future, they do not facilitate people to access banks and local sources of reasonable credit, so their capacity is not strengthened in this area.

Overall Project Quality Rating: Unsatisfactory

Summary

Performance Dimension A Context Analysis	Rating	Performance Dimension B Development Strategy	Rating	Performance Dimension C Activity Implementation	Rating
Indicators 1. Appropriateness of analysis of context and complexities.	S	Indicators 4. Adequacy of design process.	S	Indicators 5. Efficiency of activity implementation.	S
		5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design.	US	6. NGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement.	US
2. ANGO capacity to deliver development response.	US			7. Effectiveness of development intervention.	US
3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.	US			8. Strategies for sustainability.	US

Quality Ratings: GP = Good practice; S = Satisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly Unsatisfactory.

APPENDIX E: ANCP ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Summary

Performance Dimensions

Dimension A Context Analysis	*Rating*	Dimension B Development Strategy	*Rating*	Dimension C Activity Implementation	*Rating*
Indicators 1. Appropriateness of analysis of geo-political context and complexities 2. ANGO capacity to deliver development response 3. Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships		**Indicators** 4. Adequacy of design process 5. Standard of funding proposal or activity design		**Indicators** 6. Efficiency of activity implementation 7. ANGO capacity for learning and continuous improvement 8. Effectiveness of development intervention 9. Strategies for sustainability.	

Overall Project Quality Rating: _____

Quality Ratings: GP= Good Practice; S= satisfactory; US= Unsatisfactory; HU= Highly unsatisfactory

Descriptions of Quality Ratings:

GOOD PRACTICE (GP):
This is normally as good as it gets. The project/program fully satisfies all AusAID/NGO requirements and has significant strengths. There are only a few minor weaknesses in the project/program as a whole.

SATISFACTORY (S):
This is the lowest rating that satisfies AusAID/NGO requirements. However, this rating usually means there can be weaknesses as well as strengths but that the weaknesses are not severe enough to threaten the project/program.

UNSATISFACTORY (US):
This rating indicates that the project/program has significant weaknesses although other aspects may be satisfactory. The weaknesses require immediate action if the project/program is to continue to progress.

The weaknesses have the potential to undermine the capacity of the intervention to achieve its objectives.

HIGHLY UNSATISFACTORY (HU): This is a rating that indicates serious deficiencies in the activity.   An activity would only be given an overall HU rating if there were widespread problems which have/will have the effect of preventing achievement of its objectives.

SOME RATING PRINCIPLES

- The emphasis is on quality and not quantity of analysis. In this regard multi-context sampling is important; the perspectives of key stakeholders (ANGO, partners, beneficiaries, other donors and government agencies) need to be taken into account during field visits.

- Only one rating may be awarded per level ie indicator

- Ratings against individual Standards are not necessary; the standards are only a guide to assessing the quality rating of an indicator.

- Provisional ratings (consequent upon the Desk Review) will be adopted pending the receipt of further information following field visits.

- The indicators within each Performance Dimension should be rated before the actual performance dimension. When each Performance dimension is finalised it is then possible to rate the overall development intervention.

- Ratings should not be averaged when converting to a higher level, eg, from quality Indicators to Performance Dimensions. Where the appropriate Performance Dimension level rating is not readily apparent, it is important to reflect upon the relative significance of particular indicators in arriving at an overall rating.

- Strengths and weaknesses should be briefly recorded in the Indicator comments column to capture the key issues in relation to the quality standards for that quality Indicator.

Performance Dimension A: Context Analysis

Indicator 1: Analysis of geo-political context and complexities.			
#	**Quality Standards**	**Rationale**	
1.1	Analysis of the development context target area and population (including relevant historical, social, gender, economic, political and cultural factors) was adequate		
1.2	ANGO and partners' development strategy and activity design took sufficient account of the geo-political context		
1.3	Changes in the geo-political context were carefully monitored and the development strategy, activity design and implementation mechanisms adjusted accordingly		
	Rating		
	Strengths	**Weaknesses**	

Indicator 2: ANGO capacity to deliver development response.			
#	**Quality Standards**	**Rationale**	
2.1	Past involvement or relevant experience of the ANGO and its partners in the geographic area and sector		
2.2	Quality management procedures and practices in place, including: • Financial management and administration systems • M&E systems for compliance and learning • Effective communications between ANGO and field • Professional development • Security		
2.3	ANGO Staff or volunteers have the capacity, skills and sensitivity needed to oversight or manage the activity effectively.		
2.4	staff or volunteers responsible for the project in-country have, or are developing the technical, organisational and social skills needed to implement the activity effectively		
2.5	Evidence of adherence to use of international HA standards where relevant		

	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Indicator 3: Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.			
#	**Quality Standards**	**Rationale**	
3.1	Pre-existing, positive working relationship with local partners		
3.2	Compatibility between ANGO and implementing partners' goals, policies, management procedures and practices		
3.3	Existing mechanisms to facilitate joint decision-making during planning, implementation and evaluation		
3.4	Participation of local partner throughout the project cycle and development process		
3.5	ANGOs assessment of partner capacity has been appropriately accommodated in partnership and activity design		
3.6	Partnership incorporates capacity building (if appropriate)		
3.7	ANGO is coordinating with other NGOs effectively		
3.8	ANGO has a strategy for long term engagement with partners' program and development process.		
	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Performance Dimension B: Development Strategy

Indicator 4: Adequacy of design process			
#	***Quality Standards***	***Rationale***	
4.1	Situational and needs analysis identified those in greatest need, as well as the most vulnerable and marginalised		
4.2	Design has considered the geo-political context and inherent risks		
4.3	Design reflects satisfactory gender analysis		
4.4	Activity design is coherent with ANGO's broader development strategy/ programs and may provide and benefit from synergies with other activities		
4.5	Activities are consistent with AusAID's policies and country strategies		
4.6	Participatory planning approach has been used involving local partners and/or representatives of target communities		
4.7	ANGO has made a positive contribution to the design process		
4.8	ANGO incorporated lessons from earlier work into the design process		
	Rating		
	Strengths	***Weaknesses***	

Indicator 5: Standard of funding proposal or activity design			
#	***Quality Standards***	***Rationale***	
5.1	Design is clear and logical and has realistic objectives that are appropriate to the project goal		
5.2	Beneficiaries are clearly identified		
5.3	Implementation strategies, responsibilities and schedules are clear, workable and achievable within project life		
5.4	Budget is realistic and informative		
5.5	Design articulates M&E arrangements		
5.6	Design identifies and takes account of the main risks and presents strategies for managing them		
5.7	Design incorporates sustainability strategy		

	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Performance Dimension C: Activity Implementation

Indicator 6:	*Efficiency of Activity Implementation*		
#	*Quality Standards*	*Rationale*	
6.1	Planned activities and outputs are likely to be completed on schedule		
6.2	Planned activities and outputs are likely to be achieved within budget		
6.3	The project inputs (commodities and services) and material outputs were of a satisfactory quality		
6.4	Costs for key budget items were reasonable		
6.5	NGO's project monitoring, reporting and acquittal procedures reliable, professional and meet AusAID needs		
6.6	Technical aspects of activity implementation meet agreed standards		
	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Indicator 7:	*ANGO Capacity for learning and continuous improvement*		
#	**Quality Standards**	*Rationale*	
7.1	M&E systems ensured timely information flow		
7.2	M&E systems ensured responsive decision making		
7.3	M&E system facilitates both accountability/compliance and organisational learning		
7.4	ANGO policies, organisational structure and culture favour change or willingness to innovate in response to lessons learned		

	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Indicator 8:	**Effectiveness of Development Intervention/Response**		
#	**Quality Standards**	**Rationale**	
8.1	Activity is likely to achieve planned objectives		
8.2	Outputs delivered have fostered the anticipated benefits among beneficiaries		
8.3	Outcomes contribute to significant and lasting changes in target communities		
8.4	Improvements likely to occur in poverty reduction		
8.5	Improvements are likely to occur in Gender equity		
8.6	The livelihoods of the affected populations were supported, not disrupted by the intervention (Checklist STEEP)		
	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

Indicator 9: Strategies for Sustainability			
#	**Quality Standards**	**Rationale**	
9.1	Sustainability issues are monitored and strategies for dealing with sustainability adjusted as required during implementation		
9.2	Project is likely to add to the capacity of implementing partners and beneficiaries to maintain the flow of benefits in the future.		
9.3	Project is likely to support the sustainable use of the environment		
9.4	There is a phasing out strategy for ANGO support to implementing partners.		
	Rating		
	Strengths	*Weaknesses*	

APPENDIX F: ANCP ASSESSMENT QUESTION GUIDE

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
Indicator 1: Analysis of geo-political context and complexities.		
ANGO, LNGO, field observation	Describe social or cultural factors that have influenced the project and the level of participation of beneficiaries in project activities?	
ANGO, LNGO, field observation	What technical factors have enabled or hampered project implementation or beneficiary participation?	
ANGO, LNGO, field observation	What economic factors have enabled or hampered project implementation or beneficiary participation?	
ANGO, LNGO, field observation	What ecological factors have enabled or hampered project implementation or beneficiary participation?	
ANGO, LNGO, field observation	What political (relational) factors have enabled or hampered project implementation or beneficiary participation?	
ANGO	What is your country strategy?	
ANGO, LNGO	Describe how you analysed the context to design the project	Also informs Indicator 4 and 3
ANGO, LNGO	How did you assess the community need?	Also informs Indicator 4
ANGO, LNGO	Describe how the beneficiaries were identified/scoped	Also informs Indicator 4
Indicator 2: ANGO capacity to deliver development response.		
ANGO,LNGO	How long have you implemented projects in this target area?	
ANGO, LNGO	Describe the nature of your interactions with your in-country partner – communication, frequency etc.	Also informs indicator 3
In Australia and in-country	Points for observation: • Management systems • quality of staff and volunteers	
Indicator 3: Strategies for ensuring quality partnerships.		

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
ANGO,LNGO	Describe the history and structure of your relationship with your partner.	Also informs Indicator 2
LNGO	Describe the value added by your ANGO partner	Also informs Indicator 4
ANGO	What level of engagement do you have with your in-country partner?	
ANGO	Describe your strategies for development of good relationships	
DA, ANGO, LNGO	Describe capacity building initiatives by the ANGO	
ANGO	Describe plans for the future of the relationship	
ANGO	Describe how you engage with partners beyond projects (if you do)…	
ANGO, LNGO	Describe how your collaborative efforts with other organisations (NGOs) are of value.	

Indicator 4: Adequacy of design process

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
ANGO	How does this project contribute to your country strategy?	
DA	Are activities consistent with AusAID's objectives?	
ANGO	Describe any synergies between this project and other projects within your country program?	
ANGO, LNGO	What strategies are you employing to ensure the intended changes are socially/culturally acceptable?	Also informs Indicator 1
DA, ANGO, LNGO	Describe your design process	

Indicator 5: Standard of funding proposal or activity design

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
DA, field observation	Consider the internal logic, coherence with context analysis, achievability of targets and performance measurement framework. Are implementation strategies, schedules and responsibilities clearly defined?	Also informs Indicator 6
DA, ANGO, LNGO, field observation	Describe the M&E framework employed to guide: • management decision-making, • learning and • accountability	Also informs Indicator 7
ANGO, LNGO	What processes do you use to assess risk and implement mitigation strategies? What are the risks?	

Indicator 6:   Efficiency of Activity Implementation

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
DA, ANGO	How do you know the planned activities and outputs are completed on schedule and within budget?	Also informs Indicator 7

Indicator 7:   ANGO Capacity for learning and continuous improvement

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
ANGO, LNGO	Describe processes by which you and your partners capture lessons learned	Also informs Indicator 2
ANGO	In what situations do you modify plans or change approaches?	
ANGO	Describe any particular innovative aspects to the work undertaken and has it enhanced or detracted from the impact)	
DA, ANGO, LNGO	Describe any aspects of your work which increase its complexity arising from where you work (location), who you work with (people) or the nature of what you do (sector).	
DA, ANGO, LNGO, field observation	Describe the M&E framework employed to guide: • management decision-making, • learning and	Also informs Indicator 5
ANGO, LNGO	How has the project been adapted to respond to any changed circumstances?	

Indicator 8:   Effectiveness of Development Intervention/Response

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
ANGO, LNGO	What changes to people's lives (impact) do you anticipate?	
ANGO, LNGO	What processes do you use to assess changes in peoples lives?	Also informs Indicator 7
ANGO,LNGO, field observation	What evidence do you have to suggest that your project is helping to change people's lives?	Also informs Indicator 7
ANGO, LNGO	What constraints have you encountered in gathering the evidence of this change?	Also informs Indicator 7
ANGO, LNGO	Do you anticipate the project will achieve its objectives?	Also informs Indicator 6

Indicator 9: Strategies for Sustainability

Data Source	Question	Cross reference
ANGO	What strategies do you employ to promote sustainability?	

APPENDIX G: ITINERARY

Date	Time	Task: Interview/meeting/focus group discussions
18/10/06		AusAID briefing Canberra
8/11/06	1130	QSA Program Manager
	1800	Travel to Melbourne
9/11/06	0930	TEAR Project Officer, Program Manager & Head of Operations
	1400	Assisi Project Officer & Chairperson
10/11/06	0930	PLAN Project Officer
		Travel to Sydney, Canberra, Mittagong
18/11/06		Travel: Canberra, Mittagong –Sydney – Delhi (JT, JH)
19/11/06		Travel: Sydney – Delhi (SM)
20/11/06	1000	AusAID briefing at Australian High Commission, Delhi
	1300	PLAN CEO & Head of M&E at AusAID office
	1500	PLAN - Mobile Creches CEO at MC office
21/11/06		PLAN Mobile Creches project site visit, focus group meetings with mothers, construction workers, construction site centres, Indra Puram, Delhi
	0930	PLAN – Mobile Creches, Advocacy Manager, Resource Mobilisation Manager, Board Member at MC office
		PLAN site visit – Mobile Creches: Right to Food Rally in Delhi suburb
22/11/06		PLAN, ECCD Technical Advisor, Program Support Manager, Grants Manager at AusAID
		PLAN – FORCES National Coordinator, at AusAID
23/11/06	1000	TEAR – Muneer: CEO & SMT at Muneer offices
	1100	Muneer field staff at Muneer offices
	1330	Muneer project site visit to Bhalaswa, focus group discussions & interviews: • Muneer field staff • SHG members, savings & loans participants; • Literacy; tailoring & beauty trainees • Other community members
24/11/06	1030	Muneer project site visit to New Goutampuri, focus group discussion & interviews with: • Muneer field staff • SHG members, savings & loans participants; • Literacy; tailoring, craft & beauty trainees • Other community members
	1500	Muneer debriefing with CEO & staff at AusAID
25/11/06		Travel Delhi – Chennai

Date	Time	Task: Interview/meeting/focus group discussions
26/11/06		Travel Chennai – Auroville
27/11/06	0900	PBRC – site visit Pitchandilkulam Forest Area
	0930	PBRC – briefing with CEO & SMT
	1400	PBRC site visit, Nadukuppam Environmental Education Center including: • SHG leaders in 3 focus group meetings • Meetings with PBRC field staff • School visit, tailoring trainees
		PBRC – informal meetings with staff during travel to and from project site
28/11/06		PBRC project site visits to Nadukuppam and surrounding villages including: • Interviews with individual SHG members, model toilet & kitchen herb garden recipients, PBRC staff; • Primary school visit, discussions with students, SHG member, staff; • Focus group discussions with tailoring trainees; • Site visits to kitchen herb garden, vermiculture kits, system of rice intensification fields;
		PBRC – debriefing with CEO & SMT
29/11/06		Travel Auroville to Vadanallur
		AFTC briefing with CEO & SMT, also with IDT
		IDT – meetings with field staff
		IDT – focus group discussions with 22 SHG members in their village
		IDT – project site visit to Nagamalai village including: • Discussions with community members; • Site visits to village dams; • Ceremony and discussions at village hall;
30/11/06		IDT – interview with Project Officer;
		IDT – focus group discussions in two villages with SHG members, Animators and community members;
		IDT/AFTC – debriefing with CEO and SMT
		Travel to Chennai
1/12/06		Travel Chennai to Singapore
2/12/06		Travel Singapore to Sydney to Mittagong

APPENDIX H: TERMS OF REFERENCE

AusAID 2006 Cluster Evaluation of NGO ANCP activities in India
Terms of Reference – 20ᵗʰ October 2006

BACKGROUND

The Australian Government's AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) managed by AusAID will provide around $25 million in funding in 2004-05 through Australian community development NGOs. The goal of the ANCP is to subsidise Australian NGO community development activities, which directly and tangibly alleviate poverty in developing countries. Each year AusAID reports to Parliament on the effectiveness of the aid program. At present NGOs assess the performance of their own ANCP activities against their stated objectives. Under the current system, over 80 per cent of NGO activities are self-assessed as satisfactory or higher.

There is an ongoing requirement to improve the quality of performance information in the ANCP. Since AusAID does not monitor ANCP activities, Cluster Evaluations will be carried out biannually as part of the CPS broader performance framework to assess ANCP outcomes. This strategy includes cluster evaluations, accreditation, spot checks and agencies' own evaluation findings.

The representative sample of NGOs taking part in this India Cluster Evaluation is diverse, and therefore the results of the evaluation will examine individual agency's activities and their contribution to the ANCP Scheme. It will not determine the impact of all NGOs within the ANCP.

There have been four cluster evaluations of NGOs undertaken since 2000. These have considered ANCP and bilateral NGO projects in Southern Africa and Vietnam, ANCP projects in Cambodia and the HES Cooperation Agreement projects (CAER) in Pakistan.

The 2004 Kilby Report[19] identified the need to conduct longitudinal performance reviews of the ANCP, comparing findings over time. To do this a standard methodology for ANCP Cluster Evaluations was developed during the Cambodia Cluster Evaluation in 2005. As a result of recommendations from that evaluation and input from the NGO sector through ACFID, the cluster evaluation methodology and the NGO Quality Assessment Framework were refined. These were subsequently used and refined further in the CAER Evaluation in Pakistan in 2006 and will be used in the India Cluster Evaluation.

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[19] Kilby, P, Options Paper, Revision of Performance Criteria for the ANCP Program, Sept 2004.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation are:
1. To evaluate a sample of ANCP activities in India
2. To assess the contribution of sampled activities to the overall ANCP objectives
3. To verify the efficacy of ANGO self-assessment processes of the sampled ANCP activities
4. To review the methodology developed for ANCP cluster evaluations
5. To review action taken on recommendations from the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation

INTENDED OUTCOMES

It is intended that the outcomes of the cluster evaluation will be used:
1. To meet AusAID's accountability requirements to the Australian Government
2. To contribute to the performance information on the ANCP Scheme
3. To enhance opportunities for learning and performance improvement by AusAID and the NGO sector
4. To further refine the cluster evaluation methodology and tools.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

ANCP projects of the following ANGOs will be included in the cluster evaluation:
- TEAR Australia
- Quakers Service Australia (QSA)
- Assisi Aid Projects India Inc. (Assisi)
- Plan International Australia (Plan)

For each NGO, the following stakeholders will be consulted in Australia and in India:
- Australian agency program staff (e.g. Program Director, Desk Officer)
- Indian partner program staff (e.g. Country Director, Program Director)
- Project implementation team staff (e.g. Project Manager, technical/field staff)
- Project beneficiaries, community representatives etc.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Approach

The approach acknowledges the complexity of issues surrounding performance measurement of international aid activities. These issues include the lack of agreement on absolute measures of performance and definitions of concepts such as impact, quality etc., as well as the difficulty of attributing change to individual activities in complex environments. In a cluster evaluation, these complexities are compounded by the need to use rapid appraisal techniques and the difficulty of accommodating diverse agency structures, contexts, objectives and stages of implementation.

The Cluster Evaluation Framework (attached at Annexure 1) to be used in India was developed by CPS as a result of lessons learned during the 2005 Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. It draws on the three assessment frameworks used in that evaluation: AusAID's NGO Quality Assessment Framework (QAF); ACFID's NGO Effectiveness Framework and the STEEP Framework. An AusAID peer review of the Cambodia ANCP Cluster Evaluation acknowledged the merit of taking a broader perspective on activity performance and recommended that the three frameworks be integrated into a new single evaluation framework. The Cluster Evaluation Framework is further supported by the use of a Question Guide developed by CPS for the Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. These tools have subsequently been trialled in the 2006 CAER Cluster Evaluation in Pakistan.

The use of these tools will ensure that the process of analysing activity performance is rigorous, transparent and comprehensive, and will help to address some of the long-standing problems associated with incorporating activity context in NGO performance evaluation.

To ensure the India Cluster Evaluation meets its dual roles of accountability and quality improvement, it is important that all stakeholders are engaged in the evaluation process and respond to the findings and recommendations.

Sampling
A three-stage purposive sampling process has been carried out to select the cluster of four ANCP activities to be evaluated.

The first stage of sampling involved country selection. India was selected based on the following criteria:
- a minimum of 5 NGOs implementing ANCP activities from which to draw a reasonable sample
- acceptable security situation in country
- countries outside of South East Asia (the location of the Cambodia Cluster Evaluation)
- The AusAID post willing and able to support the cluster evaluation

While other countries were canvassed within AusAID and with DPAC, India met all these considerations.

The second stage of sampling involved selection of the agencies for evaluation. Both Base and Full agencies were considered. Four of the five agencies supporting ANCP activities in India were chosen, largely based on the location of their activities and logistics of conducting the field work.

The third stage of sampling involved selection of the individual activities to be evaluated. Where partner agencies implement more than one ANCP-funded activity in India, the selection was made by AusAID with input from the ANGO.

Methodology
The broad methodology will be qualitative. The particular methods of inquiry will include:
- Document reviews
- Key informant interviews
- Focus group discussions

- observation

Data will be collected and triangulated at three levels:
- In Australia with ANGOs, AusAID and ACFID
- In India with AusAID Post, Indian NGO partner organisations and other relevant groups
- At project sites with implementing teams, community representatives and beneficiaries

The performance of the sampled ANCP activities will be assessed using the AusAID Cluster Evaluation Framework. The Framework considers three dimensions of performance: context analysis, development strategy and activity implementation. The Framework identifies 9 indicators of performance. A qualitative approach is used to assess each activity using the indicators and a four level quality rating system. Strengths and weaknesses of the activity are also analysed and described.

The Cluster Evaluation Framework is supported by the use of a Question Guide. It will inform all interviews and focus group discussions. Drawing the Question Guide from the Evaluation Framework minimises the likelihood of omitting important lines of inquiry and ensures a rigorous and consistent approach by subsequent evaluation teams.

Initially the evaluation team will undertake a desk review of project documentation. Interviews with Australian NGO personnel will be held prior to departure for India. This will be followed by a two-week field study in India, allowing approximately 2-3 days per activity. Interviews with AusAID officers at Post, implementing partner personnel and beneficiaries, and other stakeholders such as Government and community representatives will be undertaken in Delhi and during field visits to project sites. Feedback sessions will be conducted with each implementing partner in India and ANGO prior to the completion of the draft report. The draft report will be circulated within AusAID and to the sampled ANGOs for comment prior to the submission of the final report.

In-Australia and field inquiry will involve a mix of key informant interviews and focus group discussions as appropriate to the context. Interviews will generally use a semi-structured approach and be informed by the Question Guide. The focus of these interviews will be context driven. Interviews with the ANGO will focus on strategic and tactical issues, with the Implementing Partners on operational issues and with the beneficiaries on formal and informal evidence of change in their lives.

PHASING AND DURATION

The evaluation process will be conducted in three phases in Australia and India:

Phase 1: Desk Review in Australia
18th October – 17th November 2006
- Identify sample activities for review, review methodology and evaluation framework in light of lessons learned from 2006 Pakistan CAER Cluster Evaluation, prepare TOR, procure AusAID and NGO documents relevant to the evaluation of the sample of activities, liaise with ANGOs
- Conduct document review in accordance with the approach and methodology as outlined above.
- Meet with relevant ANGO staff in Australia to collect additional documents if required and discuss activities in accordance with the approach and methodology outlined above
- Analyse the data and prepare a brief interim Desk Review Report for each agency for use by the Evaluation Team to inform the conduct of the next phase of the evaluation.

Phase 2: Field Visit in India
18th November – 5th December 2006
- Meet with AusAID representatives at Post
- Meet with all stakeholders involved in the sampled activities i.e. Indian partner program staff, project implementation team staff, project beneficiaries, community representatives etc. Discuss the context and activity and collect data in accordance with the approach and methodology outlined above
- Conduct rapid appraisal of field work of sampled activities through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews with staff, informal contact with beneficiaries and transect walks.
- Hold a de-briefing session with NGO staff in the field to discuss preliminary findings and seek feedback.

Phase 3: Feedback and Analysis in Australia
6th December - 22nd December 2006, February 2007
- De-brief AusAID staff in Delhi by phone to discuss preliminary findings
- Provide draft agency-specific findings to the ANGOs in Australia for comment
- Analyse data and findings
- Prepare a draft report on the performance of the selected sample of ANCP activities (report format attached at Annexure 2) and make recommendations on areas where performance might be improved.
- Provide AusAID and the NGO Sector (through ACFID/DPAC) with findings and seek feedback.
- Finalise report following AusAID and NGO comments and AusAID peer review in February 2007.

EVALUATION TEAM

The Team will be led by an AusAID appointed Team Leader with NGO and evaluation expertise. The three member team will include the Team Leader, an AusAID staff member from CPS, and another AusAID appointed consultant. The Team Leader acted as the NGO

representative on the previous Cambodia Cluster Evaluation. Team members from previous cluster evaluations will act in an advisory capacity. During the in-country visit, one PSU staff member will be made available to participate in the evaluation.