



REVIEW OF THE IRAQ HUMANITARIAN AND STABILISATION PACKAGE (2018-2020)

DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Program Overview

On 25 April 2017 the Australian Government announced a three-year \$100 million Iraq Humanitarian and Stabilisation Package (the Package). This was Australia's second multi-year humanitarian package in response to a protracted crisis. The design drew on the lessons learned from the Syria Humanitarian and Resilience Package. The Iraq Package was divided into three pillars (humanitarian, stabilisation and social cohesion). Support was initially provided to five partners, with three more engaged over the course of the program.¹

The Package was designed with two key objectives:

- (i) Vulnerable people in Iraq affected by the crisis receive inclusive humanitarian assistance and have greater access to protection services; and
- (ii) Institutions, infrastructure and social conditions are improved for conflict affected populations to recover and build resilience in a stable environment.

The thematic priorities of the Australian humanitarian program – disability, protection and gender equality – were mainstreamed across all partners' activities. The package started in April 2018.

The multi-year approach was a recommendation of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) 2014 evaluation of Australia's response to the regional Syria crisis. This approach also supported Australia's 2016 World Humanitarian Summit reform commitments to multi-year funding, greater localisation, providing unearmarked funding, and addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of affected populations (the Grand Bargain).

Since 2014, Australia has provided more than \$180 million in response to the humanitarian and stabilisation crises in Iraq. Australia's contribution is commensurate with our status as a mid-sized donor with a development program primarily focused on the Indo-Pacific.

Review Purpose

Through the review, DFAT sought to:

- assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the package and make recommendations for future programming;
- assess the extent to which the Package meets the needs of those most vulnerable and protects the safety, dignity and rights of affected people (with a particular focus on women and girls and people with a disability);
- assess whether the Package was delivered in a way which reinforced local capacity and supported recovery, resilience and long-term development;
- assess the extent to which Australia's approach was coordinated with and complementary to efforts of other actors, the extent to which Australia engaged with and influenced the international humanitarian system, and how the program contributes to Australia's national interests.

¹ The initial package partners selected were the UN Development Programme Funding Facility for Stabilisation (UNDP FFS); UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); International Humanitarian Organisations; and the Save the Children Australia-led Building Peaceful Futures consortium (BPF). Over the course of its three years of operation, the other partners brought on board were the International Organisation for Migration (IOM); the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Mosul Organisation for Development.

Key Findings

The review found that the Iraq Package was appropriately conceived and effective in responding to a highly complex operating environment and cross section of needs.

The Package has remained relevant due to its built-in flexibility to adapt to change and respond to emerging priorities. This capacity was used over the Package life to respond to social cohesion challenges, the sexual and reproductive health needs of Yazidis and Syrian refugees, and urgent water and sanitation needs in Central and Southern Iraq.

Working through trusted partners, the Package delivered strong results under the humanitarian, stabilisation and social cohesion pillars. Further, significant progress was made on thematic priorities such as gender and disability inclusion.

The review highlighted the importance of integrating conflict analysis in any new package to ensure the package logic and design sustains its relevance, and to improve alignment with the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) protection standards. The review also recommended third party monitoring and improved methods of data collection to improve accountability to affected populations.

Reflections on the Review

DFAT thanks the review team for the professionalism and expertise they brought to this review. DFAT is grateful to all those who participated in consultations for sharing their insights. We appreciate the ongoing dedication of our implementing partners and the Humanitarian Advisory Group in delivering and supporting humanitarian efforts in Iraq, particularly in light of the heightened operating challenges in 2020. DFAT also recognises the limitations of a desktop review and the absence of consultation with local communities and the Government of Iraq.

Australia has assisted 2.3 million people by responding to the humanitarian needs of Iraq's most vulnerable conflict-affected populations and supported Iraqi communities on a path toward greater resilience, cohesion and stability.

The review provides solid evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of implementing through trusted partners. It also highlights limitations of specific multilateral partner reporting efforts. Balancing our Grand Bargain Commitments for limited project specific reporting while ensuring our information needs are met is a key consideration for future monitoring and evaluation frameworks and partnership agreements.

The review offers useful recommendations on how DFAT can improve its monitoring and evaluation systems by integrating international standards such as IASC protection standards and considering third party monitoring. The review provides informed findings and well-considered recommendations for Australia's response to the Iraq conflict and to humanitarian crises more broadly. The review collates valuable evidence and captures lessons that will inform Australia's policy and programmatic approach to protracted crises and our global humanitarian reform commitments.

The review comes at an important juncture. COVID-19 is impacting aid priorities and all aspects of global humanitarian and stabilisation efforts. In 2020, some of Australia's partners adapted their activities to respond to the primary and secondary effects of COVID-19 in Iraq. Australia's COVID-19 response is informed and guided by priorities outlined in *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*. Australia's focus on the Indo-Pacific and the global pandemic may constrain DFAT's ability to address all the review's recommendations in full.

DFAT's Action Plan

DFAT agrees with the evaluation's five overarching recommendations in full or in part. Justifications for our responses are summarised in the following table. In developing the action plan, consideration was given to the COVID-19 context and shift in strategic priorities for the aid program outlined in the *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*. We will seek to apply these actions both in our Iraq programs and in other protracted crisis programs, as appropriate.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1: Maintain and strengthen an appropriate, relevant and effective package approach through diplomatic leadership and programming support for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and maintain support for critical protection services. Advocate and consider support for programming necessary to advance stabilisation objectives • Increase resource allocation to reconciliation and social cohesion and consider current and new specialised partners • Support trusted partners to adapt and respond to the health, protection and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable • Continue to exercise diplomatic leadership and engage in strategic coordination with likeminded donors on issues of common interest such as gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), women peace and security (WPS) and rights-based returns • Ensure future Packages and ongoing activities are informed by conflict analysis that integrates gender and WPS considerations 	<p>Agree in Part</p>	<p>DFAT recognises the importance of diplomatic leadership and effective programming as demonstrated by the results of this review.</p> <p>Advancing protection of civilians, UNSC 1325 (Women, Peace and Security [WPS]), and responding to COVID-19 are important issues for Australia and our current response in Iraq.</p> <p>Where possible, DFAT has supported our partners to flexibly respond to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 in Iraq, this has in part been possible due to softly – earmarked funding provided to partners.</p> <p>Reconciliation and social cohesion remain key aspects of the program however given the complex rapidly changing operating environment, resource allocations must continue to be based on contextual analysis.</p> <p>DFAT agrees that conflict analysis (that includes gender and WPS considerations) is important in the concept, design and implementation phase of Australia's responses to protracted crises and is a significant part of addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for more effective and sustainable outcomes for affected communities.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to exercise diplomatic leadership to advocate (independently or coordinated with others) for progress on durable rights based returns, GEWE, WPS, stabilisation and social cohesion. We recognise the value of diplomacy as a force multiplier in achieving these goals.</p> <p>DFAT will encourage implementing partners to design programs around appropriate analysis and standards including conflict analysis, protection standards, WPS, and GEWE. DFAT will consider appropriate funding across the nexus, particularly, between lifesaving assistance and reconciliation and social cohesion activities.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Improve effectiveness through alignment with IASC protection standards and minimum response level measures and verifiable indicators for accountability to affected populations (AAP) and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Ensure this approach informs future package designs, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Iraq's M&E framework, future package designs and M&E processes through alignment with IASC protection standards • Review and update current M&E processes and indicators with reference to independently verifiable indicators for AAP and PSEA 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT supports the IASC protection standards and recognises the importance of integrating them into programming. This includes through comprehensive protection risk analysis and three levels of action (strategic approach, dedicated programs and mainstreaming).</p> <p>Such an approach would support engagement with the full range of protection risks and better capture activities that could have been underreported previously.</p>	<p>During the design and implementation of response to protracted crises DFAT will encourage partners to demonstrate their adherence to the IASC standards and guidance on protection, PSEA, gender equality, gender-based violence, AAP, or equivalent organisational policies. Further, these will be required to be reflected in partner and DFAT monitoring and evaluation frameworks.</p>	<p>by July 2021</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Progress connectedness, sustainability and efficiency through a staged transition to Government of Iraq (GoI) leadership, continuing multi-year funding, investing in local partner systems and advocating for an appropriate and efficient coordination structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a progressive transition toward GoI leadership, continue to provide multi-year funding and require partners build the financial management and reporting capacity of their local partners • Advocate for an appropriate and efficient coordination structure moving forward 	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>DFAT recognises the benefits of multi-year funding and investing in local partner system strengthening. DFAT's reprioritisation of development assistance in response to COVID-19 may impact multi-year funding commitments.</p> <p>In line with Grand Bargain commitments, DFAT supports principled humanitarian action that is as local as possible and as international as necessary, calibrated to achieve the best outcome for affected populations. This includes identifying opportunities to provide funding directly to local partners and international organisations with strong local partnerships and promote local leadership and the voice of affected populations.</p>	<p>For the remainder of the current Iraq investment and during the design and implementation of response to protracted crises DFAT will incorporate advocacy and capacity development activities within our monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure progress towards this recommendation.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with partners to ensure capacity development of local partners progresses in Australia's protracted crises responses, including in Iraq. We will continue engagement with humanitarian coordination structures (i.e. the Humanitarian Country Team) and relevant Government-led coordination structures to support increased levels of local leadership.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

			DFAT will continue to work with other governments to ensure consistent messaging to host governments, UN and INGO partners on localisation approaches and local leadership.	
Recommendation 4: Enhance package level M&E, document good practice, address systemic M&E challenges and improve policy coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Package level M&E through third party monitoring • Good practice lessons from Iraq should inform ongoing and future packages • Review the systemic challenges that result in high levels of variation in partner reporting, policy coherence and ability to capture results • Initiate DFAT policy guidance to accompany the Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response (2020) to support Australia's engagement in complex protracted crises and address the significant policy level and normative developments since the release of the Humanitarian Strategy (2016) and Protection Framework (2013) 	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that documenting and sharing good practice lessons is important for the future of Australia's protracted crises responses.</p> <p>Subject to resources, DFAT also agrees in principle that there is value in exploring third party monitoring (TPM) in countries like Iraq to strengthen package level M&E to help mitigate risk and improve the triangulation and verification of partner reporting.</p> <p>DFAT agrees that new policy guidance articulates and where possible incorporates policy developments relevant to our engagement in protracted crisis.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to work with partners to strengthen the consistency of their reporting through agreements and regular engagement.</p> <p>DFAT will consider lessons from the Iraq package in shaping future humanitarian and nexus policy guidance.</p> <p>DFAT will investigate options for TPM, review how policies in Do Not Travel locations (i.e. Workplace Health and Safety [WHS]) impact this option, and assess cost implications in the context of resource limitations and funding priorities.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to work with partners to improve consistency in reporting, including through detailing reporting requirements in agreements.</p>	Ongoing
Recommendation 5:	Agree	The implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security remains a key policy priority for Australia.	Implement DFAT's WPS NAP Implementation Plan (forthcoming), which articulates Australia's	Ongoing

<p>Advance the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through supporting Iraqi women's meaningful participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bilateral diplomatic engagement and coordinated advocacy with like-minded donors on the participation pillar of the WPS agenda in Iraq 		<p>Women's full and meaningful participation is a core part of the Iraq Package's End of Package Outcomes, in that it contributes towards sustainable social cohesion, durable peace and preventing further conflict</p>	<p>contributions to the Participation pillar in the WPS agenda.</p>	
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