

AIDE MEMOIRE
KASTOM GADEN ASSOCIATION
STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY FOR RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM
INDEPENDENT REVIEW
JUNE 2011

INTRODUCTION

In June 2011, AusAID hired a short term consultant to undertake an independent review of the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) Strengthening Food Security for Rural Livelihoods in Solomon Islands Program. The purpose of the consultancy was to revise the KGA Strengthening Food Security for Rural Livelihoods in Solomon Islands Program so that KGA is a more effective and sustainable organisation.

The main objectives of the review were to:

- Improve links between proposed inputs, outcomes and the budget.
- Develop options to reduce KGAs reliance on a single donor. These should include phase down options for AusAID funding. Phase down options should be in concert with options to diversify KGA's funding sources. Such phase down options should not undermine KGAs current program and should be consistent with principles of funding predictability so that at the end of the three years of the program AusAID funding will not be detrimental to the organisations continued operation
- Improve KGA's corporate, governance and accountability arrangements including monitoring and evaluation.
- Make recommendations to AusAID on its oversight and management of the program.

In undertaking the independent review, the Consultant worked closely with the KGA management team to review the program design and implementation in line with the objectives of the consultancy. The following documentation was used to guide the review process:

- Program Design Document
- Six Monthly Review (Nov 2009)
- KGA Corporate Plan And Constitution
- Agricultural Livelihoods Program ICR
- AusAID Quality at Implementation (QAI) Report for Improved Economic Livelihoods
- KGA PMN Member survey 2011

In addition, current KGA management systems and processes (finance, activity monitoring, activity planning etc) were reviewed to assess the practical impacts of a change in the project design. The budget has been developed using current KGA cost codes to ensure that appropriate reporting against activities can be provided.

A range of stakeholders were interviewed as part of the process, including: representatives from AusAID; KGA management; Terracircle; KGA Board members; Ministry of Agriculture, SINPA and RAMSI (URS).

DESIGN REVIEW

The review was undertaken using a participatory workshop approach, engaging all program management staff in the process. The project design was reviewed in detail down to activity level. This process defined the focus of the design and ensured the logic of the design through its goal, purpose, objectives, outputs, outcomes, activities, inputs and budgets. Throughout the process, the team also discussed and agreed certain parameters, targets, management arrangements, roles and responsibilities and internal capacity development requirements to facilitate quality implementation. Required resources, success factors and measurable outcomes were also identified and agreed. In summary, the main recommendations for KGA from the review process include:

- Maintain the current KGA program components (8): Partner Capacity Building and Networking; Food Crops and Organic Farming; Small Livestock; Marketing and Value Adding; Women and Nutritional Health; Youth in Agriculture and Urban Agriculture; Communication and Information Services; and Program Management. These comprise the organizational program framework, within which the AusAID funded program is contained.
- Maintain the current Program objectives, however the outputs need to be adjusted to provide a more targeted focus.
- Develop a deeper engagement with its most capable partners – up to one key partner per province will be supported to become independent civil society organisations (ie. With their own source of income) by the end of program. This includes providing increased support to partners by PSOs in the field and also through the creation of a provincial coordinator position based in the provinces to provide in depth support to the key partners and institutionalize improved planning and management processes. An exit strategy is required for key partner support as they become self-sustaining. KGA should then bring on new partners as appropriate. At the end of 3 years there should be 5 key partners established and up to 10 other partners receiving lower level support in the program.
- Focus on technical, research and advisory services and build the food security evidence base in the Solomon Islands and reduce hands on outreach activities across the country. Hence, KGA will need to develop partner capacity to take on greater implementation responsibility for providing outreach services in the field.
- Increase its focus on internal staff capacity development, developing a resourced and targeted capacity development plan for implementation.
- Build the current KGA activity management system (developed in year 1 and implemented in year) into a comprehensive M&E system that allows KGA to also monitor outcomes and impacts and hence more clearly demonstrate the benefits of KGA programs. This is to be done in partnership with Terracircle in Q1, 2011. In addition, an M&E officer position will be created to further support this area.
- Using the improved M&E information, KGA should continue to build greater internal capacity in information and communication.
- Target its advocacy activities (1-2 key areas per year).
- Strengthen KGA management systems, especially annual planning, reporting systems and performance review. This includes a review of the organizational structure to ensure appropriate management oversight across all KGA activities.

- Develop internal capacity and skills in understanding and documenting value chain systems to develop market-driven interventions to alleviate poverty and spur economic growth (through a narrow focus on a small number of products).
- Include people with disability into the program, as appropriate.
- Improve strategic involvement of Terracircle for targeted backstopping. The KGA annual plan will include agreed inputs for the year and activities will be reported on in program reports.
- With Board assistance, KGA to focus on diversification of funding to improve sustainability.
- Program funding for the remaining three years of the program should remain at or near proposed levels. This is in line with the recommendation from the ICR. Organizational growth is a long term development strategy and as such, KGA needs a consistent level of confirmed funding to maintain its current program and to invest in organizational growth. Also, there have been significant cost increases in the Solomon Islands in recent years which have increased implementation costs, for example travel costs.
- Introduction of some simple milestones into the contract to ensure contract responsibilities are met. See Milestones section below for details.

DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDING

A range of opportunities to diversify KGA's funding base were discussed with staff and Board members. It was felt that there are significant opportunities for KGA to become increasingly financially stable, although this would need resources, management focus and a strong commitment of involvement from the Board. The most feasible opportunities include:

- Increase PMN members (and hence fees)
- Provide training and advisory services (to farmers, partners, donors, NGOs, government)
- Increase support from other donors (increase number of quality submissions)
- Corporate partnerships (eg. Provide advice on sourcing produce from farmers)
- Commercial activities (eg. Sale of seeds, chickens etc)
- Research partnerships (with regional research institutes, donors, NGOs)
- Further develop the partnership with Ministry of Agriculture to provide increased services.

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

In order to improve the overall management of the program by KGA, a number of priority management activities were identified and agreed for immediate implementation to ensure that the revised design is implemented as proposed from 1 July, 2011. These activities have been included in the revised design and the budget. Activities include:

- Annual planning process implemented (now)
- Clear management roles and responsibilities established, including regular meetings and standard reporting formats (now)
- M&E system development (Q1, Terracircle)
- Recruit information and communication PSO (Q1)
- Recruit a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer to report to the Information and Communication PSO (Q1)
- Recruit a Provincial Coordinator position to be based in the field, reporting to the Partner Capacity Building and Networking PSO (Q1)
- Downgrade the Youth PSO to a Youth Coordinator position who ensures that youth are integrated across all program activities and to transform that component to be youth-led
- Immediate recruitment of Program Development Officer (Q1)

- Board involvement in planning of commercial activities (Q1)
- Completion of baseline information and required evidence across components
- Determine priority partners and revise partnership agreements (now)
- Adopt SINPA stories reporting practice as part of reporting to AusAID (Q1).

MILESTONES

The review recommends the introduction of some simple milestones into the contract to ensure contract responsibilities are met. As many local NGOs do not yet have the capacity to forward fund program implementation in the case of a shortfall by donors, it is recommended that the full allocation for year 1 be provided to KGA to ensure implementation of the 2011/12 plan as budgeted. During each year KGA need to meet the following milestones:

- Submission of six monthly report, including the financial report (December)
- Submission of the annual report (including the annual plan and the financial report) (June)
- Organization of the annual reviews (2011 and 2013) and the Mid-term review (2012).

If these three milestones are not met then AusAID can withhold 10% of the following year budget until the milestones have been completed. Please note that if there are any delays of the reviews that are outside the management of KGA (eg. SIG or AusAID involvement in the review), then the milestone payment can not be withheld.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

It is recommended that AusAID continue to directly oversight the Kastom Gaden program. The following recommendations are offered to AusAID to improve management oversight to KGA:

- Three year confirmed funding from AusAID
- Continued attendance at KGA Board meetings
- Provision of feedback on annual plans (submitted with report on previous year) and six monthly reports through meetings and formal written response
- Involvement in the planned mid-term review
- Facilitate linkages with other program capacity building activities and materials, eg. SINPA, RAMSI etc
- Involve KGA in the planning of AusAID rural livelihood programs, including consideration of KGA reports and publications as resources.