

## Attachment 2 – Management Response to the Outcomes Evaluation

### Outcomes Evaluation

#### In-Africa Australian Development Scholarships Management Program (IAAMP)

#### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

**NOTE:** On 1 November 2013, AusAID was merged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The Report of the Outcomes Evaluation was finalised prior to the merger and any reference to AusAID below refers to the Australia aid program within DFAT.

### Management Response Summary- Outcomes Evaluation of IAAMP

The independent Outcomes Evaluation of IAAMP focused on the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the IAAMP program as well as outcomes relating to gender equity and the program's performance assessment systems. The evaluation focused on Masters level Awards in agriculture in Kenya and health in Mozambique as case studies for this assessment. The evaluation was intended to provide lessons applicable to the strategic direction of the current Australia Awards in Africa, as well as providing outcome-level reporting.

Overall, the evaluation resulted in very positive findings on the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the scholarships program. It found the Awards are viewed positively by African partners and have produced results at the individual and institutional levels that could be seen to have an impact on poverty. However, we note that the sample size was small and there are risks involved in extrapolating results from Kenya and Mozambique across Africa.

### ICR Recommendation One

**Recommendation:** *THAT AusAID develops a Delivery Strategy for the scholarships program in Africa incorporating a Theory of Change (ToC) which identifies the differences in desired/expected outcomes in higher priority countries and lower priority countries.*

**Response:** AGREED IN PRINCIPLE. This recommendation will be considered as part of a design process for the next iteration of the Australia Awards in Africa, expected to take place through 2014.

### ICR Recommendation Two

**Recommendation:** *THAT consideration is given to engaging in dialogue with Australian Universities regarding the possibility of establishing sandwich programs for PhDs in order to recognise the importance of in-country research and to maximise opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups.*

**Response:** AGREED. The Australia Awards Agricultural PhDs already allow for one year in-country research which counts towards an Australian qualification. Developing a 'sandwich program' is a lengthy process, which requires university-to-university relationships in a specific discipline area, especially in terms of assurance of equivalence of courses offered at non-Australian universities, since degrees of this nature are 'co-branded'. This option will be explored through the design process expected to take place through 2014.

### ICR Recommendation Three

**Recommendation:** *THAT AusAID re-emphasises to the AAA Managing Contractor, and Australian Universities, the importance of pre-return counselling for awardees with a particular focus on mechanisms for dealing with the 'knowledge gap' and enabling institutional environment which alumni encounter upon return.*

**Response:** AGREED. The Australia Awards in Africa Managing Contractor has delivered pre-return workshops in both 2012 and 2013 for 283 Masters-level Africans for precisely this

purpose. For short courses, all the Australian providers integrate pre-return workshops into their courses, with a specific focus on the development and implementation of Work Plans on Return. The focus of these pre-return workshops is on refining work plans on return to cover strategies and networks needed to achieve their objectives. These workshops provide coping strategies to deal with issues arising upon return to the workplace. There are also opportunities to link Awardees to their respective alumni networks.

### ICR Recommendation Four

**Recommendation:** *THAT encouragement for the selection of experienced provincial and district level candidates is emphasised, not only as a matter of equity, but also because of the potentially greater contribution that such scholars may make to capacity building upon their return.*

**Response:** AGREED. Selection panels take this factor into consideration during the selection process.

### ICR Recommendation Five

**Recommendation:** *THAT a range of affirmative action measures be undertaken to assist qualified women, as well as individuals from rural and disadvantaged groups to apply for, accept and complete post graduate studies. Affirmative action may include:*

- *Pro-active promotion of the ADS to qualified women in circumstances which may prevent them from applying (e.g. single mothers).*
- *Pro-active counselling to women who are offered scholarships; female ADS alumni may assist in this exercise.*
- *Provision of information packs to women, at the time of the offer, outlining:*
  - *realistic costs of renting suitable accommodation and an understanding of “how far the stipend might go”.*
  - *preference of initially travelling alone, then arranging for their family to come after they had settled in.*
  - *experiences of spouses in obtaining work in Australia and level of income that might be generated.*
- *placing women, where possible, in pairs or small groups at selected universities to facilitate sharing and emotional support.*

**Response:** AGREED. The Australian aid program recognises that more can be done in terms of targeted promotions strategies to attract more applications from women although the gender balance of selected awardees has been good (for example, in 2013 women received 49 per cent of Masters scholarships). Following the Gender Study, completed in July 2012, we are implementing a number of affirmative action initiatives including greater targeting of women’s professional organisations and enhanced messaging for women applicants on how Australia Awards can support them. These initiatives are paying dividends as 53% of the 2014 Masters awards were awarded to women. A Women in Leadership Network was launched in Africa in 2013. It was designed to encourage peer support from alumni to new Awardees, promotion of the Awards to women, and broadly engage alumni in initiatives aimed at advancing opportunities for women.

### ICR Recommendation Six

**Recommendation:** *THAT the upcoming Gender Study specifically considers this report with a view to further investigating the barriers for women in applying for, accepting and completing ADS scholarships.*

**Response:** AGREED. As noted in the response to Recommendation Five, the Gender Study was completed in July 2012 and we have been implementing several initiatives to encourage more applications from eligible women.

### ICR Recommendation Seven

**Recommendation:** *THAT Australian universities accepting ADS scholars be encouraged to give greater attention to the maintenance of professional links/networks with ADS alumni after their return to their home country. Mechanisms to achieve this could be discussed during the pre-return preparation.*

**Response:** AGREED. The Australia Awards Office within the Australian aid program is developing an Alumni Strategy for Australia Awards alumni, including establishing and maintaining networks of Australia Awards alumni. Alumni associations have been set up in some African countries (eg Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique) in addition to a Women in Leadership Network, offering professional development support and the provision of small grants for initial alumni association set up costs and to support alumni development projects.

### ICR Recommendation Eight

**Recommendation:** *THAT O-based staff responsible for the ADS program in higher priority countries visit those countries for a minimum of one week every six months to ensure that effective 'brand' and 'relationship' management is maintained with Partner Governments.*

**Response:** AGREED IN PRINCIPLE. While the need for regular visits is agreed, their frequency and the staff involved will be determined according to planning priorities. DFAT does not currently designate priority countries in Africa.

### ICR Recommendation Nine

**Recommendation:** *THAT the Australia Awards in Africa Initiative pro-actively works with the alumni in senior positions in Mozambique, and other higher priority countries with a focus on assisting leadership to develop qualified middle management personnel who are capable of operationalising the vision being articulated by senior management.*

**Response:** AGREED IN PRINCIPLE. As noted in the response to Recommendation Seven, the Australia Awards are increasing alumni activities. Country visits will include meetings with alumni as well as the partner government Coordinating Authority.

### ICR Recommendation Ten

**Recommendation:** *THAT AusAID ensure that the Managing Contractor's contract includes a duty to update the alumni contact data base and to keep it up to date, as well as a task to investigate and make recommendations regarding long term plans to establish an institutional 'home' for the data base at one or more regional hubs.*

**Response:** AGREED. The Australia Awards Office has developed an alumni database for all Australia Awards Alumni, including from African countries, which draws on information provided by the Managing Contractor.

### ICR Recommendation Eleven

**Recommendation:** *THAT AusAID directly appoint a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) specialist (with previous experience developing M&E Frameworks for Australian scholarships programs) to revise the current M&E Framework to facilitate the capture of information related to desired/expected outcomes in higher priority countries vis-a-vis lower priority countries as outlined in the Delivery Strategy and ToC.*

**Response:** NOT AGREED. Through the Managing Contractor, the Australia Awards in Africa initiative has a full-time M&E expert and support team. The Australian aid program

considers this resourcing adequate for the initiative. This issue will be considered again as part of the design of the next iteration of the Australia Awards in Africa.

### **ICR Recommendation Twelve**

**Recommendation:** *THAT AusAID and the Managing Contractor explore mechanisms for involving existing alumni in M&E activities as both a mechanism for obtaining ‘rich’ data and to facilitate greater levels of networking between earlier and later alumni.*

**Response:** AGREED IN PRINCIPLE: Thought needs to be given to the best way to gather representative alumni in terms of gender, country, sectors etc. Also, M&E activities must be seen to benefit alumni, who are at risk of suffering ‘survey fatigue’. A tracer study of the Australia Awards in Africa planned for 2014 should assist in this process.