

## Independent Progress Review of the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP)

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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#### Aid Activity Summary:

Aid Activity Name			
AidWorks initiative number	INH 528		
Commencement date	In country commencement May 2008	Commencement date	In country commencement May 2008
Total Australian \$	36.3 million		
Delivery organisation(s)	Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd		
Implementing Partner(s)	Various regional organisations, and national leadership and peak bodies		
Country/Region	Pacific Regional, with country programming in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu		
Primary Sector	Governance		

#### Independent Evaluation Summary

**Evaluation Objective:** The current program ends in June 2013. This evaluation provided an analysis of important lessons to inform the next phase of Australia's support for leadership in the Pacific.

The review had three principal objectives:

- 1) to evaluate the extent to which PLP achieved its objectives: has PLP support led to improved leadership practice shown through process and achievements towards development change?
- 2) to assess Australia's impact on local leadership led development: has PLP supported leadership capacity for developmental change?
- 3) to provide lessons learned that will inform and shape leadership work in the Pacific: has PLP enhanced learning on Pacific leadership approaches, theory, practice and models?

**Evaluation Completion Date:** 31 July 2012

**Evaluation Team:** Simon Henderson, Team Leader, IOD PARC; Chris Roche, Monitoring and Evaluation specialist, Oxfam Australia; with support from Allan Mua Illingworth, PLP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Officer (Suva).

## Management Response

AusAID is committed to ongoing improvements in program performance – in line with the aid effectiveness agenda, as well as Australia's commitment to the Busan Partnership, the Accra Agenda for Aid and the Paris Declaration –to ensure the efficient and effective use of all development resources according to value for money principles.

The Australian aid program's Performance Assessment and Evaluation Policy requires aid activities that have been running for four or more years to be independently evaluated during implementation. The purpose of these ongoing evaluations is threefold:

- To assess progress against objectives;
- To improve implementation quality; and/or
- To inform the design of any follow-on phases or new activities.

The PLP Review provided an opportunity to evaluate the holistic effectiveness of AusAID's delivery of technical assistance to the Pacific region. The Review was participatory and inclusive, and many stakeholders and partners had the opportunity to input to the review.

Overall the Review found that the methods (programs) –employed on PLP are highly relevant and have a good level of effectiveness in strengthening Pacific leadership. However, despite the achievements of PLP to date, weaknesses were identified in the current M&E and gender focus which need to be addressed.

- AusAID recognises that greater attention needs to be provided to M&E within the program and that the M&E framework needs to be strengthened to record results in the short-term to measure current performance and inform future activities.
- AusAID agrees with the review recommendation that PLP should develop a simpler and more embedded overall M&E framework, which builds on the draft framework and theory of change; and complements the evaluation processes used by PLP through the 6 Monthly Reflection and Refocus process.
- AusAID is strengthening its work on gender equality and on women's leadership as priority areas in its support for coalitions of leaders (such as Vanuatu women in shared decision making).
- AusAID agrees with all recommendations in the review and will take appropriate actions to fulfil the recommendations, as outlined in the following section.

- **Response to Review Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1:** The Program should develop a simpler overall M&E framework - building on the draft framework and theory of change, and this evaluation.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- Steps are already being undertaken to introduce a more effective M&E framework in the program, including the need for better data capture of individual activities; such as through the relationship management system - Salesforce database - which can help then inform and develop a better picture of the program's progress.
- We recognise that there is a strong focus on the 'Monitoring' side rather than the 'Evaluation'. This occurred as a result of the data collection approach established early in the program which in turn impacted evaluation methods at the end of the second phase. This will be rectified in both the end of the second phase and imbedded in Phase 3.
- PLP will work with Canberra (Performance Policy & Systems; and quality and performance within Pacific Division) on ways to better integrate AusAID M&E systems into the broader PLP framework to ensure ongoing data capture and analysis as well as better adherence to measuring longer-term performance. This includes better incorporation of M&E and targeted 'action' research.

**Recommendation 2:** The current M&E framework for the Tonga Secondary Schools Leadership Program (TSSLP) should include the explicit objective and means to allow longer-term impact to be assessed.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

Steps to better integrate the M&E of TSSLP are being undertaken. Separately contracted TSSLP technical advisors (via the AusAID ERF) will now be contracted through PLP, to ensure greater consistency, coordination and integration of M&E and other work under the program

**Recommendation 3:** The Program should give greater priority to the objective of informing practice in the broader Australian aid program.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- PLP is actively investigating ways of better aligning its work with the broader Pacific program activities. This includes meeting with the relevant programs and investigating synergies particularly where the objectives of leadership, economic development and governance exist. Monthly meetings have commenced with the Pacific Regional team in Suva to share information about programming for mutual partners. Two short term placements from Canberra in October and November, have worked in the PLP office in Suva, enhancing Canberra staff understanding of PLP work and approach. Strong and beneficial relationships are also in place between PLP and Post in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Samoa that are enabling PLP to gain greater influence with AusAID at country level.
- PLP is also actively seeking stronger communication avenues to better inform stakeholders and better integrate into the AusAID Pacific program. Integral to this process will be the use of targeted communication products –E-News, Hot Topics, Focus, blogs and visual media. PLP's website is being revised and will be relaunched in November 2012.

- PLP is identify more opportunities to engage AusAID personnel in program activities, such as PLP Symposiums, Reflection and Refocus meetings and networking events, in order to to build broader understanding of PLP activities and ways of working.

**Recommendation 4:** Any shift in Program strategy away from the Partnership model should be handled cautiously and treated as an experiment to be tested for effectiveness.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- The Program's shift from working exclusively in partnership with organisations should not be perceived as moving away from the partnership model, but supplementing this approach with other ways in which leaders – as individuals, in organisations, and in coalitions – can be supported.
- PLP recognises that the partnership principles of strong, respectful relationships built on transparency, mutual benefit and trust continue to be a critical factor underpinning support for long term developmental change. The Program continues to invest in building the partnership brokering skills of program staff, with an internal training scheduled for November 2012.
- PLP's increased focus on supporting coalitions of leaders still requires a commitment to partnership principles. As work in this area progresses, the program is likely to find a role in brokering multi-stakeholder partnerships between coalition members, to support them in clarifying their own priorities and risks within a coalition for developmental change. This would be a valuable, and appropriate, offering for a donor program in this context.

**Recommendation 5:** The Program needs to develop an explicit transition/ exit strategy with existing partnerships to assist it to move forward.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- As the Program increases its support for coalitions of leaders, the support for organisations will continue where it is clear such organisations can directly or indirectly support coalitions' work, e.g. through helping to identify developmental change issues to be addressed, providing an entry to key networks and contacts, or where needed, to provide a funding conduit for in-country work.
- Where existing partner organisations do not fall into any of the categories outlined above, PLP is developing a strategy to support Program staff and partners to explain changing priorities and exit partnerships in a respectful and positive manner.

**Recommendation 6:** The Program should consider initiating regular get-togethers among partners in target countries, as it has among regional partners.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- With the establishment of country representatives in PLP focus countries, more regular, formal get-togethers will be initiated to strengthen networks and share information between PLP partners in-country.
- The National Leadership Development Forum in Tonga (TNLDF) has provided an avenue for discussion between partners and the Vanuatu Country Representative has been holding regular national partner meetings to share experiences, consider collaborative initiatives and inform the PLP program.

- A number of formal activities are now taking place including symposia/fora in Brisbane, and hosting forums among partners in target countries to share priorities and learnings from their work and to work together around priority issues. This encourages relationship development outside the 'hub and spoke' approach that PLP has used in establishing the program.

**Recommendation 7:** The Program should review its approach to gender equality, as opposed to Women's Leadership, in order to ensure that it is central to its core work with male and female Pacific Leaders, and its M&E system.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- Gender disaggregated data will be tracked and measured through the newly reinvigorated M&E framework, to capture information about how PLP is engaging and supporting leadership on gender equality.
- While PLP does not explicitly influence the agenda of leadership organisations, our relationships with key influential and emerging Pacific Leaders allow us the space to engage on gender equality as part of our support for coalitions for development change.
- While PLP supports the Review findings that there currently isn't an established formal M&E program, there are arguments the report was overly negative in its assessment that PLP activities do not effectively target women, given there has been a focus and investment in identifying and mentoring (significant) women leaders.
  - The IPR doesn't seem to reflect the challenges in women's leadership in Pacific, particularly the predominance of men in leadership roles (e.g. 92% in Tonga). Programming work that has been undertaken in the past 12 months is now progressing in a number of issues coalitions, the majority which are women's leadership and empowerment activities, e.g. Women in Shared Decision Making in Vanuatu, Local Economic Development with Women in Business in Solomon Islands, Sustainable Livelihoods in Ha'apai, Tonga.
  - While we support the report's findings that the work on gender equality requires stronger focus, we note that the program is now providing considerable support to initiatives and organisations that promote gender equality. Partnerships with RRRT, YWCA and support for the Women in Shared Decision Making Coalition in Vanuatu are three examples. PLP also commissioned with IWDA a research piece on women's leadership in the Pacific. This investment in women's leadership and gender equality will become more prominent in the coming months, including the investment in identifying and mentoring women leaders.

**Recommendation 8:** AusAID Pacific Division – perhaps in consultation with Policy and Sector Division and Corporate enabling – should work with the Program to identify a) what aspects of the Program's experience have wider relevance to AusAID's ways of working in the region; and b) what adaptations may be necessary to ensure practicability concerns are addressed.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- PLP is actively sharing lessons learned through case studies and the completion of an ODE evaluation, about PLP's support for developmental change in the region. This may be useful to PSD in their work with replication of the PLP methodology in other programs.
- PLP will seek advice from PSD in the design of Phase 3.
- Closer engagement with Pacific regional and bilateral programs is being pursued to ensure that information is shared and collaborative programming is explored.

- The design team for the next phase of PLP is consulting with regional and bilateral programs to identify potential areas for collaboration or complement both programs activities.
- PLP is working with the Pacific Advisory Group to share more information about the PLP programming impacts, and with the Developmental Leadership Program to share how the leadership theory is being implemented through PLP.
- Subsidiary arrangements are being developed for each country program to detail PLP work for the remaining program. These arrangements will detail what are PLP's priorities in each particular country, the partners that PLP is working with to support those priorities, and the value of that contribution. Vanuatu is currently reviewing the first draft subsidiary arrangement.
- PLP has developed an MOU with the Vanuatu bilateral post, detailing how we work with each other. This is replicable for other PLP country programs, in consultation with the relevant posts.

**Recommendation 9:** AusAID Pacific Division should work with the Program to identify the scope to apply the Program's experience to the design and development of a major new program of support to civil society strengthening, gender equality, governance or service delivery.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- PLP is investing significant resources in the final year of the program to develop case studies on impact, monitoring data, and evaluative studies on the impact of PLP support in the region. This will be actively shared through an interactive communications program with the Pacific Division.

**Recommendation 10:** Phase 3 design team should undertake at the earliest possible stage a) an explicit risk assessment – with particular consideration of staff turnover risks; and b) engage AusAID Pacific Division in the development of effective controls to manage those risks.

**Response: Agree,**

**Actions:**

- New AusAID corporate requirements on risk management are being integrated into the PLP.
- As stipulated by AusAID risk management/corporate policy, risks are now reviewed on a quarterly basis. Significant risks, including will then be brought to the attention to senior executive and managed through the risk management process
- PLP recognise the issue of retention of institutional memory and managing key contacts that the current program staff provide to the PLP. During the transition to Phase 3 and the associated strategy – staff turnover process will be considered within the scope of the tendering process.
- PLP acknowledges that the current program staff are a key asset of the program due to their experience, expertise and contacts in the Pacific. Part of the tender will therefore include a novation process, where current program staff's contracts (which all expire 30 June 2013 due to the end of the Phase 2 program) will be renewed under the new managing contractor.

**Recommendation 11:** Phase 3 design team should explicitly review progress over the next 6 months in addressing M&E requirements and factor in additional support as necessary in the design of the new phase.

**Response: Agree**

**Actions:**

- Timeframes for reporting will be revisited to ensure that the consolidated program M&E report is compiled to incorporate the findings of the January 2012 PLP Reflection and Refocus, and the results again of the May 2012 report to be incorporated into the final Project report for PLP.
- The M&E Framework, which provides an overview of the M&E processes, is being developed and refined. Complementing this work are the processes for information management systems developed by the Body of Knowledge team and including the Salesforce database which houses program data.
- An external M&E Advisor (following the departure of the previous adviser due to restrictions of the AARF) has now been engaged to provide external verification on a bi-annual basis of data collected and assist with review of M&E Framework. He is also providing technical support to PLP's M&E specialist.
- A briefing session was held for staff to understand M&E framework and templates, coaching for program and country reps on monitoring. This will be an ongoing process to ensure that the program staff continue to adhere to M&E procedures, such as updating Salesforce, the PLP relationship management database.
- Joint visits to country programs with communications and M&E staff will continue undertaken shortly to ensure that information is being captured and used to inform M&E and communications products.
- The peer review of the IPR also raised a number of other issues that were not included in the Review recommendations, that specifically referenced how the design of the M&E Framework needs to be reflected in the design of PLP Phase 3 as well as more broadly considering:
  - Leadership for development needs to be more explicitly link to poverty reduction and engagement with the Development Leadership Program (DLP). DLP operational support is now being coordinated by PLP's Managing Contractor, Cardno Emerging Markets, integrating their processes more smoothly with PLP.
  - There is a perception of fragmentation of a number of the country programs – however PLP is undertaking steps in developing country program strategies which will have a smaller number of themes, priorities and programs. This will help ensure clearer objectives, more realistic outcomes and better strategic alignment and complementarity of future programs to create an overall program narrative.