

Partnerships for Social Protection

End-of-Phase Evaluation Report

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Contact Details

Authors: Chloe Olliver, Lucy Scott, Deborah Thomas

DFAT contacts: Joanna Pickles, Claire Birks, Jacqui Powell

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Disclaimer

An independent team of Chloe Olliver, Lucy Scott and Deborah Thomas undertook this evaluation. The views expressed in the evaluation are those of the independent evaluation team and do not reflect the views or policies of DFAT or the Australian Government. Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the evaluation team.

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Executive summary

Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP) is a four-year (September 2021 – September 2025), AUD18 million program to support governments in Pacific nations and Timor-Leste strengthen their national social protection systems. P4SP was designed in mid-2021 in response to the severe economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic to bolster DFAT's ability to support partner governments as they quickly established or adapted national social protection schemes for people who had lost livelihoods and income.

Despite a surge in social protection investment by governments and development partners, there remain significant gaps and challenges in social protection systems and programs in the region. P4SP seeks to assist Pacific nations and Timor-Leste to respond to poverty, vulnerability, and economic and social exclusion by supporting sustainable developments to social protection systems with a focus on social assistance.

The goal of P4SP is: *Greater commitment to, quality and coverage of social assistance systems in Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to reduce gender inequality, vulnerabilities, and economic and social exclusion, while promoting stability and economic growth.* P4SP has one end-of-program outcome: *Governments increasingly address gaps and bottlenecks in the coverage and inclusiveness of social protection policy and program delivery.* P4SP has two Intermediate Outcomes:

- 1) Governments strengthen social protection delivery systems and policies to improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness.
- 2) Key stakeholders better understand and recognise the relevance of quality and inclusive social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

P4SP is a small-scale, responsive technical assistance mechanism that builds and responds to national government demands and DFAT priorities. **At the bilateral level**, the program provides responsive and high-quality advice to Posts and partner governments through remote / online, fly-in, fly-out, and in-country embedded advisory support. P4SP supports governments to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their own public spending on social protection. **At the regional level**, P4SP delivers social protection awareness-raising, training and evidence generation and sharing to generate regional and national understanding and commitment.

P4SP was designed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and began implementation when travel restrictions were still active in many places, limiting in-country engagement. While P4SP uses influencing strategies to open doors, there is a limit to the scale and scope of interventions that P4SP can deliver. It is a relatively small spend over a diverse geographical area. Additionally, P4SP is reliant on DFAT engagement at Posts, which are often stretched. The original P4SP team was (deliberately) very lean, and this has had a significant impact on program scale and scope. P4SP started as a small team of 2.6 full time equivalent positions.

The program is being implemented in a fluid and dynamic geopolitical context. Since inception there have been elections and changes of government in Fiji and Timor-Leste, with elections underway in Kiribati at the time of undertaking consultation. There has been a change in government in Australia, the introduction of a new Australian International Development Policy, and related policies are being developed.

Findings from the literature review and consultations demonstrate that P4SP is a relevant, effective and efficient program that has played an important role in supporting governments to strengthen social protection systems and improve coverage, quality and inclusiveness. P4SP represents a highly valued Australian government offering to counterparts in the region and supports their pursuit of inclusive economic growth, human capital development, and reductions in poverty and vulnerability.

Relevance

P4SP remains relevant to the Government of Australia and is well positioned to contribute to commitments for social protection highlighted in Australia's *International Development Policy (2023)*. Importantly, the focus on the Pacific aligns with the Government of Australia's priority engagement with the Pacific region across the development program and beyond.

P4SP has maintained relevance by adapting priorities in response to changes in context. P4SP has adopted a responsive and pragmatic approach to bilateral country engagement, providing governments with practical support to address immediate challenges. P4SP's flexible and responsive support complements the work of other development partners. P4SP's regional social protection awareness raising, training and research supports program relevance.

Effectiveness

P4SP is effective. There are clear examples of where P4SP has played an important role in supporting governments to improve social protection policies, strengthen and change the status of social protection systems and improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness. This is particularly clear in Kiribati, Fiji, and more recently in Tonga and Vanuatu, as well as in Timor-Leste (until recently). Examples of policy influence, systems and program reform, and counterpart professional development are threaded throughout the evaluation. There is evidence that the knowledge and confidence of partners is growing.

Regional training, knowledge products and communications of those products have provided successful entry point to engage bilaterally in new countries. It has raised awareness of social protection, and demand for support in reforming social assistance schemes in the region. DFAT and regional counterparts place considerable value on P4SP research and knowledge products. There is evidence that these products do inform and influence policy decisions. There is appetite for more Pacific focused social protection research.

Gender equality

Gender equality is not an explicit outcome in P4SP's theory of change, though inclusiveness is included at both EOPO and Intermediate Outcome levels. The P4SP GEDSI Strategy acknowledges that gender equality, disability and social inclusion have different frameworks, actors, networks and requirements and need to be addressed separately as well as collectively. However, there is low awareness and use of the GEDSI Strategy by P4SP and DFAT.

At the bilateral level, P4SP's approach and focus on strengthening operations of existing social assistance schemes has determined the type of engagement and entry points P4SP has pursued on gender. Opportunities have been taken to **mainstream** consideration of gender into analytical work. Where the 'door is open', P4SP has used the analysis of gender and equity barriers in social protection operations to inform government led systems strengthening. While gender mainstreaming has progressed well, P4SP lacks entry points and relationships to engage with **strategic** and **gender specific** considerations related to social protection.

At the regional level, P4SP has considered gender in training, evidence reviews and research plans. Gender equality is integrated into various training modules, and some regional evidence products have addressed gender equality and gender responsive social protection.

Limited gender capacity of P4SP (until recently), the responsive nature and operational focus of bilateral investments, and competing demands on the program have culminated in modest ambition and prioritisation of gender equality. The trusted relationships that P4SP has forged with respective government agencies in Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga, and the appointment of a GEDSI adviser with established networks in the Pacific are a strength on which the program can build greater ambition for advancing gender equality going forward.

Disability equity

P4SP has achieved some important gains in disability social assistance in a short period of time. The program takes a twin track approach to support disability specific social assistance and mainstreaming disability inclusion across all social assistance. P4SP's responsive and demand led approach fits well with advancing disability inclusive social protection in Pacific Island Countries where disability assistance is well accepted among government, and where the local political economy is conducive. Through its responsive approach, it has generated trust and fostered relationships with the governments of Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati on disability specific analytics, policy and operations. It has mainstreamed attention to disability into some of the broader analytics it has supported in these countries and created opportunities for ongoing engagement on disability inclusion in reform processes.

Efficiency

P4SP is efficient and represents value for money. The DFAT and P4SP teams proactively invest in making the partnership work. The One Team approach is applied flexibly and works differently in different places depending on Posts' appetite and ability to engage. Interlocutors at Post are a real enabler for the program, providing sound context analysis and opening doors into government and other stakeholders. Posts are an important partner in the One Team approach and value the strategic decision-making and policy engagement role that they play in the program, without the administrative burden of program management.

The adaptive management approach is valued by partner governments and by DFAT staff at Posts. It positions Australia to deliver relevant, timely and responsive support across the Pacific by a program with a relatively small budget. Where DFAT has the capacity and subject matter expertise, P4SP represents a good model for regional programs, especially in the Pacific.

In-country partners value the access P4SP gives them to consistent, niche expertise who are willing to be based in or travel frequently to their countries, and work in a respectful and empowering way.

P4SP has a unique delivery model, with no centrally co-located core program team. This model has proven to be effective and has delivered efficiencies and Value for Money. Remote working arrangements are seen as cost effective, and have reduced barriers to recruitment, allowing P4SP to engage people with the right skillsets irrespective of their home location.

The program has successfully built demand for their services, but the overall budget ceiling for the Managing Contractor is tied to the initial approach to market. This is unfortunate as there is demand for expanding the investments in some bilateral programs; demand to increase the number of countries where there are bilateral investments, and a need to increase investment in gender equality, monitoring and evaluation, and regional training, research and influencing.

Coherence

P4SP has been nimble in leveraging and complementing DFAT programs in priority P4SP countries, including working closely with the Partnership for Human Development in Timor-Leste, and governance programs in Tonga and Vanuatu. The program aligns well with Australian budget support and multi-donor Joint Policy Reform initiatives. The 2024 independent evaluation of Australia's AUD\$498m Fiscal Budget Support package (2020-23) to the Pacific found that P4SP expertise 'was critical' to significant social protection system improvements.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a key program principle, defined by an emphasis on supporting locally led initiatives, building capacity, and working through and strengthening existing systems. P4SP ways of working provide clear eyed assessments and understanding of constraints to sustainability. P4SP has established systems and ways of working that support sustainability in

the Pacific context. Supporting government partners to make evidence based and risk informed choices enhances program sustainability. Working to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing programs and systems improves fiscally sustainability for partner governments.

Summary of key recommendations

Detailed recommendations are provided in section 4.

In summary, the evaluation recommends:

1. The program should be extended into a second phase.
2. DFAT could leverage P4SP for broader Australian regional objectives.
3. Where there is momentum and appetite, scale up bilateral investments.
4. Increase the spend on research, training and influencing.
5. Consider new approaches to bilateral engagement in countries with no/limited formal social assistance.
6. DFAT and P4SP could be more ambitious and focused on gender equality.
7. Continue the focus and ambition on disability equity in social protection.
8. DFAT and P4SP could invest in pursuing locally led development more intentionally.
9. Allow the program to continue to increase its annual spending rate.
10. Consider taking Timor-Leste out of the program.
11. Consider including an Intermediate Outcome on climate change.
12. Expand the investment in MEL and maintain some independence.
13. Country Engagement Plans could include country level MEL frameworks
14. DFAT and P4SP to explore opportunities to coordinate and collaborate more intentionally with other development partners.
15. Explore opportunities to engage more intentionally with CSOs

Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AUD	Australian Dollar
BdM-JF	Mother's Grant New Generation (Bolsa da Mae – Jerasaun Foun)
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DMEL	Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and learning
DSA	Disability Support Allowance (Kiribati)
DWS	Disability Welfare Scheme (Tonga)
EOPO	End of program outcome
FIFO	Fly-in-fly-out
FIM	Functional Impairment Measure
FTE	Full time equivalent
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
IMR	Investment Monitoring Reporting
KEQ	Key Evaluation Questions
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MERLA	Monitoring, evaluation, reporting, learning and adaptation
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs (Tonga)
MIS	Management of Information Systems
MWCSP	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (Fiji)
MWYSSA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs (Kiribati)
NGO	Non-government organisation
OPD	Organisation of persons with disabilities
P4SP	Partnerships for Social Protection
PHD	Partnership for Human Development (Timor-Leste)
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030
SCA	Senior Citizen Allowance (Kiribati)
SFU	Support Fund for the Unemployed (Kiribati)
SWSE	Social Welfare Scheme for the Elderly (Tonga)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP) is a four-year (September 2021 – September 2025), AUD18 million program to support governments in Pacific nations and Timor-Leste strengthen their national social protection systems. P4SP was designed in mid-2021 in response to the severe economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic to bolster DFAT's ability to support partner governments as they quickly established or adapted national social protection schemes for people who had lost livelihoods and income.

Despite a surge in social protection investment by governments and development partners, there remain significant gaps and challenges in social protection systems and programs in the region. P4SP seeks to assist Pacific nations and Timor-Leste to respond to poverty, vulnerability, and economic and social exclusion by supporting sustainable developments to social protection systems with a focus on social assistance.

P4SP is a small-scale, responsive mechanism that complements and builds on the work of national government priorities and DFAT priorities (bilateral, regional, and thematic). Building and responding to demand by partner governments is central to P4SP's operations. To achieve this, P4SP utilises an adaptive management approach. The program delivers technical assistance to a number of partner governments in partnership with DFAT Posts and Canberra, and coordinates with multilateral development partners, humanitarian and non-government organisations (NGO), organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) and civil society organisations (CSO) including gender equality organisations.

The goal of P4SP is: *Greater commitment to, quality and coverage of social assistance systems in Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to reduce gender inequality, vulnerabilities, and economic and social exclusion, while promoting stability and economic growth*. P4SP has one end-of-program outcome (EOPO): *Governments increasingly address gaps and bottlenecks in the coverage and inclusiveness of social protection policy and program delivery*. Achievement of the EOPO is supported by two Intermediate Outcomes:

- 3) Governments strengthen social protection delivery systems and policies to improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness
- 4) Key stakeholders better understand and recognise the relevance of quality and inclusive social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

The P4SP Program Logic is included in Annex 1.

1.2 Evaluation purpose, scope, and methodology

The **purpose** of the End of Phase Evaluation (Evaluation) is to:

- 1) fulfil program accountability requirements by providing an independent, evidence-based judgement of performance to date
- 2) inform future Investment Monitoring Reporting (IMR) and Final IMR by provision of an independent assessment
- 3) support learning by documenting lessons from program implementation to date and making practical recommendations to inform DFAT's decision to extend the program into a second phase, including any recommended changes in approach.

The evaluation also provides lessons to inform future programming including DFAT's decision to extend the program into a second phase via a head contract extension option.

This evaluation assesses overall program performance across the life of the program from September 2021 to August 2024 against key evaluation questions (KEQ) related to effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality, disability equity, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Key evaluation questions are included in Annex 2.

The Evaluation was conducted in line with DFAT policies including the Design, MEL Standards (September 2023) and Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance.

The evaluation aligns with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria on effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and sustainability.

The evaluation uses a convergent mixed methods approach to analyse quantitative and qualitative data to inform judgements on the KEQ. Methods include document and data analysis complemented by stakeholder interviews. Data analysis utilises both deductive and inductive methods to ensure analysis relates to KEQ elements and allows emergent themes to be discovered.

The purpose, scope, and methodology of the P4SP evaluation are documented in detail in the Evaluation Plan (July 2024).

This Evaluation report builds on a Document Review Report (September 2024) as well as a Fiji mission Back to Office Report (September 2024).

1.3 Limitations

The evaluation has some limitations. The evaluation primarily relies on secondary data with purposive primary qualitative data collection in one country (Fiji). We did undertake limited online consultations with stakeholders in five other countries (Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Timor-Leste, and Kiribati).

A significant proportion of those consulted were either from the P4SP team and / or DFAT officers involved in the program, either at DFAT Post or DFAT Canberra (See Figure 1). More robust surveying of beneficiaries or the convening of a more participatory engagement of government and beneficiary representative groups in other countries has not been feasible. This limits the robustness of evidence and veracity of findings.

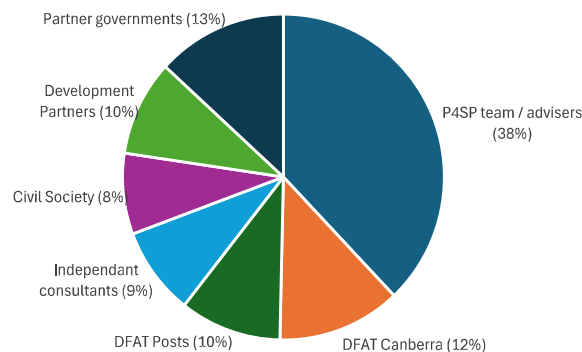


FIGURE 1: CATEGORIES OF EVALUATION STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

The program is being implemented across the Pacific but has not engaged in all countries. In some cases, implementation is only partly underway and in others evidence of impact or change may take some time to emerge.

Social protection is also a crowded space with other development partners in some countries, making it challenging to attribute P4SP's contribution to outcomes in these locations.

2. Program context

P4SP was designed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and began implementation while COVID-19 related border closures and travel restrictions were still active in many places,

including Australia. As a result, face-to-face meetings, in-country missions and deployment of advisers were restricted for the inception and early stages of the program.

The program is being implemented in a fluid and dynamic geopolitical context. Since inception there have been elections and changes of government in Fiji and Timor-Leste, with elections underway in Kiribati at the time of undertaking consultation. There has been a change in government in Australia and the introduction of a new Australian International Development Policy. Related policies are being developed including Development Partnership Plans in each country in the region, a new international gender equality strategy, a new disability equity and rights strategy, new humanitarian strategy and new international LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Engagement Strategy.

As described in the design, P4SP is a demand driven, flexible and responsive mechanism. It is a relatively small spend over a diverse geographical area. While P4SP uses influencing strategies to open doors, there is a limit to the scale and scope of interventions that P4SP can deliver. Additionally, P4SP is reliant on DFAT engagement at Posts, which are often stretched in terms of staff capacity to engage with and on behalf of P4SP.

The original P4SP team was (deliberately) very lean, and this has had a significant impact on program scale and scope. P4SP started as a small team of 2.6 full time equivalent (FTE) positions (Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader (0.8 FTE) and Social Protection Specialist (0.8 FTE). This, combined with the loss of the consortium partner responsible for operational support (detailed in section 3.4.4 below) meant the team was stretched in the early stages across program inception, establishing engagements in two countries, building operational systems, and recruiting essential positions. In 2023, P4SP continued to expand the team, bringing on a second Social Protection Specialist, a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) consultant, and strengthening communications, programs, and operations capacity. A GEDSI Adviser (0.8 FTE) replaced the GEDSI consultant in June 2024.

3. Evaluation Findings

Findings from the literature review and consultations demonstrate that P4SP is a relevant, effective and efficient program. P4SP represents a highly valued Australian government offering to counterparts in the region and supports their pursuit of inclusive economic growth, human capital development, and reductions in poverty and vulnerability.

P4SP remains relevant to the Government of Australia and is well positioned to contribute to commitments for social protection highlighted in Australia's *International Development Policy* (2023). Importantly, the focus on the Pacific aligns with the Government of Australia's priority engagement with the Pacific region across the development program and beyond. P4SP has maintained relevance by adapting priorities in response to changes in context, providing governments with practical support to address immediate challenges. P4SP's regional social protection awareness raising, training and research supports program relevance.

There are clear examples of where P4SP has played an important role in supporting governments to improve social protection policies, strengthen and change the status of social protection systems and improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness. There is evidence that the knowledge and confidence of partners is growing. Regional training, knowledge products and communications of those products have raised awareness of social protection. DFAT and regional counterparts place considerable value on P4SP research and knowledge products. The program has successfully built demand for their services.

Limited gender capacity of P4SP (until recently), the responsive nature and operational focus of bilateral investments, and competing demands on the program have culminated in modest ambition and prioritisation of gender equality. The trusted relationships that P4SP has forged with respective government agencies, and the appointment of a GEDSI adviser with established

networks in the Pacific are a strength on which the program can build greater ambition for advancing gender equality going forward. P4SP has achieved some important gains in disability social assistance and inclusion of the elderly in a short period of time.

P4SP is efficient and represents value for money. Interlocutors at Post are a real enabler for the program, providing sound context analysis and opening doors into government and other stakeholders. Posts were overwhelmingly positive about the model during consultations. The adaptive management approach is valued by partner governments and by DFAT staff at Posts. It was noted during consultations that P4SP advisers – both long-term embedded and short-term FIFO - work in a respectful and empowering way that is unique among development partners.

Recommendation 1: The program should be extended into a second phase.

- P4SP represents a highly valued Australian government offering to counterparts in the Pacific. The program is well positioned to leverage its reputation, reach and influence to deliver more for Australia and the Pacific.
- To end the program would be a lost opportunity to entrench outcomes in what is a relatively new area of work in the Pacific. It would undermine the good relationships and reputation of Australia as a consistent, long-term partner of choice.

3.1 Relevance

KEQ: What evidence is there that P4SP investments are responsive to Australian and partner government plans, policies and priorities?

P4SP remains relevant to the Government of Australia and is well positioned to contribute to commitments for social protection highlighted in Australia's *International Development Policy (2023)*, particularly efforts to strengthen social protection systems and break down barriers that unfairly exclude people. The policy also advocates improved social protection measures as a contribution to building an effective and accountable state.

Importantly, the focus on the Pacific aligns with the Government of Australia's priority engagement with the Pacific region across the development program and beyond. P4SP represents a highly valued Australian government offering to counterparts in the region and supports their pursuit of inclusive economic growth, human capital development, and reductions in poverty and vulnerability.

P4SP is highly relevant to partner governments to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, Vision for a Blue Pacific 2050, and relevant country policies and plans. This is particularly important as many Pacific Island Countries (PIC) were hard hit by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that continue to impact development outcomes. Listening to partner government needs and being responsive to those where possible is central to the program's engagement approach and underpins program relevance to country partners. Underpinning successes of P4SP is strong engagement between the Government of Australia and national governments, with the Government of Kiribati reporting Australia to be the 'partner of choice' on social protection.

P4SP complements Australia's considerable package of budget support to some PICs. The program has demonstrated an ability to respond to emerging priorities and opportunities, for example, working with the Australian Climate Partnership Program to collaborate with the Pacific Island Forum on the Disaster Risk Financing learning series (2024) and on the research agenda. Investment in shock-responsive social protection is seen as an important means to build resilience and support partner governments to lead climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts.

There is opportunity for DFAT to harness P4SP for other Australian government priorities in the Pacific such as pursuit of inclusive growth, labour mobility, humanitarian and climate change, including broad based distribution of emerging loss and damage funds.

Recommendation 2: DFAT could leverage P4SP for broader Australian regional objectives including:

- Evidence informed policy choices that promote broad-based and inclusive growth, including reviewing the relative merit of partner government spending on social protection versus spending on less productive policies such as subsidy schemes.
- As Pacific labour is increasingly exposed to Australian social protection schemes and has expanded reciprocal rights to these schemes, P4SP could inform policy choices and be informed by evidence and lessons on Australian and PIC schemes. Where relevant and useful, enhancing interoperability could be considered (e.g. superannuation and Retirement Benefit Funds).
- As Australia continues to benefit from a pipeline of trained and experienced social welfare and care economy workers from the region, P4SP could support partners in their workforce planning, and to access relevant professional development schemes.

Promoting the use of broad-based and equitable social protection mechanisms for distributing climate change financing including loss and damage funds. This is more efficient than supporting the establishment of parallel distribution mechanisms.

P4SP has maintained relevance by adapting priorities in response to changes in context. P4SP recognised relatively early the importance of being demand-driven and that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach was less likely to lead to success. This is evident in the decision to amend the contract in May 2024 and streamline the Theory of Change to place greater emphasis on bilateral engagements compared with regional evidence generation and capacity building. The amendment was accompanied by funding allocations to country program budgets.

Debates around social protection are highly political and often underpinned (explicitly or implicitly) by a range of ideological viewpoints and understandings of who is considered to be ‘worthy’ of support and who is not, and under which conditions. P4SP has adopted a responsive and pragmatic approach to bilateral country engagement, providing governments with practical support to address immediate challenges. They have focused on everyday issues such as payment mechanisms, management information systems (MIS) and standard operating procedures (SOP).

Bilaterally, the approach of P4SP is to start small and gain traction and trust through working with government responding to their initial needs. By way of example, the starting point in Kiribati was reconciling three years of social assistance payments before moving into supporting on developing a Cabinet Paper for a child benefit, a review of the disability support allowance and support for the unemployed, and technical assistance towards their first MIS. In Tonga (where the World Bank is an important partner for government), P4SP has focused on supporting the government’s social welfare assistance scheme, which has not been the focus of other donors. This approach means that P4SP has largely stayed away from influencing the strategic scope of the overall social assistance landscape and instead has engaged on certain programs, specifically those relating to ageing and disability.

Whilst P4SP would be highly relevant to Papua New Guinea (PNG), where a nutrition-sensitive child grant is being designed. DFAT is yet to find a hook for P4SP engagement. To date, P4SP has technically reviewed documentation such as World Bank analysis and design documents. They have shared lessons from other relevant programs and provided advice to DFAT on engagement with the World Bank on the child grant. As the grant starts implementation, it will be important to re-assess this role and the value-add of P4SP engaging in PNG.

Through fly-in fly-out (FIFO) support, P4SP has begun supporting the government of Vanuatu with the development of their Adaptive Social Protection policy. Engagement in Vanuatu will test the demand-driven nature of P4SP, given that the entry point is humanitarian cash programming to respond to cyclones, rather than an explicit demand for categorically focused lifecycle social protection. There are no existing social assistance schemes in Vanuatu for P4SP to provide immediate operational support. This is a good opportunity to showcase the potential for social assistance payment systems to disburse climate related funds, an issue of significant relevance in the Pacific and globally.

Embedded Technical Advisers are considered by partners as important for ensuring relevance for in-country partner government priorities, with Timor-Leste (until recently), Kiribati and Fiji, all having embedded Technical Advisers. Most recently, P4SP has been able to respond to demand for an embedded Technical Adviser in Vanuatu. DFAT's Nuku'alofa Post would also appreciate similar support in Tonga to ensure that Australia is seen as a core partner on social protection there and to complement the work of other development partners.

P4SP's regional influencing work supports program relevance and provides a solid foundation for program activities and the research agenda. Initially, P4SP focused its regional influencing agenda on broad social protection awareness raising and training. Collating and sharing evidence, lessons and case studies from the Pacific is central to program relevance. These reflect lessons from early stages of the program and reinforce a program of relevance to the Pacific. The *P4SP Evidence Review: Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste (2024)* provides an overview of the available evidence on social protection in the region. In 2024, the regional influencing agenda emphasises climate change, inclusive social protection, and an enhanced understanding of perceptions of social protection and how it relates to other Pacific structures and systems such as non-state safety nets.

3.2 Effectiveness

KEQ: How effective is P4SP?

Effectiveness is assessed in terms of the program's two main Intermediate Outcomes, reflecting P4SPs two main areas of engagement: bilateral and regional.

3.2.1 Bilateral engagement

Intermediate Outcome 1 (*Governments strengthen social protection delivery systems and policies to improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness*) is assessed only for those countries where P4SP has invested bilaterally (to date: Fiji, Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Tonga and most recently Vanuatu).

There are clear examples where P4SP has played an important role in supporting governments to improve social protection policies, strengthen and change the status of social protection systems and improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness.

Kiribati: The focus of P4SP in Kiribati has been on supporting basic and essential operations. P4SP started in Kiribati in August 2022 at the request of the government, who approached the Australian High Commission for support. The government – elected in 2019 – had a manifesto of reforms that included legislation (2020) to decrease the age and increase the amount of the senior citizen allowance, and a new and broad-based support fund for the unemployed (announced in late July 2020).

A rapid analysis by P4SP recommended including a focus on case management. A subsequent Operations Review by P4SP provided the foundation for working closely with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs (MWYSSA) to develop SOP for the Senior Citizen Allowance (SCA) and the Support Fund for the Unemployed (SFU), including combining systems and tools for the programs as much as possible.

P4SP has played an important role in supporting the government to:

- reduce the backlog of overdue social protection payments accumulated during COVID-19
- complete annual financial reconciliations
- design a new payments system
- design a new MEL system
- streamline, strengthen and make more consistent the delivery chain for the SCA, SFU, and the Disability Support Allowance
- shape a submission to Cabinet on the child grant
- review the Disability Support Allowance through analysis and consultations
- undertake policy consultations for the Support Fund for the Unemployed.

P4SP has increased the knowledge and confidence of government counterparts. It was noted during consultations that P4SP has empowered MWYSSA to make more informed policy and program decisions, including influencing and advocating for relevant reforms with Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and shaping relevant budget support reform actions. It was also noted that there has been a significant reduction in the number of questions from Cabinet about social protection, and the questions are of better quality.

Fiji: The entry point for P4SP engagement in Fiji was an Operational Review of six social protection programs under MWCSP. The Ministry accepted the recommendations of the review and is embarking on a reform agenda to improve quality, reach and efficiency of existing schemes, including revising SOP for those schemes.

The shift from a bus fare concession to transport allowance has been a major development for inclusive social assistance in Fiji. P4SP supported MWCSP to successfully advocate for this change to the Ministry of Finance, including providing costings analysis. Building on this momentum, the team has successfully generated interest and support for reforms to communications and grievance and redress for social assistance schemes. In the final stages of development, the anticipated roll out of a comprehensive Management Information System will be a substantial improvement for social assistance schemes in Fiji.

Through its embedded technical assistance, P4SP has increased the knowledge and confidence of MWCSP counterparts. During consultations, senior ministry staff reported being more confident engaging the Ministry of Finance and Cabinet including on social assistance scheme reforms and on social protection related budget support reform actions.

Tonga: The entry point for P4SP engagement in Tonga was through the attendance of a key individual from the Social Protection and Disability Division in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) in P4SP's online training on social protection (2022), and participation at the Pacific Regional Conference on Disability (2023). This led to a request for P4SP social protection training, tailored for Tonga, which included simulations on social protection spending and impacts.

P4SP has subsequently used a range of different entry points, including in-country visits (May 2023, November 2023, February 2024, June 2024), and undertaken social and economic analysis of adequacy, coverage gaps and operations of the Social Welfare Scheme for the Elderly (SWSE) and the Disability Welfare Scheme (DWS). The team has worked closely with DFAT's Deputy Head of Mission, deploying remote and FIFO technical support to Post and a range of organisations including:

- MIA - responsible for social protection policy leadership as well as implementation of the Disability Welfare Scheme
- National Retirement Benefit Fund - responsible for delivering the SWSE as well as implementing the provident fund

- the Ministry of Finance – responsible for decision making on social protection spending
- disability and aged care NGOs
- consultation with multilateral agencies.

Based in part on P4SP's economic and social modelling of changing the age of eligibility for the pension and altering the allowance level, Post successfully advocated for reforms at the highest levels of government. The government committed to lowering the age of eligibility for the SWSE and increasing the level of allowance for both the SWSE and DWS in their June 2024/2025 budget. This will result in a significant expansion of social protection coverage and reduce the gap between the official retirement age of 60 and access to the elderly scheme from 70 to 63 by 2027. This will particularly benefit women who are less likely to have access to the provident fund.

P4SP engagement in Tonga continues to focus on the SWSE and DWS, primarily on strengthening SOP at this stage. This remit is in part shaped by the role of the World Bank in social protection in Tonga, particularly in relation to adaptive social protection. P4SP is viewed by MIA, Ministry of Finance, and the National Retirement Benefit Fund as a partner on issues related to ageing and disability.

Timor-Leste: whilst Bolsa da Mae – Jersaun Foun (BdM-JF, the Mother's Grant New Generation scheme) was repealed by the in-coming government in December 2023, P4SP has played an important role in enhancing counterpart capacity for core government functions such as MEL, inter-ministerial ways of working, and mobile money payments. This is likely to have supported the development of the mobile money ecosystem in the country.

Vanuatu: the work of other development partners and civil society, notably the World Bank, Oxfam and more recently Save the Children have built national demand for social protection in Vanuatu. Leveraging this opening, P4SP has recently (Q2 2024) commenced bilateral engagements in Vanuatu. Frequent FIFO missions and remote technical assistance supported the finalisation of an Adaptive Social Protection Policy (which the World Bank was the lead development partner for). A long-term adviser had been recruited at the time of consultations and was scheduled to be deployed in November 2024 to support the Government's preparation of a National Social Protection Policy.

Recommendation 3: Where there is momentum and appetite, the program could scale up bilateral investments

There is appetite in Fiji, Tonga (from FIFO to embedded adviser), likely Kiribati subject to the priorities of the incoming government, and Vanuatu.

The above reforms are impressive, and P4SP's role in these reforms could be made more evident through contribution analysis. The role of P4SP is usually one of several factors contributing to improvements in social assistance. By way of example, the switch from a bus fare concession to a transport allowance in Fiji had been under consideration for several years prior to P4SP engagement. P4SP's main approach has been to identify technically and politically feasible areas for support and lean into these areas. Contribution analysis would highlight the links between P4SP's input and the outcomes of improved social protection.

3.2.2 Regional investments

Intermediate Outcome 2 (*Key stakeholders better understand and recognise the relevance of quality and inclusive social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste*) has two focus areas:

1. online regional training
2. knowledge products and communications of those products

There is evidence that progress is being made against this Intermediate Outcome. Online regional training has been used as a successful entry point to engage bilaterally in new

countries. It has raised awareness of social protection, and demand for support in reforming social assistance schemes in the region. More recently, P4SP has ramped-up the number of knowledge products it produces and the communications of those, including through social media such as LinkedIn, and knowledge platforms such as socialprotection.org.

P4SP is successfully reaching a range of stakeholders through its online training, with end-of-training reports reflecting positively on the experience. Given the timing of participant surveys, this reflects intended use of knowledge gained in training rather than actual use of enhanced knowledge and understanding. There is scope to more clearly track medium term outcomes of P4SP learning and evidence, including how well targeted these activities are on key stakeholders.

DFAT and regional counterparts place considerable value on P4SP research and knowledge products. There is evidence that these products do inform and influence policy decisions. Examples of publicly available regionally focused products include:

- P4SP Evidence Review of Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste
- From Historical Trends to Investment Pathways: Social Protection Expenditure in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste
- Investing In Social Protection for Good Times and Bad: An Assessment of Social Protection Financing in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

There is appetite for more Pacific focused social protection research. Some of this is occurring through the bilateral investments, which adds to the broader evidence base. These include:

- P4SP Review of Delivery Systems in Timor-Leste, Fiji and Kiribati
- Kiribati Disability Support Allowance Review
- Bolsa da Mãe - Jersaun Foun Qualitative Learning Evaluation

There is a lack of evidence on the relative merit of spending on social protection versus other spends such as infrastructure. The program is starting to do some work on this e.g. through the Social Accounting Matrix modelling in Kiribati. It will be important for P4SP to continue to contribute to building clear and compelling arguments for social protection investments at the same time as strengthening the nuts-and-bolts of social assistance programs.

There is a lack of evidence around the impacts of social assistance in the Pacific (with the notable exception of the top-ups in Fiji following Cyclone Winston). Impact evaluations are expensive and the scale and implementation quality of many social assistance programs across PICs poses a constraint for generating robust (and positive) evaluation results. While impact evaluations should remain a consideration, more low-cost approaches to illustrating impact, for instance through case studies or field visits with key stakeholders could be used strategically to demonstrate the value and returns from social assistance investments.

Given the recency of P4SP knowledge products, there is less information available about the influence of these knowledge products. There is scope to think through (or document) the audience, intended use and main messaging of different knowledge products to maximise their potential impact. It would be helpful if future outcome harvesting or contribution analysis could assess the role of P4SP training, learning events and knowledge products in shifting demand for social assistance and P4SP support in the region.

Recommendation 4: Increase the spend on research, training and influencing, including more tailored, in-country training and cross-country learning.

Priorities for P4SP include:

- research on the interconnection between gender equality and social protection
- research on the interplay of informal and formal social protection systems
- evaluative work on key social protection schemes (e.g. the Support Fund for the Unemployed in Kiribati)
- evaluative work on the impacts of these schemes (e.g. old-age pensions and disability benefits) on poverty
- documenting the audience, intended use and main messaging of different knowledge products and assessing their influence
- assess the efficacy of P4SP influencing activities on shifting demand for social assistance and P4SP support in the region
- learning what is not working on progressing gender recommendations.

DFAT could invest in Productivity Commission style research on the relative return on investment for social protection versus other investments such as infrastructure to answer the issue of why spend on social protection when faced with tight fiscal space.

P4SP has worked to amplify synergies between bilateral engagements and regional investments. P4SP does this through sharing bilateral experiences during regional training and actively seeking to include people from PICs where there is no or limited bilateral engagement in different types of training. Attendance (see Table 1 below) point to some success at including people from PICs beyond the countries where P4SP engages bilaterally.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF ATTENDEES FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ATTENDING ONLINE TRAINING

Country	Intro to SP Cohort 2 (April 23)	Intro to SP Cohort 3 (Nov 23)	SP Operations (April 24)
Fiji	5	24	13
Kiribati	3	1	
Timor-Leste	3		
Tonga	4	4	1
Vanuatu	2	6	
Cook Islands		2	
Samoa	7	18	5
Federated States of Micronesia	1	1	
Papua New Guinea	2	9	2
Regional*	6		
Solomon Islands	3	2	
Nauru		1	
Australia	1	22	2
New Zealand		1	

* Category only used for cohort 2 and presumably covers representatives from other countries in the Pacific not separately listed as attendees. Attendees from beyond the region are not included in Table 1.

There is scope to further strengthen and measure synergies between bilateral and regional activities and how to leverage the regional activities to raise demand for social assistance across different PICs. There are emerging instances of where P4SP is effectively convening key stakeholders from different Pacific countries to share their experiences, learn and build relationships. The regional nature of the program is supporting the Pacific to define its way of doing social protection and opens up opportunities for trilateral and mini-lateral investments.

3.2.3 Countries without social assistance

P4SP is explicitly designed to engage bilaterally where there is clear demand for P4SP services from DFAT Posts and from partner governments. The most recent Annual Report (2024) notes that P4SP is engaging bilaterally in all countries where the government and DFAT Post has requested support. P4SP is most deeply engaged in Fiji and Kiribati, the two PICs with the most advanced social protection public expenditure and programming on social assistance. It makes sense that P4SP is not engaging bilaterally in countries where formal social assistance is least developed (PNG and Solomon Islands), and has only recently started engaging bilaterally in Vanuatu, where social assistance schemes are related to humanitarian crises. During consultations it was noted that there is demand in Nauru for P4SP support from government, and DFAT Canberra and Post are exploring initial steps for P4SP engagement in Nauru with the Government of Nauru and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

P4SP does not engage with countries or Posts directly until an entry point has been established by DFAT Canberra. Scoping missions to either Nauru, Vanuatu or Samoa were proposed by P4SP in 2023 but did not take place due to an inability to identify viable entry points. In 2024, P4SP has been responding to increased demand in Vanuatu, but was not the driving force in building that demand.

There could be more diversity around ways of building demand for social assistance in other PICs, particularly Solomon Islands and PNG. Under DFAT leadership, P4SP could support other regional or national partners with in-country presence such as local and international CSOs and multilateral agencies who are working on social protection in Solomon Islands and other countries. This could be complemented with participation in P4SP training and learning events by government counterparts and other relevant parties. During consultations it was noted that Solomon Islands has reached out to government of Fiji for support on establishing a formal disability allowance scheme. In PNG, DFAT could re-assess whether and how P4SP can play a supportive role in the design and piloting of the nutrition-sensitive child grant, with a focus on ensuring inclusion.

Recommendation 5: DFAT to consider new approaches to bilateral engagement in PICs with no / limited social assistance.

- Trilateral support with Fiji to Solomon Islands on disability is an opportunity worth exploring.
- Continue the watching brief and responsive support in Samoa.
- Reassess opportunities to support government partners and the World Bank on the nutrition pilot in PNG.

3.3 Gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion

3.3.1 Gender equality

KEQ: To what extent did P4SP advance gender equality within the scope of the program?

P4SP's strategic intent on gender equality

Pacific policy commitments to advancing gender equality are set out in the Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030 (PPA). The policy commitments recognise the relationship between social protection and women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women. They provide the anchor for P4SP's intersectional GEDSI Strategy.

The P4SP foundational GEDSI Strategy (2022) sets out how P4SP would contribute to the direction and strategic objectives of the PLGED and PPA in specific areas:

- “Supporting the production and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform gender responsive government policies and programs (PLGED) / enhancing the generation of knowledge to inform policies and decision-making (PPA)
- Economic empowerment through the provision of social protection, financial inclusion and literacy linked to cash transfers (PLGED)
- Ending violence against women (PLGED / PPA), in terms of improving understanding of the relationship between social assistance and reduced gender-based violence
- Health and education (PLGED), to the extent that social assistance can facilitate access to basic services and encourage positive changes in diet
- Mobilising resources and sustain investment to advance gender equality (PPA) by encouraging investments in gender responsive social protection.” [P4SP, GEDSI Strategy and Inception Plan (Part 1), 2022]

Gender equality is not an explicit outcome in P4SP's theory of change, though inclusiveness is included at both EOPO and Intermediate Outcome levels. While it could be argued that the focus on inclusiveness prioritises the intersectionality of inequality and social inclusion, it also runs the risk of making structural inequality invisible. This is especially pertinent for gender equality given the cultural context and systemic inequalities in access to social protection in the Pacific, which has traditionally focused on provident funds and contributory pensions for employees of the formal sector. Women's lower labour force participation, greater likelihood to be paid less and be in less secure employment than men when they are in the formal sector, and the employment breaks women take for care-giving all disadvantage women in contributory pension savings.

Working with the theory of change, P4SP prepared a foundational GEDSI Strategy in 2022 which was updated in February 2024. The GEDSI Strategy incorporates a twin track approach of GEDSI mainstreaming and GEDSI specific activities and is centred on a GEDSI-responsive and age-sensitive approach to social protection arranged around the four elements of:

- a) GEDSI analysis
- b) GEDSI responsive social protection systems
- c) GEDSI outcomes for social protection
- d) long term GEDSI outcomes at the country level.

The first two elements are said to be within the sphere of influence of P4SP. The GEDSI Strategy (2024) states that “P4SP-supported designs and activities will include attention to gender equality, including generating and promoting disaggregated data, analysis, identification of

barriers and gaps, and design and monitoring of proactive strategies to address these barriers and gaps.”

The GEDSI Strategy acknowledges that gender equality, disability and social inclusion have different frameworks, actors, networks and requirements and need to be addressed separately as well as collectively. It includes guidance on areas for integrating gender equality, disability and social inclusion into the social protection delivery chain. However, there is low awareness and use of the GEDSI Strategy by P4SP and DFAT. The GEDSI Strategy has not been used to shape engagement with government, has no action plan or measurable outputs, and is not monitored. It has not provided strategic direction on how gender equality, disability and social inclusion are addressed separately and collectively, and has not been used as a framework against which to measure progress, identify weaknesses and adjust design and approach. These weaknesses were acknowledged by P4SP which has recently increased its GEDSI technical capacity to address gaps.

Various measures are factored into programming to ensure gender equality and GEDSI is considered at critical junctures. This includes Country Engagement Plans which provide an overview of the GEDSI context in individual countries. However, with the exception of Kiribati, Country Engagement Plans tend to fall short of assessing the political economy for gender responsive social protection.

All P4SP activities are reported in P4SP Annual Progress Reports on whether they are gender sensitive, responsive or transformative with the aim to be gender sensitive at a minimum. The P4SP Strategy (2024) notes that the intention is that P4SP will move along the gender continuum to more responsive and transformative activities over the life of the program. At this stage in the program, gender sensitive is a low level of ambition and at odds with the GEDSI responsive and age sensitive approach to which P4SP has committed.¹

Gender mainstreaming into bilateral systems strengthening

At the bilateral level, P4SP’s approach and focus on strengthening government operations of existing social assistance schemes has determined the type of engagement and entry points P4SP has pursued on gender. Opportunities have been taken to **mainstream** consideration of gender into analytical work such as in the Technical Review of Social Assistance in Fiji, and analysis of the coverage and benefits of the disability and aged pension schemes in Tonga. These have proven to be valuable entry points.

Where the ‘door is open’ such as in Fiji, P4SP has used the analysis of gender and equity barriers in social protection operations to inform discussions on revisions to the SOP.² Through this process, some of the operational barriers to access for people with disability, the elderly, women and other vulnerable populations have been addressed. For example, introducing gender positive affirmative language around payment processes, GEDSI disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation, and making public communications, outreach and the Grievance Redress Mechanisms accessible to people with disabilities. The trusted relationship P4SP has now fostered with the Ministry means that it has an opportunity going forward and is well placed to bring evidence of gender and intersectional gaps into other areas of systems strengthening in Fiji. Planned support to strengthen the MIS is expected to address gender and equity data gaps and enable government to undertake more accurate analysis of coverage and reach.

¹ P4SP’s GEDSI Strategy explains that its GEDSI responsive and age sensitive approach examines gender, disability, and social inclusion across the life course.

² Barriers found include the head of household being listed (usually male) and receiving the Poverty Benefit Scheme payment, lack of gender disaggregated data, the unconscious bias of community leaders who are asked to endorse applications, the lack of GEDSI sensitivity of Social Welfare Officers, and the security and practical challenges faced by the largely female social welfare officer workforce.

The indirect and incremental approach to gender that P4SP has taken to its bilateral work partly reflects the nature of a responsive and demand led system strengthening approach with a focus on government identified social protection priorities. It may also reflect the limited capacity and time and confidence of P4SP to take a more forward leaning approach on gender equality. P4SP technical specialists on the ground in Fiji and Kiribati have limited gender or local contextual expertise and have understandably needed time to build confidence and identify entry points for gender. There is also a limit to what individual experts can be expected to cover. This highlights the trade-off between a nimble, limited and low risk technical response to government demand versus a more nuanced and opportunistic response with stronger gender equality coherence over time.

In Fiji, the result is that while gender mainstreaming has progressed well through the strengthening of the SOPs and will be picked up in the strengthening of the MIS, P4SP has not yet engaged strategic and gender specific considerations related to social protection that are beyond the mandate of the Department of Social Welfare. This includes the potential to engage on a range of programmatic, analytical and policy issues that are at the nexus of gender equality and social protection including for example referral pathways for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) who are social assistance beneficiaries, cash transfers for survivors of violence, and cash plus programming; agendas that are already under discussion led by Department of Women. Similarly, P4SP has not yet engaged with Fiji's other national gender priorities such as increasing female labour force participation and access to childcare, which are addressed in part via social assistance schemes in other countries.

The situation in Timor-Leste where P4SP worked alongside and was supported by DFAT's Partnership for Human Development (PHD) on BdM-JF was quite different. In Timor-Leste, P4SP's social protection systems expertise was complemented by PHD's strong gender equality, disability and social inclusion capacity and relationships. PHD understood the political economy of gender equality and was able to bring in DFAT's GBV program Nabilan to develop operational linkages between BdM-JF and GBV crisis centres. P4SP's technical assistance to BdM-JF also integrated consideration of gender equality and disability equity including responding to and respecting the needs, dignity and burden of work on diverse women to enable access to social protection registration, enrolment, and receipt of benefits.³ The complementary strengths of P4SP and PHD contributed to the design of BdM-JF, which was strong on being gender responsive and disability inclusive.⁴

Engagement with gender equality champions and organisations

P4SP's engagement with gender equality champions and women leaders at the bilateral level has been mixed. On the one hand, P4SP works closely with Ministries and lead government agencies for women where social protection tends to be located as in Fiji, Kiribati and Timor-Leste. Women leaders of these agencies are important gender equality influencers though P4SP engages more with technical managers than political leaders. The focus on social protection operations means P4SP has not tended to engage on gender equality policies and programming directly or work with the department responsible for gender equality or women. There is opportunity for P4SP to better leverage its access to partner government's 'women' machinery to advance debate and programming around the linkages between social protection and women's economic empowerment and GBV, as per the Pacific policy commitments. This would require P4SP shifting from a narrow social protection systems and operations focus to a more strategic and intentional gender focus.

³ Alinea, Outcomes Harvesting 2023-2024; BdM-JF Qualitative Baseline Survey, 2023.

⁴ GEDSI was factored into the delivery and operations in multiple ways including by removing 'marital status' from the registration form to reduce barriers for single mothers and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, strengthening the MIS to capture gender, age and disability disaggregated data, and GEDSI was systematically considered in the qualitative baseline survey.

Through P4SP's support to government partners, the program has engaged with women's organisations and other CSOs that work with or are invited to engage with government and participate in consultations and technical discussions related to social protection. However, P4SP has yet to forge direct working relationships with country specific and regional gender equality and women's organisations and networks and DFAT's gender programs including Pacific Women Lead. Resourcing constraints, prioritisation of bilateral over regional programming and a narrow focus on being responsive to government departments leading social protection operations underpin this choice which has trade-offs, and leaves P4SP short-sighted on strategic linkages to gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming into regional influencing activities

At the regional level, P4SP has considered gender in training, evidence reviews and research plans. Gender equality is integrated into various modules of the Introduction to Social Protection and Inclusive Social Protection training. P4SP also adjusted the timing of online training to accommodate the caregiving and family responsibilities of diverse participants.

Gender equality and gender responsive social protection has been covered by some regional evidence products including the Evidence Review of Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste (2024) which is one of P4SP's main evidence products. The Evidence Review identified the need for further research on how to design and implement effective gender responsive and disability inclusive social protection including research to understand how social protection may affect intra-household dynamics in relation to GBV in different contexts. While P4SP has factored this into its plans, research on the relationship between social protection and intimate partner violence has been a DFAT priority since the program began. P4SP has been slow in building consensus and agreement on the framing of this research across the P4SP and DFAT teams. Various factors have contributed to the delay including competing demands on program funding, and internal concern that P4SP lacks the technical expertise and local Pacific capacity and organisational relationships to take this on. The recent engagement of a Pacific GEDSI adviser with research and gender networks in the region appear to have been key in finalising the tender for the research.

Other P4SP evidence products have provided gender specific data and analysis. A paper on social protection financing provided the inputs for a blog on 'Protecting Women's Futures: From Provident Funds to Government-Funded Pensions for Older People in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste'.⁵ Other key evidence pieces such as the (internally focused) Review of Social Protection Delivery Systems in Fiji, Timor-Leste and Kiribati (2024) are essentially gender, disability and social inclusion blind in how they present beneficiaries, providers and systems strengthening solutions.

The intimate partner violence study will contribute to the evidence base and is important for P4SP's growth and opportunity to more actively engage with gender equality stakeholders. However, it is one of many potential evidence gaps on gender responsive social protection and the gender equality impact of social protection that P4SP should arguably be targeting or influencing others to fill as it prioritises gender equality in its regional influencing work.⁶

⁵ P4SP, Investing in social protection in good times and bad: An assessment of social protection financing in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, 2024.

⁶ Other key evidence gaps in the Pacific include the impact of social pensions on levelling up women's income security in old age; the impact of social assistance on household gender dynamics and power relations; the impact of social assistance on female labour force participation and women's economic empowerment in PICs; access to and impact of social protection on 'invisible' social groups such as people with diverse SOGIESC; relative impact of cash vs in-kind support on women's decision-making and control and household gender dynamics.

In conclusion

P4SP has performed adequately in mainstreaming gender into operational systems strengthening in focus countries and ensured gender is integrated into regional social protection training. The pace of progressing research on the relationship between social protection and intimate partner violence has been very slow. P4SP has underinvested in networking and forging relationships with gender equality organisations and champions in the region and focal countries and would benefit from engagement with DFAT gender equality programs in the Pacific especially Pacific Women Lead.

Limited gender capacity of P4SP (until recently), the responsive nature and operational focus of bilateral investments, and competing demands on the program have culminated in modest ambition and prioritisation of gender equality. This needs correcting. The trusted relationships that P4SP has forged with respective government agencies in Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga, and the appointment of a 0.8 FTE GEDSI adviser with established networks in the Pacific are a strength on which the program can build greater ambition for advancing gender equality going forward.

Recommendation 6: DFAT and P4SP could be more ambitious and focused on gender equality

- Continue to build the team's common understanding and confidence on how gender equality intersects with social protection.
- Introduce a gender equality intermediate outcome to focus attention and accountability, and shift to a more intentional approach to addressing gender equality.
- Undertake political economy analysis of gender in each of the focal countries.
- Prioritise gender responsive or transformative activities in each of the bilateral engagements including openness to cash+ initiatives.
- Increase resourcing of gender specific activities including research and influencing at regional and bilateral level to complement the focus to date and continued support to mainstreaming.
- Strengthen the monitoring of gender responsive actions and separate out reporting on gender equality from GEDSI.
- Invest in networking and building linkages with DFAT gender equality and GBV programs, regional Pacific and national gender architecture, champions and organisations. Leverage these for gender transformational information.
- Continue to undertake sex and disability disaggregated analysis of social assistance coverage and benefits and consider how P4SP can share the analysis to influence and inform stakeholders operating outside of social protection on disadvantage and inequality.
- Refer to Pacific and national government commitments for political cover.

3.3.2 Disability equity

KEQ: To what extent did P4SP advance disability inclusion within the scope of the program?

P4SP's strategic intent on disability equity and inclusion

The Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disability 2016-2025 is the key disability inclusion policy for the region. It supports governments to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of persons with disability as set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It does not include a specific commitment on social protection, but ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been one of the triggers behind

countries introducing disability benefits.⁷ The Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent supports a twin track approach to disability inclusion.

The P4SP GEDSI Strategy (2024) states that the program will take a twin track approach and support disability specific social assistance and mainstreaming disability inclusion across all social assistance. It also explicitly mentions partnering with OPDs and ensuring all training materials and knowledge products are easily accessible to people with disability.

While the same broad concerns about the GEDSI Strategy noted above⁸ under gender equality apply to disability inclusion, the social protection landscape is quite different for disability. In the Pacific, social assistance programs to people with disabilities were introduced in most countries over the past twenty years with the exception of PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Marshall Islands.⁹ Key concerns include gaps in access, coverage and adequacy of the payment level of disability allowances, intersectional inequalities that disadvantage specific groups, and overshadowing of disability mainstreaming into social protection by the focus on disability specific assistance. However, the existence of national disability policies, frameworks and disability assistance schemes in many PICs provide an established landscape and entry point for engagement on disability equity and inclusion that P4SP has seized.

Disability specific social assistance and mainstreaming disability inclusion into national social protection systems

P4SP has achieved some important gains in disability social assistance in a short period of time. Through its responsive approach, it has generated trust and fostered relationships with the governments of Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati on disability specific analytics, policy and operations. It has mainstreamed attention to disability into some of the broader analytics it has supported in these countries and created opportunities for ongoing engagement in reform processes.

Tonga: P4SP's entry point to disability in Tonga was generated through participation in P4SP's regional social protection training of the Government of Tonga's head of the Disability section of MIA, who is also responsible for social protection. Following a positive experience, P4SP was invited to provide training on disability inclusive social protection to a variety of disability stakeholders in Tonga. P4SP offered to undertake an analysis of the Disability Welfare Scheme (DWS), an offer which the government accepted.

P4SP's analysis was based on data from the Tonga Health Income and Expenditure Survey (2021) and DWS administrative data. It found that women and men with disabilities aged between 15 and 69 are less than half as likely as women and men without disabilities to be in the labour force, and that women with disabilities are especially disadvantaged with only 23% of women with disabilities in the workforce. The analysis found people with disabilities in all age groups have higher poverty rates, and households with a person with disability spend more than twice as much as others on health care, with impacts on the household's standard of living. The analysis found that 65% of people with disabilities were covered by the DWS, with the highest proportion in the 50-to-89-year age group. It showed that the disability allowance contributed to a 4.7% average increase in consumption among households with recipients under 70 years. It made the biggest difference to the poorest income decile which benefited from a 6% increase in consumption. The benefits contribute to a 14% reduction in the poverty rate among households with recipients under 70 years, and a 19% reduction in the relative poverty gap. The analysis concluded that the impact on poverty could be greater through higher coverage of

⁷ As in Fiji; reported in P4SP, Financing Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, 2024.

⁸ The low awareness and use of the strategy amongst P4SP and DFAT, lack of direction it provides to shaping engagement with government, absence of an action plan or measurable outputs, and that it is not monitored.

⁹ P4SP, Financing Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, 2024.

people with disabilities and showed that Tonga's investment in disability allowances was similar to other small island countries.

The analysis initially opened doors for P4SP support to reform efforts on the social welfare scheme for elderly people (discussed below). DFAT Post has used the analysis in high level policy discussions with Government of Tonga to good effect and secured a commitment to increase the disability allowance and age of eligibility for the elderly pension. The One Team approach between DFAT and P4SP in Tonga has been particularly effective and efficient, with Post providing political economy analysis and P4SP FIFO technical specialists providing analysis to shape social protection policy dialogue between Post and the Government of Tonga, while supporting the strengthening of operations of the elderly schemes. DFAT Post continues to facilitate P4SP engagement on disability social assistance.

Kiribati: the trust and confidence in P4SP fostered by P4SP's long term adviser in the Social Protection Unit in MWYSSA opened the door for P4SP to support government with a review of the Disability Support Allowance (DSA). This is the first detailed review of a disability benefit in the region with scope for lesson learning for other countries with disability benefits in the region. The review involved the Ministry and OPDs in Kiribati throughout the process and included a person with disability as a member of the review team. The review was framed to consider the DSA and broader disability inclusive social protection. Findings and recommendations will be presented to the government after the elections, with P4SP well placed to respond to demands for further technical support.

Fiji: P4SP's entry to engagement on disability in Fiji was through the Technical Review of Social Assistance Schemes. This covered disability specific assistance and mainstreamed a disability (and gender) lens into the review of social assistance schemes. The review of the disability assistance scheme examined operations, benefit levels, and a desk-based review of the Functional Impairment Measure (FIM). It identified a number of constraints and weaknesses in design and use of the FIM, including a lack of suitability for identifying severe disability among people with invisible disabilities and children, and lack of training and capacity of social welfare officers to use the FIM. The assessment also recommended reactivating partnerships with OPDs to support the Department of Social Welfare to implement the disability assessments. While the quality of the Technical Review is highly appreciated by the Department and led to the revision of SOPs and P4SP's engagement in other systems areas, the FIM is a recent introduction and there is little appetite for reform at this time within the Department's Disability Unit.

While the Department has paused reform of the disability assistance scheme, it chose to rapidly reform the bus fare concession into a more accessible and inclusive transport assistance scheme that increases accessibility of people with disability and elderly persons. The reform had been under discussion prior to P4SP engagement, and the findings and recommendations of the Technical Review undertaken by P4SP added evidence to the momentum for reform. It is discussed in more detail under the next section on inclusion of older people.

Disability inclusion in regional influencing activities

P4SP has followed through on its commitment to ensure training materials and knowledge products are easily accessible to people with disability. Feedback and lessons from the regional Introduction to Social Protection training led P4SP to develop a standalone Inclusive Social Protection training package that profiles the gender equality, disability and social inclusion considerations required when developing and delivering social protection programs. P4SP engaged Maven (an OPD) to support the development of training products that are accessible to people with disabilities and produce accessible e-learning materials. Easy-read content has been developed for all regional training, and e-learning courses provide flexibility

for how and when people learn bearing in mind people's caring responsibilities and preferences to learn at their own pace.

P4SP's Evidence Review of Social Protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste identified nine broad priorities for future research which included addressing the evidence gap on the complementarity of community-based disability care in the Pacific and disability inclusive social protection. This has not been picked up yet by P4SP though pipeline research is planned on informal and formal social protection and the perception of social protection in the Pacific.

Engagement with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

P4SP has directly engaged with OPDs and people with disability, including working with Pacific Disability Forum, Maven and other OPDs on the design and delivery of regional training. In focal countries, OPD and CSO involvement in policy dialogue varies by country and the space created for this by government. P4SP's engagement with OPDs has tended to flow from government-led consultations and fit with existing government CSO and OPD relationships. P4SP's engagement with OPDs tends to be technical, to inform analysis and as a party to government-led consultations, rather than collaborative and partnership based.

There is broad agreement in P4SP that OPDs and CSOs including women's organisations could play a greater role in social protection operations. This is reflected in some P4SP analytics such as the Technical Review in Fiji but is not an agenda P4SP is likely to pursue beyond their engagement with lead government stakeholders on specific programs.

In conclusion

P4SP's responsive and demand led approach fits well with advancing disability inclusive social protection in PICs where disability assistance is well accepted among government, and where the local political economy is conducive.

Recommendation 7: Continue the focus and ambition on disability equity in social protection

- Develop an engagement strategy with OPDs in PICs at regional and bilateral levels.
- Prioritise research on disability specific evidence gaps in future research plans including sustainable financing options such as disability insurance.
- Strengthen capacity of disability sections and units in Government on disability inclusive social protection.

3.3.3 Inclusion of older people

KEQ: To what extent has P4SP achieved outcomes that support or progress the inclusion of older people within the scope of the program?

Within its short lifespan, P4SP has contributed to tangible improvements in social assistance benefits for older people in Tonga and Fiji.

In Tonga, DFAT Post has proactively helped P4SP navigate the social assistance operating space and generate demand for P4SP technical assistance. P4SP has worked hard to build a relationship with the National Retirement Benefit Fund, which manages the SWSE. P4SP support has grown from an analysis of the scheme's coverage and benefits based on Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2021) data. The analysis showed the steep decline in the purchasing power of the pension and the relatively low investment in the social pension compared to other countries in the region. A key message was the gap between the retirement age (60) and eligibility for the social pension (70 years), and the consequences for poverty reduction. The analysis led the National Retirement Benefit Fund to request further technical

assistance, firstly an Operational Review of the pension scheme and most recently, a review of the MIS. This is an example of how quality analysis can lead to demand for systems strengthening technical assistance. Moreover, the analysis of the pension scheme provided Post with evidence to make the case in policy dialogue for an increase in the pension benefit level and a lowering of the age criteria. The age criteria will drop from 70 to 67 in 2024 and to 66 in 2025 with further lowering expected. The gains will increase the value of social pensions to older people and their coverage.

Universal social pensions are more gender responsive than contributory pensions and given the longer life expectancy of women in Tonga, it is assumed women will especially benefit from the changes. P4SP's analysis falls short of explaining the gender disaggregation of beneficiaries and respective coverage rates of the pension by gender. This is a missed opportunity to integrate gender analysis into a key reform area and capture tangible evidence of improved gender responsiveness and contribution towards gender equality.

In Fiji, P4SP has supported the reform of the bus fare concession targeted to older people and people with disability into a transport assistance scheme that allows beneficiaries to use cash for available and accessible transportation beyond buses. This addresses the problem of limited bus routes in rural, remote and maritime areas, and physical barriers to using buses which have high clearance and boarding, all of which led to people paying out of pocket for taxis or foregoing travel. P4SP recommended changes to the bus fare concession as part of the Technical Review, arguing for reforming the concession into a cash top up of the social pension and the disability allowance. The result has been improved accessibility for target groups and the more efficient management of the bus fare concession as part of the social pension scheme and the disability allowance rather than as a standalone allowance. The Ministry reports that the reform has seen a reduction in the number of complaints from users (which had previously been high), and despite some teething problems, the reform seems well received.

Three key factors have supported the quick wins P4SP has made on improving benefits to older people.

- a) The strong commitment of PICs and established social assistance to older people, with pensions the most common form of formal social protection in the region.¹⁰
- b) Guidance and support provided by DFAT Posts including on the political economy and space for P4SP technical assistance, and the active engagement of Post in policy dialogue utilising P4SP evidence.
- c) The responsive and high-quality technical assistance P4SP has provided, and its focus and commitment to building trusted relationships with government partners.

3.4 Efficiency

3.4.1 One Team partnership approach and ways of working

The One Team approach and partnership ways of working are effective and efficient. A Ways of Working document was co-created during partnership meetings held online in November 2021. The document describes and guides P4SP's One Team approach and ways of working. It captures intent and guiding principles, shared and individual objectives of the parties (DFAT, Development Pathways (the Managing Contractor), and the P4SP team), and their joint and respective contributions to program outcomes. It outlines governance, decision-making and communications arrangements, and partnership risks. This allows for a truly adaptive program where opportunities are discussed openly, and decisions can be made quickly about priorities, risks, and how to proceed.

¹⁰ P4SP, Protecting Women's Futures: From Provident Funds to Government-Funded Pensions for Older People in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste', 2023.

The One Team approach is applied flexibly and works differently in different places depending on Posts' appetite and ability to engage. The approach is more devolved in some places where the partnership is more between P4SP and government counterpart, and more Post led in others (Tonga) where the political economy makes this more effective. The linkages between social protection and budget support are a good example of joined up work across DFAT teams in Canberra, Post, and P4SP embedded and other advisers.

There are high levels of trust and commitment across the team and with Posts. Interlocutors at Post are a real enabler for the program, providing sound context analysis and opening doors into government and other stakeholders. They often frame the space in which P4SP plays, which is mostly a positive but may add to the reticence to engage in areas where Posts are less confident or where they assess the political economy to not be conducive to engaging, such as more strategic engagement on gender.

The DFAT and P4SP teams proactively invest in making the partnership work. Development Pathways and P4SP work collaboratively with DFAT, and the One Team communicate frequently through weekly program management meetings and bi-weekly meetings between DFAT and the contractor representative. These are seen to be working well and have ensured that DFAT and P4SP are aligned on priorities and approaches. Ways of Working are reviewed annually through partnership health checks and revised as needed and by mutual agreement.

The One Team approach does require investment in suitably experienced and senior resources in Canberra. There has been relative stability in the DFAT teams in Canberra, and open and well-coordinated working between DFAT's Office of The Pacific and the Social Protection Unit. At design, it was envisaged that DFAT (Canberra) would allocate 1.5 FTE to P4SP, recognising the need to drive demand for P4SP, engage in policy dialogue, and facilitate relationships with Posts and partner governments. The design was ambitious, and DFAT has provided around 0.5 FTE of an experienced DFAT staff member, with further support provided from the central Social Protection Unit. This has been adequate to date.

In the most recent Health Check (June 2024), factors contributing to success include a strong and shared sense of purpose and commitment to improving social protection in the Pacific; strong commitment to open, honest and frequent communication; good internal collaboration within DFAT and P4SP; a willingness on all sides to be flexible, responsive and adapt to changing needs; and willingness to solve problems collaboratively and productively in a way that allows for creative and constructive conflict (disagreement), essential for innovation.

Posts are an important partner in the One Team approach and were overwhelmingly positive about the model during consultations. They value the strategic decision-making and policy engagement role that they play in the program, without the administrative burden of program management. It is a good practise model for DFAT for regional programs in the Pacific where DFAT can invest suitable resources in the model.

While the One Team approach has been effective in supporting P4SP and has contributed significantly to its success, it does mean that some things can move more slowly. Consultations between all parties has benefited the quality and sustainability of P4SP work, but has resulted in some slower progress, particularly on more sensitive issues. This is openly discussed at each of the partnership check-ins and is something the One Team are collectively working to improve over time.

3.4.2 Adaptive management

P4SP is delivering a high quality, flexible and responsive program. Adaptive management is underpinned by good ways of working including dynamic and close engagement and high levels of trust and communication. Frequent communication supports rapid decision-making between DFAT and the P4SP Senior Management Team, enabling the program to consider and

quickly respond to opportunities and shifts in direction. Adaptive management supports the airing of different opinions and views, in turn leading to high levels of contestability of strategic direction and approach.

There are numerous examples of where P4SP has supported responsiveness to partner government and Post requests for support. These are detailed in previous sections of this report and include:

- Quick responses to sudden interest in support from government of Vanuatu
- Technical review of social protection systems in Fiji as part of budget support actions in a very short timeframe
- Development of the policy option paper on transport allowance in Fiji
- Development of briefing papers for Post on Tonga's SWSE including fiscal simulations
- Delivery of training for disability groups at short notice at the request of MIA in Tonga.

Flexible workplans, refreshed each six-months, supports P4SP's response to shifting priorities. The quarterly and monthly activity budget review is a key component of P4SP's approach to adaptive management. Program planning, implementation, MEL and reporting is managed through the annual learning-adaptation cycle. A key component of P4SP's adaptive management approach is the Reflect and Refocus Workshop, held annually in July. Regular reflection is generating lessons which are changing the scope and approach to investments. This is reflected in iterative updates to elements of the program Theory of Change and indicators of success, countries of focus and areas of investment in bilateral workplans and the regional influencing agenda, as well as shifts in the shape of the P4SP team and in the Ways of Working approach.

The adaptive management approach of P4SP is valued by partner governments and by DFAT staff at Posts. It positions Australia to deliver relevant, timely and responsive support across the Pacific by a program with a relatively small budget. Where DFAT has the capacity and subject matter expertise, P4SP represents a good model for regional programs, especially those working in the Pacific.

3.4.3 Delivery model

P4SP is a technical assistance platform that works bilaterally and regionally. The program provides responsive and high-quality advice to Posts and partner governments through remote / online, FIFO, and in-country embedded advisory support. P4SP utilised the core technical team, specialist short-term advisors (via a short-term technical advisory panel) and the Managing Contractors' technical staff. This model has reduced barriers to recruitment, allowing P4SP to engage and mobilise global experts on social protection to the Pacific.

DFAT bilateral programs in the Pacific are highly unlikely to be able to generate sufficient demand to attract or sustain the range of expertise that a regional program like P4SP can attract and mobilise. By creating a market for global social protection expertise in the Pacific, the global pool of experts is becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the Pacific, and how to work with and support DFAT in the Pacific.

In-country partners value the access P4SP gives them to consistent, niche expertise who are willing to be based in or travel frequently to their countries. Feedback from in-country partners is that they value having at least one embedded long-term adviser, with supplementary access to consistent short-term advisory and other support. Embedded advisers in Fiji and Kiribati have made the program highly responsive to partner government and allowed for the development of nuanced, proportional, contextually relevant and evidence-informed support. Ensuring clarity on boundaries and what is possible under P4SP may assist embedded advisers manage competing pressures going forward.

Despite being a regional program, P4SP is locally led. It was noted during consultations that P4SP advisers – both long-term embedded and short-term FIFO - work in a respectful and empowering way that is unique among development partners. There is an appetite for more long-term embedded P4SP advisers in some locations such as Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu. These advisers have a nuanced understanding of their partners and are delivering support that positions their partners to make informed choices and advocate these positions with central agencies and political leaders. Embedded advisers do report being pulled into other areas of work and sometimes being constrained by partner government preferences, such as levels of engagement on particular issues (gender equality) and with stakeholders such as civil society and development partners. However, the willingness of P4SP advisers to help out and respect boundaries has won them considerable access and influence in the social protection space.

P4SP has recently welcomed its first team member from the Pacific. This is a great start and could be complemented by further investment in nurturing local talent. Building on existing efforts to pair international with local talent as a way of sharing knowledge and understanding and building a strong and more localised cadre of social protection experts would be ideal. P4SP have consistently worked with CoLab in the Pacific to support training in an endeavour to grow expertise and knowledge in social protection. The IPV and climate research have been designed and commissioned in a way to support stronger engagement and ownership from Pacific organisations and individuals. This is a long-term endeavour that includes:

- ensuring that P4SP has the resourcing capacity to support meaningful localisation will be very important.
- developing a localisation strategy and monitoring and reporting on progress will be key.
- some administrative hurdles will need addressing, such as the ability to legally employ local staff and lateral approaches to recruitment.
- an increased footprint in countries will require a shift in the role of the Senior Management Team.

Recommendation 8: DFAT and P4SP could invest in pursuing locally led development more intentionally

The P4SP team could:

- Develop a localisation strategy in countries where the bilateral investment is significant, and monitor and report on progress.
- Continue to pair international expertise with local talent.
- Address administrative barriers to localisation where they exist.

P4SP has a unique delivery model, with no centrally co-located core program team. The dispersed, remotely located team resulted in part from the program inception during COVID-19 when travel and co-location were not possible or preferable. Over time, this model has proven to be effective and has delivered efficiencies and Value for Money. Remote working arrangements are seen as cost effective, and have reduced barriers to recruitment, allowing P4SP to engage people with the right skillsets irrespective of their home location.

The delivery model is underpinned by the One Team approach. Effective, open and frequent communication within the P4SP team and with DFAT combined with regular face-to-face touch points have been key to supporting the dispersed team work effectively. The program supports co-working for people who are based in the same location. All of this has been beneficial for building effective working relationships and a sense of team.

Given the dispersed nature of the team and the lack of a permanent office, P4SP worked via PHD in Timor-Leste and works via Governance for Growth in Vanuatu and the Partnership for Human Development in Timor-Leste. This supports technical and administrative coherence

and allows P4SP to mobilise rapidly into countries where they have no operational footprint. Partnership brokering can be helpful at the outset of these sorts of arrangements to set expectations about roles and responsibilities between parties.

3.4.4 Resource allocation

P4SP works exclusively on providing technical support to partner government programs, and as such leverages partner government funding in all that it does. P4SP does not contribute to social assistance benefit payments, but rather supports counterparts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their own public spending on social protection.

Alignment with Australian budget support and multi-donor Joint Policy Reform Matrices has proven useful, with P4SP building on the leverage that this funding delivers to support reforms. P4SP has supported the development of nuanced social protection reform actions for release of payments, and then supported partners to deliver on the reforms.

A key element of the program design was to crowd in support from bilateral program budgets. There were allocations from country program budgets from the first year of the program including in Timor-Leste and Kiribati (FY2021-22 and FY2022-23), and in Fiji from FY2023-24. In FY2023-24, there was budget allocation from DFAT's central Social Protection budget, complementing the core program commitment from the Pacific regional program fund.

Management fees accounted for almost a third of the program's expenditure in FY2021-22. This was due to both the frontloading of milestone payments in Year 1 and the slower than expected activity expenditure due in part to ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions. The management costs as a proportion of program costs has not changed over the life of the program and milestone fees remain in line with expectations and operational maturation.

The P4SP core team started very small with a Team Leader, a Deputy Team Leader, and a part time Senior Social Protection Specialist. The team has grown over time in line with increased program delivery requirements. The early exit of a consortium partner meant that the core team needed to absorb administrative and logistics tasks. An Operations Manager, two Program Managers, and an operations officer were recruited into the core team, which remains a relatively streamlined team. Core technical adviser roles have expanded, including in GEDSI and in Communications. As the program grows, the Senior Management Team will need to continue to elevate their role to be high level and strategic rather than involved in activity level detail. Country level teams may need to expand, and more technical work may need to be devolved to an increased pool of Program Managers.

The remote, dispersed, and FIFO model is likely delivering Value for Money. P4SP has not created its own in-country operations and logistics platforms, and as noted above, draws on existing in-country programs for this support, which represents efficiencies.

The program has successfully built demand for their services, but the overall budget ceiling for the Managing Contractor is tied to the initial approach to market. This is unfortunate as there is:

- demand for expanding the investments in some bilateral programs (Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, and likely Vanuatu)
- demand to increase the number of countries where there are bilateral investments (Nauru, Tuvalu, and Republic of the Marshall Islands, and possibly Solomon Islands via trilateral engagement)
- a need to increase investment in gender equality
- appetite for increased investment in regional training, research and influencing
- a need to increase the spending on MEL to around 3-5% of annual program spend.

Recommendation 9: Allow the program to continue to increase its annual spending rate.

The budget ceiling for the head contract is tied to the original procurement approach to market and cannot be increased beyond those thresholds. DFAT could allow the program to exhaust its extension phase budget earlier than the 4 years of the phase. If this option is taken up, DFAT would need to consider going into a design and tender process for a follow-on program in year 2 of the next phase of P4SP.

If spend rate increases, the role of the Senior Management Team will need to evolve to be high level and strategic. Country level teams may need to expand, and more technical work may need to be devolved to an increased pool of Program Managers.

Recommendation 10: Consider taking Timor-Leste out of the program.

- This would provide more fiscal space and bandwidth for the P4SP team to meet expanding bilateral and regional demands.
- Government of Timor-Leste has officially repealed BdM-JF and there are currently no entry points for P4SP.
- Timor-Leste does not fit within DFAT's Office of the Pacific or the regional Pacific architecture.
- The transition would be seamless to GoTL who does not have visibility over P4SP.
- There are mechanisms in country and southeast Asia for Timor-Leste to draw on should social protection expertise be required.

3.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

P4SP developed a high-quality MERLA strategy during the inception phase, using facilitated workshops with DFAT to revise the original design Theory of Change. The MERLA Strategy has been updated each year based on lessons and shifts in program. The MERLA strategy complies with DFAT Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) standards, and clearly outlines P4SP's (evolving) program logic, performance assessment protocols including KEQ and key performance indicators, data collection methodologies and sources. Emerging priorities – such as climate change, localisation, and the influencing agenda – continue to be embedded into MERLA processes.

P4SP's EOPO remains the same as in the Investment Design. Intermediate outcomes have been revised since design to clearly distinguish between country-level engagement and regional investments. Intermediate outcomes are assessed appropriately i.e. bilateral and regionally, as well as for the mutually reinforcing nature of regional and bilateral activities.

GEDSI is integrated into the MERLA strategy, including through outputs, indicators and data sources and methods. Unpacking GEDSI in the Theory of Change and including a gender equality Intermediate Outcome would increase focus and ambition and bring P4SP into line with new DFAT DMEL Standards. This should be followed by similar unpacking of gender equality from GEDSI in the MERLA strategy, engagement and activity plans, and progress reporting. The GEDSI Strategy needs monitoring. GEDSI reporting requirements for IMR have been updated, and P4SP will need to realign its reporting to allow easier IMR. (See Recommendation 6).

Two of five key evaluation questions relate to GEDSI and GEDSI elements are reported against. GEDSI sensitive qualitative processes and evaluation and learning questions are built into MERLA, and GEDSI markers are set for each activity. Disaggregated baseline data is collected during scoping and needs assessment processes where possible.

Inclusion of a climate change Intermediate Outcome would increase focus and bring P4SP into line with new DFAT DMEL Standards.

Recommendation 11: Consider including an Intermediate Outcome on climate change

- This would enhance focus and attention on the linkages between social protection and climate financing distribution, including for disaster response and for loss and damage funds.
- This would bring P4SP into line with guidance on DFAT DMEL standards.

At inception, P4SP bought in external MEL expertise from Alinea International. Alinea offers specialist and diverse MERLA methodologies, tools and systems to P4SP and other programs. The Alinea team support the development of a range of products including annual planning, activity and program progress reports, training assessments, briefing papers, outcomes harvesting reports and case studies. They support program-wide reflection and adaptation processes that are integral to the adaptive management of the program. In successive IMR, DFAT has assessed the information generated from P4SP MERLA to be timely and accurate, with strong links between the workplan and outcomes data.

The Alinea MEL team are not social protection experts, and there is an appetite for more country-specific, quantifiable social protection data in reporting such as the number of beneficiaries for reforms, systems change analysis, cost benefit analysis of relative spends of Australia and partner governments, and so on. Contribution analysis combined with partner government data (disaggregated if possible) on quantifiable outcomes related to social protection programs that P4SP has supported - including on program coverage, timeliness of payments, timeliness of reconciliations, number and nature of grievances and complaints, number and nature of referrals, and so on - would be invaluable in providing the evidence of P4SP outcomes.

Regardless of who delivers this type of data, it will require broader investment in country-level MEL, more often than not as an activity together with partner governments including supporting better links between national poverty data and social protection data. Supporting counterparts to generate better data and evidence is a worthwhile proposition and goes beyond the role of Alinea in P4SP.

Managed well, having external MEL embedded in any program can provide independence and additional contestability to program performance tracking and decision-making. Where it has worked well, the model is embedded in the Senior Management Team and has a reporting line on strategic and technical issues to the Team Leader. This provides MEL experts with the authority to inform strategic decision-making based on evidence and lessons and provides program teams with access to niche MEL expertise via the sub-contractor. Currently, the Alinea role is restricted to MEL processes, is insufficiently resourced (0.6 FTE) for a program the size of P4SP and does not have sufficient authority as it is not a member of the Senior Management Team and has no reporting line to the Team Leader. Further, the MEL team has had limited opportunity to travel and work more closely with in-country program teams and partners. P4SP Program Managers can and should play a role in MEL.

Recommendation 12: Expand the investment in MEL and maintain some independence.

- MEL resourcing should represent around 3-5% of program annual spending.
- Embed a full time MEL lead in the Senior Management Team with a reporting line on strategic and technical issues to the Team Leader.
- Support improved generation of country-level outcomes viz social protection by supporting improved partner government MEL.
- Maintain independence and contestability to program performance tracking and decision-making via an external supplier or a QTAG that reports to DFAT.

It can be difficult to track progress against outcomes for what are now quite complex and detailed bilateral investments. At the country level, the evaluation team had access to two main documents:

- 1) Country Engagement Plans that outline the background, focus and rationale for P4SP's engagement, activities and coordination, key stakeholders, MERLA and risk management
- 2) Activity Plans that list activities and how these align with P4SP's overarching and high-level Theory of Change as well as risk management.

Clearer articulation of intended outcomes at a country level or country-level theories of change (where there is a sizable bilateral investment) would make it easier to assess country-level intended results and outcomes. This could also support embedded advisers to prioritise across different demands, once trusted relationships are built. Country Engagement Plans could include a MEL framework (as well as gender equality action plans and a localisation strategy).

Should localisation be pursued more intentionally, it would be useful for this to be clearly defined and measured. There are well established ways of measuring progress on capacity development and localisation along a continuum from substitution to independence that could be usefully employed on P4SP.

Recommendation 13: Where there is a sizable bilateral investment, Country Engagement Plans could include intended outcomes / country level theories of change and a MEL framework.

- This would enhance country level accountability.
- These plans could include gender equality action plans and localisation outcomes.
- P4SP's role in these reforms could be made more evident through contribution analysis.

3.6 Coherence

KEQ: How well does the intervention fit?

P4SP has been nimble in leveraging and complementing DFAT programs in priority P4SP countries, including working closely with PHD in Timor-Leste, and governance programs in Tonga and Vanuatu. The program aligns well with Australian budget support and multi-donor Joint Policy Reform initiatives. The 2024 independent evaluation of Australia's AUD\$498m Fiscal Budget Support package (2020-23) to the Pacific found that P4SP expertise 'was critical' to significant social protection system improvements.

P4SP provided DFAT Posts and partner governments with specialised technical inputs on Australia's budget support operations where there is a social protection focus (Tonga, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Kiribati and Fiji). While social protection payments are primarily funded by national budgets, in some cases, Australian budget support has directly financed transfers including following crises in Fiji and Tonga, and as part of BdM-JF in Timor-Leste. In Kiribati, P4SP's

support is part of Australia's broader package of technical assistance, which includes budget support to strengthen the Social Protection Unit, establishing a national Integrated Financial MIS, and support for financial inclusion through UNCDF. P4SP supported government of Kiribati engagement on budget support joint donor matrices.

Australia is investing significantly in the design and pilot of the new Child Nutrition and Social Protection project (2021-2027) in PNG. DFAT has contributed AUD21 million to DFAT's World Bank PNG and Pacific Islands Trust Fund, in addition to the World Bank's USD80 million. To date DFAT has not identified an entry point or value-add for the P4SP team. During consultations, concerns were expressed regarding the inclusivity of this new child grant. There could be a role for P4SP to support this initiative, even if in a relatively light touch way e.g. through the specific training being designed on inclusive social protection.

Social protection policy advice is an increasingly crowded space among development partners in the Pacific, and coherence with other development partners has increased over time. P4SP Country Engagement Plans explicitly assess donor presence and approaches to coordination. Risks of conflicting policy advice and ideas being brought to government partners were evident in the parallel financing streams from DFAT to the World Bank and P4SP early in the program. This led to instances of both organisations approaching some governments with similar advisory support or implementing similar regional activities (e.g. the World Bank Community of Practice and the P4SP Knowledge and Evidence Hub).

Coordination with the World Bank has been managed through meetings with the World Bank regional office in Sydney and regular touch points between the P4SP and World Bank social protection teams. In 2024, P4SP supported DFAT and the World Bank to deliver a first Community of Practice meeting between the two organisations and government representatives across the Pacific. During consultations, some stakeholders noted that once P4SP bilateral operations ramp up, the World Bank has limited visibility or understanding of P4SP's work (Fiji and Tonga). Given the importance of the World Bank in the region on social protection it is important for both parties to assess if there are low-effort ways that this understanding can be improved.

P4SP recognises that governments play a key role in coordinating development partner activities and has largely left it to government to coordinate donors at the national level. P4SP acknowledges the limited capacity and resources that government has for this role but does not view strengthening government's coordination ability as one of its priorities. In doing this, P4SP risks missing opportunities for joint advocacy on social protection (e.g. in Timor-Leste) and has less visibility of the trade-offs that counterparts are making between development partners. As multilateral development banks vacate the space, there may be fewer lending options for counterparts should the need to borrow arise in future (e.g. for MIS, crisis payments, etc).

Consultations and literature both suggest that there is less P4SP engagement and coordination with other development partners such as the ADB, International Labour Organisation, UNICEF, UNCDF, UNDP, World Food Programme and the International Monetary Fund. There are opportunities for P4SP to work with other development partners to develop regional hubs or communities of practice (PIF or SPC) or existing coordination fora where P4SP could strengthen engagement with and understanding of social protection (UN clusters, Cash Working Groups, Disaster resilience, etc.). These organisations, networks and communities of practice should be mapped, and decisions made about the best ways to engage. This will likely vary across countries depending on the effectiveness of different groups operating there – for instance in Fiji and Vanuatu the Cash Working Group may provide an appropriate entry point for coordination, as well as the Pacific Regional Cash Working Group.

Recommendation 14: DFAT and P4SP could explore opportunities to coordinate and collaborate more intentionally with other development partners.

This would assist in ensuring consistent overall messaging about the benefits of social protection and the sustainability of P4SP's investments.

3.7 Sustainability

KEQ 8: To what extent are P4SP interventions likely to be sustained by partner governments and embedded in their systems?

Sustainability is a key P4SP program principle, defined by an emphasis on supporting locally led initiatives, building capacity, and working through and strengthening existing systems. P4SP has established systems and ways of working that support sustainability in the Pacific context. Close engagement with DFAT Posts and partner governments ensures that the program is demand-driven and locally led. Country Engagement Plans and Activity Plans support political economy analysis and risk informed investment choices. Activity design reflects the context to ensure sustainability as much as possible. It is noted that long-term system strengthening can only be sustained via strong partnerships with partner governments.

P4SP systems and ways of working provide clear eyed assessments and understanding of constraints to sustainability. These include:

- **Fiscal space:** ensuring recurrent finance for social assistance is a challenge, particularly given economic shocks. Early engagement in Tonga highlights how development partner funding (in this case particularly from the ADB) will remain critical to support social protection expansion, at least in the short- to medium-term. Australian budget support is financing key roles in the Social Protection Unit within the government of Kiribati, as well as elements of the MIS development. P4SP adopts a phased approach to activities in line with counterpart fiscal constraints.
- **Fluid operating environments:** Several countries where P4SP engaged bilaterally are classified as Fragile and Conflict-affected, including Kiribati and Timor-Leste. While not on the list of fragile countries, in the 12 months from November 2022, Vanuatu had three Prime Ministers. Garnering broad-based support for social protection in these contexts is challenging. Change in key partner government stakeholders can lead to shifts in priorities and loss of established relationships and understood ways of working.
- **Institutional and key person capacity:** P4SP is deliberate and transparent when providing capacity substitution, and these decisions are well documented in activity plans and risk assessments.
- **Incentives for reform:** as noted above, Australian budget support has proven a useful tool to encourage reforms. It is unclear to what extent incentives for reform will remain without external impetus. The end to government support for BdM-JF in Timor-Leste is evidence that coupling external funding with reform initiatives does not guarantee ongoing support.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is evidence that the knowledge and confidence of partners is growing. Working to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing programs and systems improves fiscal sustainability for partner governments. Supporting government partners to make evidence based and risk informed choices enhances program sustainability. Supporting improvements in government feedback loops through improved MEL and Grievance Redress Mechanisms is important and will enhance sustainability. Linkages and capacity support to Pacific regional bodies is also important for supporting longer term sustainability of social protection in the region.

Over the next few years, it will be important to identify financial and capability gaps and shore up the sustainability of MIS in Kiribati and Fiji. Funding gaps will occur and need to be filled either through national revenue or crowding-in development partner funds. If the latter, it will be important to engage those development partners early on in the process to ensure their support. Where multi-lateral development banks are moving out of social protection, financing choices for partner governments will be constrained.

Civil society organisations play an important role in the Pacific in providing informal social assistance, and in some cases, supporting the delivery of formal social assistance, particularly in the event of crises. However, beyond involvement in training (e.g. on disability-inclusive social protection), there does not seem to be an emphasis on engaging civil society as an advocate for social protection, as a partner in social protection reforms, or as a means to improve accountability. This could be a useful avenue for ensuring coherence, relevance and sustainability. It is also an area where Australia has a comparative advantage to engage.

Recommendation 15: Explore opportunities to engage more intentionally with CSOs.

- As an advocate for social protection.
- As a partner in social protection reforms.
- As a source of understanding how gender transformation happens in contexts.
- As a means to improve accountability.

4. Recommendations

The recommendation outlined below are based on the findings of the evaluation team. They are ordered according to how they appear in the narrative and how they link to findings. Many of these recommendations could be adopted in a phased approach, and built into the next phase of the program should recommendation 1 be taken up.

Recommendation 1: The program should be extended into a second phase.

- P4SP represents a highly valued Australian government offering to counterparts in the Pacific. The program is well positioned to leverage its reputation, reach and influence to deliver more for Australia and the Pacific.
- To end the program would be a lost opportunity to entrench outcomes in what is a relatively new area of work in the Pacific. It would undermine the good relationships and reputation of Australia as a consistent, long-term partner of choice.

Recommendation 2: DFAT could leverage P4SP for broader Australian regional objectives including:

- Evidence informed policy choices that promote broad-based and inclusive growth, including reviewing the relative merit of partner government spending on social protection versus spending on less productive policies such as subsidy schemes.
- As Pacific labour is increasingly exposed to Australian social protection schemes and has expanded reciprocal rights to these schemes, P4SP could inform policy choices and be informed by evidence and lessons on Australian and PIC schemes. Where relevant and useful, enhancing interoperability could be considered (e.g. superannuation and Retirement Benefit Funds).
- As Australia continues to benefit from a pipeline of trained and experienced social welfare and care economy workers from the region, P4SP could support partners in their workforce planning, and to access relevant professional development schemes.

- Promoting the use of broad-based and equitable social protection mechanisms for the distributing of climate change financing including loss and damage funds. This is more efficient than supporting the establishment of parallel distribution mechanisms.

Recommendation 3: Where there is momentum and appetite, the program could scale up bilateral investments.

- There is appetite in Fiji, Tonga (from FIFO to embedded adviser), likely Kiribati subject to the priorities of the incoming government, and likely Vanuatu. Continue the watching brief and responsive support in Samoa.

Recommendation 4: Increase the spend on research, training and influencing, including more tailored, in-country training and cross-country learning.

Priorities include:

- Research on the interconnection between gender equality and social protection.
- Research on the interplay of informal and formal social protection systems.
- Evaluative work on key social protection schemes (e.g. the Support Fund for the Unemployed in Kiribati).
- Evaluative work on the impacts of schemes (e.g. old-age pensions and disability benefits) on poverty.
- Documenting the audience, intended use and main messaging of different knowledge products and assessing their influence.
- Assess the efficacy of P4SP influencing activities on shifting demand for social assistance and P4SP support in the region.
- Learning what is not working on progressing gender recommendations.

DFAT could invest in Productivity Commission style research on the relative return on investment for social protection versus other investments such as infrastructure to answer the issue of why spend on social protection when faced with tight fiscal space.

Recommendation 5: DFAT to consider new approaches to bilateral engagement in PICs with no/limited formal social assistance.

- Trilateral support with Fiji to Solomon Islands on disability is an opportunity worth exploring.
- Continue the watching brief and responsive support in Samoa.
- Reassess opportunities to support government partners and the World Bank on the nutrition pilot in PNG.

Recommendation 6: DFAT and P4SP could be more ambitious and focused on gender equality.

- Continue to build the team's common understanding and confidence on how gender equality intersects with social protection.
- Introduce a gender equality intermediate outcome to focus attention and accountability, and shift to a more intentional approach to addressing gender equality.
- Undertake political economy analysis of gender in each of the focal countries.
- Prioritise gender responsive or transformative activities in each of the bilateral engagements including openness to cash+ initiatives.
- Increase resourcing of gender specific activities including research and influencing at regional and bilateral level to complement the focus to date and continued support to mainstreaming.

- Strengthen the monitoring of gender responsive actions and separate out reporting on gender equality from GEDSI.
- Invest in networking and building linkages with DFAT gender equality and GBV programs, regional Pacific and national gender architecture, champions and organisations. Leverage these for gender transformational information.
- Continue to undertake sex and disability disaggregated analysis of social assistance coverage and benefits and consider how P4SP can share the analysis to influence and inform stakeholders operating outside of social protection on disadvantage and inequality.
- Refer to Pacific and national government commitments for political cover.

Recommendation 7: Continue the focus and ambition on disability equity in social protection

- Develop an engagement strategy with OPDs in PICs at regional and bilateral levels.
- Prioritise research on disability specific evidence gaps in future research plans including sustainable financing options such as disability insurance.
- Strengthen capacity of disability sections and units in Government on disability inclusive social protection.

Recommendation 8: DFAT and P4SP could invest in pursuing locally led development more intentionally.

The P4SP team could:

- Develop a localisation strategy in countries where the bilateral investment is significant, and monitor and report on progress.
- Continue to pair international expertise with local talent.
- Address administrative barriers to localisation where they exist.

Recommendation 9: Allow the program to continue to increase its annual spending rate.

The budget ceiling for the head contract is tied to the original procurement approach to market and cannot be increased beyond those thresholds. DFAT could allow the program to exhaust its extension phase budget earlier than the 4 years of the phase. If this option is taken up, DFAT would need to consider going into a design and tender process for a follow-on program in year 2 of the next phase of P4SP.

If spend rate increases, the role of the Senior Management Team will need to evolve to be high level and strategic. Country level teams may need to expand, and more technical work may need to be devolved to an increased pool of Program Managers.

Recommendation 10: Consider taking Timor-Leste out of the program.

This would provide more fiscal space and bandwidth for the P4SP team to meet expanding bilateral and regional demands.

- Government of Timor-Leste has officially repealed BdM-JF and there are currently no entry points for P4SP.
- Timor-Leste does not fit within DFAT's Office of the Pacific or the regional Pacific architecture.
- The transition would be seamless to GoTL who does not have visibility over P4SP.
- There are mechanisms in country and southeast Asia for Timor-Leste to draw on should social protection expertise be required.

Recommendation 11: Consider including an Intermediate Outcome on climate change.

- This would enhance focus and attention on the linkages between social protection and climate financing distribution, including for disaster response and for loss and damage funds.
- This would bring P4SP into line with guidance on DFAT DMEL standards.

Recommendation 12: Expand the investment in MEL and maintain some independence.

- MEL resourcing should represent around 3-5% of program annual spending.
- Embed a full time MEL lead in the Senior Management Team with a reporting line on strategic and technical issues to the Team Leader.
- Support improved generation of country-level outcomes viz social protection by supporting improved partner government MEL.
- Maintain independence and contestability to program performance tracking and decision-making via an external supplier or a QTAG that reports to DFAT.

Recommendation 13: where there is a sizable bilateral investment, Country Engagement Plans could include intended outcomes / country level theories of change and a MEL framework.

- This would enhance country level accountability.
- These plans could include gender equality action plans and localisation outcomes.
- P4SP's role in these reforms could be made more evident through contribution analysis.

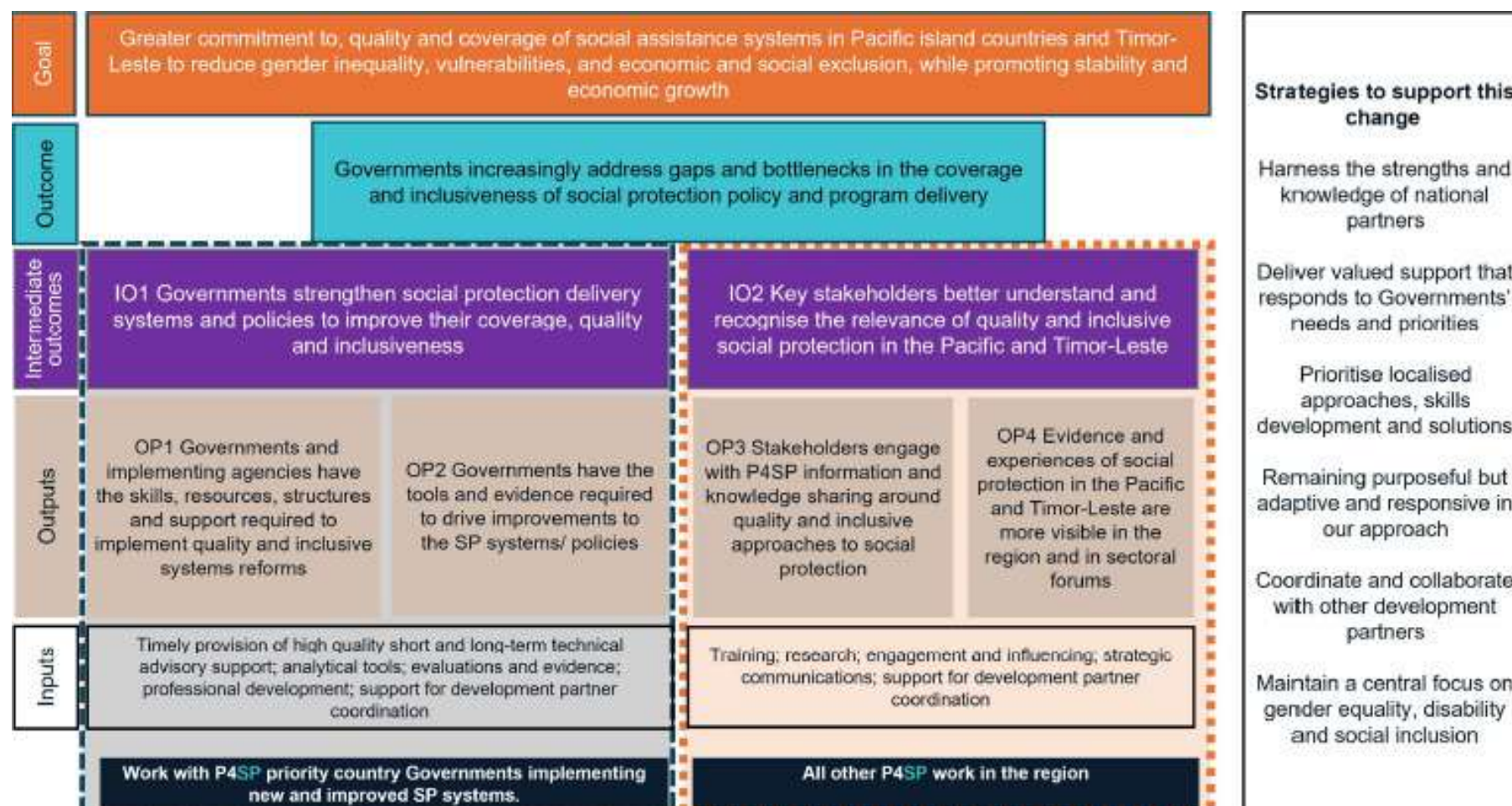
Recommendation 14: DFAT and P4SP to explore opportunities to coordinate and collaborate more intentionally with other development partners.

- This would assist in ensuring consistent overall messaging about the benefits of social protection and the sustainability of P4SP's investments.

Recommendation 15: Explore opportunities to engage more intentionally with CSOs.

- As an advocate for social protection.
- As a partner in social protection reforms.
- As a source of understanding how gender transformation happens in contexts.
- As a means to improve accountability.

Annex 1: Theory of Change



Theory of Change as alternative text

Goal: Greater commitment to, quality and coverage of social assistance systems in Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste to reduce gender inequality, vulnerabilities, and economic and social exclusion, while promoting stability and economic growth

Outcome: Governments increasingly address gaps and bottlenecks in the coverage and inclusiveness of social protection policy and program delivery

Intermediate outcome (IO) 1: Governments strengthen social protection delivery systems and policies to improve their coverage, quality and inclusiveness

Intermediate outcome (IO) 2: Key stakeholders better understand and recognise the relevance of quality and inclusive social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste

Outputs for IO 1: Output 1: Governments and implementing agencies have the skills, resources, structures and support required to implement quality and inclusive systems reforms

Outputs for IO 1: Output 2: Governments have the tools and evidence required to drive improvements to the SP systems/ policies

Outputs for IO 2: Output 3: Stakeholders engage with P4SP information and knowledge sharing around quality and inclusive approaches to social protection

Outputs for IO 2: Output 4: Evidence and experiences of social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste are more visible in the region and in sectoral forums

Inputs for IO 1: Timely provision of high quality short and long-term technical advisory support; analytical tools; evaluations and evidence; professional development; support for development partner coordination

Inputs for IO2: Training; research; engagement and influencing; strategic communications; support for development partner coordination

Strategies to support this change

- Harness the strengths and knowledge of national partners
- Deliver valued support that responds to Governments' needs and priorities
- Prioritise localised approaches, skills development and solutions
- Remaining purposeful but adaptive and responsive in our approach
- Coordinate and collaborate with other development partners
- Maintain a central focus on gender equality, disability and social inclusion

Annex 2: Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

KEQS for OECD-DAC criteria: Effectiveness

1) How effective was P4SP?

- a) To what extent has P4SP achieved its investment-level EOPO and associated IOs?
- b) To what extent has P4SP achieved its country-level intended outcomes/results?
- c) Is the approach to countries without social assistance systems fit-for-purpose?
- d) What unintended consequences (positive or negative) emerged as a result of P4SP?

2) To what extent did P4SP advance gender equality within the scope of the program?

- a) To what extent has P4SP achieved the gender equality outcomes identified in the P4SP GEDSI Strategy? What worked well and why, and what was less effective?
- b) How well has P4SP included targeted and mainstreamed gender equality considerations in its activities over the life of the program to date, including in bilateral engagements and through its influencing / regional work?
- c) How effective was the P4SP engagement with gender equality champions, women leaders and influencers, and different types of organisations representing diverse women (both government and non-government) in the design and delivery of program activities, and the program cycle more broadly, e.g. monitoring and evaluation and learning, adaptation and networking?

3) To what extent did P4SP advance disability inclusion within the scope of the program?

- a) To what extent has P4SP achieved the disability inclusion outcomes identified in the P4SP GEDSI Strategy? What worked well and why, and what was less effective?
- b) How well has P4SP included targeted and mainstreamed disability inclusion considerations in its activities over the life of the program to date, including in bilateral engagements and through its influencing / regional work?
- c) How effectively has P4SP engaged with people with disabilities and/or OPDs in the design and delivery of program activities, and in the program cycle more broadly, e.g. monitoring and evaluation and learning, adaptation and networking?

4) To what extent has P4SP improved access to social assistance for elderly people?

- a) What worked well and why, and what was less effective?

KEQS for OECD-DAC criteria: Effectiveness

5) How efficient was P4SP?

- a) To what extent is the program's adaptive management approach working?
 - i) Are targets clearly defined and encouraging an achievable level of ambition?
 - ii) To what extent has this supported the team to experiment with new approaches and flexibility?
 - iii) To what extent is P4SP able to respond to evidence and flexibly manage programs accordingly?
- b) How well has the 'one-team' partnership approach and Ways of Working supported strategic decision making, and effective, efficient and responsive program delivery, including risk management?
- c) To what extent has the delivery model (remote, dispersed team and multi-country with regional overlay) enabled efficiencies and responsiveness, and supported effective program delivery?
- d) To what extent did the program allocate the right levels and types of financial and human resourcing within and between the two IO areas to support EOPO achievement?
- e) How appropriate is the P4SP Gender Strategy in supporting achievement of outcomes, and to what extent has it been implemented in practice?
 - i) Are targets clearly defined and encouraging an achievable level of ambition?
- f) How well has P4SP identified, managed, and mitigated GEDSI-related risks?

KEQs for OECD-DAC criteria: Coherence

6) How well does the intervention fit? (OECD-DAC)

- a) To what extent has P4SP leveraged and aligned with other Australian government priorities and investments?
- b) To what extent is the program coordinated with other donor and multilateral support?
- c) How were NGOs, OPDs and other stakeholders representing women or vulnerable groups (including government organisations) consulted and involved?

KEQs for OECD-DAC criteria: Relevance

7) What evidence is there that P4SP investments are responsive to Australian and partner government plans, policies and priorities?

- a) How well does P4SP respond to the plans, policies and priorities of the Australian government?
- b) How have P4SP countries of focus and entry points been decided and revised through the program, and how has relevance been maintained?
- c) How well do P4SP activity investment choices respond to the plans, policies and priorities of partner countries?
- d) Did priorities change over time? Was P4SP adaptable?

8) To what extent does the P4SP MEL system provide, and support the use of quality investment performance information that meets DFAT standards and requirements?

- a) To what extent does the MEL system (including reporting) meet the needs of program/activity managers?
- b) To what extent does the MEL system support learning and ongoing improvement?
- c) To what extent does the MEL system meet current DFAT DMEL Standards and Investment Progress Reporting requirements?
- d) How appropriate is the P4SP Theory of Change for supporting the program? To what extent has the revision to the Theory of Change impacted the ability to track long-term performance?
- e) How appropriate is the P4SP Theory of Change for guiding ongoing programming, taking into consideration DFAT gender equality and climate change requirements?
 - i) To what extent is the P4SP MEL system fit-for-purpose for tracking gender and inclusion outcomes?

KEQs for OECD-DAC criteria: Sustainability

9) To what extent are P4SP interventions likely to be sustained by partner governments and embedded in their systems?

- a) What measures has P4SP undertaken to support sustainability of the reforms they support, particularly in a context of political shifts and leadership changes? How successful have these been?
- b) What are the constraints to sustainability?

Lessons and Recommendations

10) How can future programming be improved based on lessons identified from the implementation of P4SP?

- a) What has been learnt from the phase of P4SP, and what changes should be made for any new phase?