

Management Response

End of Program Evaluation – Youth Skills Training Program

December 2019

Summary

This end of program evaluation covers a multi-year investment in three partners to deliver youth skills training from 2015-2019 (total value AUD 17.5 million). The investment provided funding to the World Bank (AUD 14 million), to extend an existing program in Port Moresby-The Urban Youth Employment Program (UYEP), which supported 18,000 young people to have access to pre-vocational skills (2011-2018). The investment also included two leading PNG civil society partners: City Mission (AUD 1.4 million) and Ginigoada (AUD 2.1 million). These partners used different approaches to skills development, and the evaluation findings validate that all programs ‘offered a meaningful opportunity to enter an economic and social pathway, building confidence and aspirations’, however, with limited progress in employment placements given the economic constraints related to job creation in PNG.

The evaluation methodology was selected to: gather evidence of impact and opportunities from both participants and a comparison control group, and document personal narratives and experiences in a format which permits quantitative data analysis. The analysis of this data validates Australia’s engagement with church partners in PNG, and highlights the importance of faith as a source of values and identity formation for young people, and the development of socio-emotional skills for job readiness and the capacity to aspire and seek employment.

Going forward, the Australian High Commission’s major investments in youth will be informed by and aligned with the Papua New Guinea Government priorities for investment in technical and vocational education opportunities. In the long term, the demand for skills training (including literacy) and job readiness opportunities, will continue to be high, given the relatively low ratio of tertiary education places compared to high school graduates, and constraints on job creation.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe [If practical, please specify timeframe here]
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Australian High Commission (AHC) should identify an appropriate internal team to lead on, and be responsible for coordinating across, youth programming. This team should lead on defining DFAT's youth focus, prioritising youth investments and priorities, and mainstreaming learning emerging from programs with youth specific components. They may also lead on future youth programming. In practical terms, AHC may wish to consider the following:</p> <p>Developing a short youth strategy or approach, that incorporates the elements addressing strategic findings and approaches from this review. This could be as straightforward as ensuring that the relevant sector strategies, program designs and annual implementation plans consider youth related impact and take account of previous reviews.</p>	Agree in part	<p>The successful implementation of a Ministerial Commitment has clearly delivered strong benefits for young Papua New Guineans, delivering skills training and supporting job placements, through this multi-year commitment.</p> <p>With the finalisation of this ministerial commitment, the AHC agrees that leadership to drive sustained and targeted investment is an appropriate approach to address the absence of opportunity for young people who have dropped out of school, in line with the priorities of the PNG Government.</p>	<p>Aligned with the Government of Papua New Guinea's priorities, the AHC will continue to provide targeted support to meet the education and training needs of young people in Papua New Guinea. For example, in 2020, Australia will deliver technical and vocational education programs through our bilateral partnership.</p> <p>The AHC agrees that youth be addressed in sectoral strategies, program designs and annual implementation plans, this should render unnecessary, a stand-alone youth crosscutting strategy.</p>	By June 2020

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<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>DFAT should seek to incorporate the findings from this, and the previous mid-term review into on-going and future youth-related programming. There are three routes to achieving this:</p> <p>a. Ensuring that all youth-related programs have a robust M&E framework capable of reporting on youth outputs and outcomes. The AHC should consider ensuring that future and current youth-related programming builds in a specific component designed to enhance the capability of civil organisations within the sector.</p> <p>b. Drawing on the findings from Purpose 1, DFAT should ensure that findings relating to the importance of skills training, the role of churches and faith identity, the balance of rules and long-term pastoral care and mentoring are incorporated into youth programming. This finding could be incorporated through the Churches Partnership.</p> <p>c. Engaging with the GoPNG on youth issues, at the national and sub-national level.</p>	Agree	All three approaches outlined are useful and identify strategic entry points to inform Australia's engagement.	<p>The application of learning from evaluations aligns with DFAT M&E standards. As identified in the report, the AHC manages a variety of investments which are intended to support youth: from community engagement in Bougainville to technical and vocational education.</p> <p>(a) It is a requirement that all programs have an appropriate Monitoring & Evaluation framework, and identifying the specific youth-related outcomes and youth targeted components of education or health sector investments can help to drive more informed support for disenfranchised young people.</p> <p>(b) Noting the high relevance of faith identity, faith leaders and communities for young people, Australia recognises the contribution of churches in PNG in service delivery, and the potential to strengthen youth-focused skills training, including through the PNG Church Partnership Program.</p> <p>The AHC agrees that both national and subnational governments are crucial stakeholders in setting policy and delivering programs to meet the needs of young people. Through the Subnational section, province and district-based advisors will continue to strengthen engagement on inclusive, local level decision-making and support youth engagement in coalition building and local governance.</p>	By December 2020
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>AHC teams using Sensemaker® for evaluations in the future should consider collaboration with the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy. Researchers have been trained to use this tool for the purposes of this evaluation. But engaging them for other evaluations will give them further opportunities to build on this experience and knowledge benefitting future evaluations.</p>	Agree	Collaborating with Papua New Guinean researchers and research organisations is acknowledged as good practice by the AHC and contributes to broader development outcomes, through the transfer of research skills and evidence-gathering.	Sensemaker® has been used in at least two evaluations in 2019 commissioned by Port Moresby Post. In addition to the Youth Skills Training End of Program Evaluation, it was used in a humanitarian evaluation exercise. The AHC regularly engages with the University of PNG School of Business and Public Policy and where, it is useful, will continue to consider future collaboration opportunities, including in the course of data collection for independent evaluations.	