



Review of the DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement 2011-2016

Final Report – July 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (2011-2016)* has been an effective way for the Australian Government, with Australian NGOs, to respond quickly to disasters and to strengthen community resilience and preparedness.

The HPA has produced some **impressive achievements**. It has consistently delivered fast emergency response funding. In many instances, this has enabled Australia to be one of the first donors to get money on the ground after a humanitarian crisis. The flexible nature of this funding, which allows changes to implementation plans up to the 8-week point, has further helped HPA activities to remain well-targeted as a disaster response unfolds.

The predictable, multi-year nature of the DRR and DRM funding has supported long-term planning and helped build strong partner relationships. It has recently produced some good examples of collaboration between HPA NGO partners. This component of the HPA has also given tangible meaning to the partnership during periods of few or no response activations, allowing for continued momentum in partner relations.

The HPA has been **an innovative model that has delivered good outcomes**. It has moved the DFAT-NGO relationship away from a transactional approach to one involving a greater sense of collaboration. The partnership has evolved and matured over the life of the agreement. **There is scope to further improve the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements.**

All partners have invested heavily in making the mechanism work, with time, effort and goodwill. A commitment to ongoing improvement has been a standout feature of the HPA.

While the HPA is functioning well, **there are some issues which are constraining its ability to achieve its full potential**. These include: the competitiveness of the peer review; the appropriateness of the mechanism for protracted crises; the purpose of the partnership and of the strategic dialogue; the lack of public awareness and visibility; and some aspects of monitoring, evaluation and learning.

There are many rich lessons that have come through the experience of the HPA. These lessons offer valuable guidance to designing a future mechanism. Section 4 of this report details a range of lessons relevant to the design.

The review concludes with **14 recommendations grouped into three areas**: recommendations for the design; recommendations for DFAT; and recommendations for the current phase of the HPA.

The HPA provides a good basis on which to develop a future mechanism that will allow DFAT and Australian NGOs to jointly add value to Australia's collective humanitarian efforts.

Recommendations

The Review Team recommends that the design process:

1. Builds on the achievements of the HPA, and all the lessons that have been learned as identified in section 4 of this report
2. Analyses other comparable donor mechanisms and other comparable DFAT partnerships to identify best practice in partnering for effective humanitarian action

3. Reviews the recommendations from the Office of Development Effectiveness' evaluation of the ANCP program for their relevance to a future mechanism
4. Considers adaptations to the peer review in order to remove the divisive aspects while maintaining the positive elements of NGO collaboration
5. Assesses funding models that include both a narrow and broad NGO supplier base (or a combination of both), giving prominence to considerations around capacity to respond to different crises, established local capability, access to specialisation and value for money.

The Review Team recommends that DFAT use the design process to:

6. Articulate its expectations around the purpose (or purposes) of a future mechanism
7. Define the role it expects to play, as both a partner and as a donor, acknowledging that a future mechanism must remain effective in the context of DFAT staff turnover
8. Consider funding arrangements that continue to be flexible and adaptive but are also more predictable and long-term
9. Estimate a minimum level of annual funding to be channelled through a future mechanism to enable the design of an appropriately resourced governance and management structure.

The Review Team recommends that during the current phase of the HPA, DFAT together with HPA NGO partners and ACFID, implement the following:

10. In the event that the HPA is activated for a major rapid onset emergency, HPA funding will be evenly split between all partners with established local capacity to respond. The Response Committee would still operate, and have a stronger focus on coordination of quality responses, and collaboration around monitoring and learning.
11. In the event that the HPA is activated for a response to a protracted crisis, the Response Committee's peer review process will be supported by an independent technical assessment of NGO proposals.
12. Partners will review and debate the benefits and costs of the consortium approach that has been used in the Vanuatu and Nepal responses at an HPA/HRG quarterly meeting.
13. Partners will design future HPA learning events to encourage sector-wide learning, be inclusive of HRG members, have a thematic/sectoral focus, and draw in outside agencies (such as academic institutes and/or private sector organisations) as relevant.
14. Partners will review current procedures around capacity mapping of HPA (and non-HPA) NGOs, with the aim of removing any duplication of effort, and improving the accuracy and utility of the information provided to all parties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ACRONYMS

We would like to thank the many people who have given their time, and shared their expertise with us during the review including: all HPA members and their respective NGO colleagues; non-HPA members of the HRG; ACFID staff; local implementing partners in Lebanon and Vanuatu; and DFAT staff. We would particularly like to thank the HPA Director and DFAT staff in the Humanitarian Response Branch for all their efforts in facilitating our access to information and to people.

Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACFID | Australian Council for International Development |
| ADF | Australian Defence Force |
| ANCP | Australian NGO Cooperation Program |
| AusAID | Australian Agency for International Development |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CRS | Catholic Relief Services |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| HPA | Humanitarian Partnership Agreement |
| HRC | Humanitarian Response Consortium (Oxfam partner in the Philippines) |
| HRG | Humanitarian Reference Group |
| JERCP | Joint Emergency Response Concept Paper |
| MEL | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisation |
| ODE | Office of Development Effectiveness |
| UN | United Nations |

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from, and recommendations of, an independent review of the *DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (2011-2016)*. The aim of the review, as set out in its terms of reference, is to:

- Determine whether the three main outcomes of delivering rapid emergency assistance, collaborative Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) activities and strategic dialogue were achieved; and
- Identify lessons learned from the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA) to inform a design process for emergency response, DRR and DRM.

The review was commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and took place over the period from April – July 2015.

The terms of reference state that the review's findings will inform a design of a future mechanism by which partners can effectively engage in humanitarian responses. DFAT and the review team therefore agreed that the primary purpose of this review is on learning, with a secondary purpose on accountability.

A copy of the terms of reference can be found at [Annex 1](#).

2. Introduction and Context

2.1. Background to the HPA

In June 2011, the Australian Government launched the *AusAID-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (2011-2014)*.¹ The HPA replaced the Periodic Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (2006-2009). The design of the HPA was informed by a review of this agreement.² The HPA is separate from other DFAT-NGO partnership arrangements, such as the Australian-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).³

The stated **vision** of the HPA is:

- That DFAT humanitarian partners will deliver better outcomes for people affected by disasters around the world by enhancing inter-agency collaboration, upholding the highest standards of accountability and ensuring the rapid release of funds during crises.

¹ This became the *DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement* when the Government integrated AusAID into DFAT on 1 November 2013. The HPA has been extended twice (to December 2015, and subsequently to June 2016).

² Independent Review of the Period Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (PFA), December 2009

³ The ANCP is DFAT's largest single support mechanism for accredited Australian NGOs. It is an annual grants program to support development activities. In 2015-16, the ANCP will provide \$127 million to over 50 Australian NGOs.

The HPA is a mechanism for DFAT to engage with six Australian Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)⁴ in rapid-onset humanitarian emergency responses. The HPA also provides multi-year funding for DRR and DRM activities implemented by the NGOs that aims to strengthen community resilience and preparedness. As a partnership, the HPA also aims to improve collaboration, shared learning and dialogue on relevant policy issues amongst all seven HPA partners.

Australian NGO partners to the HPA are accredited agencies, which have then been selected through a competitive tender. In essence, HPA NGO partners have gone through a two-step selection process. Accreditation is a rigorous assessment that involves looking at an NGO's governance, program management capacity, partner management, links with and support from the Australian public, and risk management.⁵

Through the HPA, the NGO partners have received a total of AUD 55 million. This includes AUD 41.5 million in emergency funding, via 12 activations (as at 3 July 2015). These activations cover responses to rapid-onset emergencies, to a rapid escalation in slow-onset emergencies, and to protracted crises. The NGO partners have also received AUD 13.5 million in DRR and DRM funding.

A table detailing HPA funding, and the activation process, can be found at [Annex 2](#).

2.2. Policy Context

Disaster preparedness and humanitarian response are core responsibilities of DFAT, as reflected in the Australian Government's aid policy⁶ under the investment priority "*Building Resilience: Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Risk Reduction and Social Protection*". The HPA is seen by DFAT as an important part of the Government's humanitarian response options.⁷ DFAT is currently developing a new humanitarian strategy which is expected to be released around August 2015. This new strategy will provide a high level framework and be an important reference during the design of a mechanism to replace the current HPA.

The rationale for a partnership with Australian NGOs recognises them as trusted partners with deep expertise and on-the-ground capacity to deliver effective emergency relief assistance through their international and local networks. The HPA offers Australian NGOs and the Australia Government opportunities to provide humanitarian aid in a way that is fast and flexible, as well as being visible to the public. The HPA is designed to integrate emergency response assistance with DRR and DRM capacity building investments, to build on the significant expertise of NGOs in these areas.⁸

2.3. Our Approach

The HPA has been reviewed on a number of occasions over the past four years.⁹ This current exercise in reviewing the HPA aims to build on this history of analysis.

The HPA review was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the development of a *Brief Discussion Paper* which provided an initial assessment of the HPA based on a desk appraisal of

⁴ The HPA NGOs are: CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia, Save the Children Australia, and World Vision Australia.

⁵ To maintain accreditation, Australian NGOs must be re-accredited every five years.

⁶ *Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability*, June 2014

⁷ DFAT Website

⁸ HPA Head Agreement – Schedule 2 – Agreement 57866

⁹ Including an HPA mid-term review in 2013, annual Quality at Implementation reports, through specific response reviews, and ODE evaluations such as *Australia's Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis (2014)*.

available documents.¹⁰ The second stage involved stakeholder consultation, which were used to inform a final assessment of whether the HPA outcomes were achieved, and to identify and clarify useful lessons relevant to the design of a subsequent mechanism.

To support the consultations, the review team developed a *lessons learned working paper*, and tested these lessons with key stakeholders at a reflections workshop on 26 June 2015. Further to the initial terms of reference, the review team also conducted two brief case studies of two activations (Vanuatu and Lebanon) to help draw out, and confirm, relevant design lessons.

The findings and recommendations in this report should be viewed within the limitations as set out in the terms of reference. The review did not include a comparison of the HPA with other delivery mechanisms possibly available to DFAT, nor did it include a comparison of the HPA with other donor emergency response mechanisms. The review did not include any field visits, or consultations with affected communities. The review conducted limited interviews with local implementing partners.

A summary of the methodological approach to consultations can be found at [Annex 3](#). A list of people consulted is at [Annex 4](#). A list of documents reviewed can be found at [Annex 5](#).

3. Assessment of Outcomes

3.1. Introduction

The HPA is governed by a Head Agreement which defines the purpose of the HPA, the anticipated outcomes and a number of shared objectives for collaboration.¹¹ The HPA has evolved during its period of operation, and, in some aspects, has broadened its scope and modified its objectives. The review team's assessment of achievements against the HPA's three key outcomes has taken into account both the original design as articulated in the Head Agreement, as well as how the intent may have changed over time.

The review team has also included an analysis of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) aspects of the HPA. While MEL is not an outcome specified in the agreement, it has a central role in generating information to inform both reviews such as this and, more importantly, management decisions around performance and improvement.

3.2. Outcome 1: Delivering Rapid Emergency Assistance

The HPA was designed to achieve quick turnaround of emergency response funding, as well as better decision-making and more flexible, targeted, coordinated and accountable emergency responses.

This outcome has been achieved.

The response turnaround times achieved under the HPA have been dramatically faster than under the previous funding mechanism. While the 48-72 hour turnaround target has not been met in every case, they have all been close.¹² The rapid approval of HPA funds has frequently enabled NGO partners to leverage other public and private funding; to build early influence with local partners,

¹⁰ Review of the DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (2011-2015): Brief Discussion Paper, May 2015

¹¹ HPA Head Agreement – Schedule 2 – Agreement 57866

¹² HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.17 and HPA quality at implementation report March 2014, p.4

governments and UN clusters; and to 'prime' their logistics pipelines. Once the Joint Emergency Response Concept Paper (JERCP) is approved, NGO partners have confidence to spend their own resources in anticipation of receiving DFAT funds.¹³ The review team believes that current approval and disbursement timeframes are appropriate for rapid onset crises.

HPA response activities have proven effective and efficient. A wide range of activities were implemented, from distribution of food items following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines to de-stocking in drought-affected pastoral communities of northern Kenya. Activities have been appropriate and have generally achieved or exceeded targets, even in extremely difficult operating contexts such as the Horn of Africa.¹⁴

Rapid approval and disbursement of emergency response funds improved the effectiveness and efficiency of activities. For example, during the Typhoon Bopha response in the Philippines, the rapid distribution of supplies allowed needs assessment teams better access to affected communities, allowing for more accurate assessments.¹⁵

The accuracy of targeting relief efforts was enhanced by the flexibility built into the HPA response mechanism. By allowing changes to implementation plans up to the 8-week mark, HPA processes ensure that activities remain appropriate as the disaster response unfolds.

The long-term nature of the relationships between the HPA NGOs and their in-country partners has been central to the effectiveness of the emergency responses. The rapid nature of HPA funding, which is often used by NGOs to leverage other funding, has allowed the Australian Government to have a highly visible role in many responses, including in those in which Australian funding has been relatively small.

The HPA has improved overtime. The partnership has demonstrated a commitment to implementing lessons learned from previous funding mechanisms. As the partnership has evolved, collaboration between NGO partners in particular has been improved. For example, during the Typhoon Bopha response in the Philippines, Oxfam's partner Humanitarian Response Consortium (HRC) and Caritas' partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) shared warehousing facilities, and Oxfam-HRC distributed hygiene kits for CRS making use of existing distribution systems.¹⁶

The partnership also provided structured opportunities for learning and sharing lessons. These have led to improvements to processes and activities. However, lesson learning processes did not extend to a post-implementation assessment of the JERCP (i.e. to evaluate the extent to which the right decisions had been made). Such assessments would improve accountability and programming.¹⁷

This outcome has been achieved. However, the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving the outcome has been constrained by factors including:

- ***Using the HPA to fund slow-onset and protracted crises, for which the agreement was not designed.*** HPA partners were selected based on their ability to respond to rapid-onset disasters. Response triggers and timeframes for protracted and slow-onset crises are significantly different to those required by rapid-onset disasters. While HPA partners have made adjustments to these timeframes, the HPA is more effective in responding to rapid-onset disasters.

¹³ The Joint Emergency Response Paper (JERCP) is produced by the Response Committee as a final, consolidated proposal to DFAT for funding of activities under the HPA activation. For further information, refer to Annex 2 which sets out the steps involved in an activation.

¹⁴ Horn of Africa HPA response review November 2012, p.ii. See also, for example, Typhoon Haiyan HPA response review August 2014, p.17.

¹⁵ Typhoon Bopha HPA response review June 2013, p.11

¹⁶ Typhoon Bopha Joint Lessons Report, August 2013, p.4.

¹⁷ Refer to section 3.5 *Monitoring and Evaluation* of this report for further discussion on MEL.

- **Competitive engagement by NGO partners.** NGO collaboration has been enhanced by the HPA, and the peer review process has supported effective responses. However, competition for funds produces incentives for individual NGOs to seek maximum advantage for their own organisation, potentially at the expense of an optimal response.
- **Limited volume of funding.** The collaborative nature of decision-making by the HPA requires a significant investment of time and resources from all HPA partners, especially NGO partners. Similarly, the contracting model of individual grant orders places a heavy administrative burden on DFAT (with the possible exception of the recent consortium approach which shifts some of that burden to the consortium lead NGO). Some NGOs have questioned whether the investment in the HPA is proportional to the benefit (i.e. to the amount of funding).

3.3. Outcome 2: Collaborative Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Activities

The HPA was designed to reduce community vulnerability and enhance resilience to disasters; as well as to strengthen DRM capacities and systems of HPA NGOs and their in-country NGO partners.

Monitoring of this component of the HPA has been minimal. The review team, therefore, had a limited amount of information to assess this aspect of the agreement. Within this limitation, **the review team's assessment is that this outcome has been partially achieved.**

DRR and DRM capacity building activities have proved effective over a range of initiatives. Significant latitude was given by DFAT to NGO partners to determine the nature of these activities. Examples of DRR activities include: assisting district governments in Indonesia to develop standard operating procedures for emergencies; integrating climate change adaptation into community-based disaster risk management in Vietnam; and disaster awareness raising in schools. These activities were found to be generally effective in supporting governments to fulfil their DRR mandates.¹⁸ DRR activities also supported vulnerable communities to identify hazards and prepare appropriately.¹⁹

DRM funding was used appropriately to increase the capacity of NGO and in-country partner staff, as well as other humanitarian actors.²⁰ Examples of DRM activities include: the design and implementation of the Humanitarian Leadership Program graduate certificate at Deakin University; development of an evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of disaster resilience in shelter projects; and delivery of multi-lingual e-learning modules to NGO and local partner staff. Local in-country NGOs have reported to their Australian NGO partners that DRR/DRM activities have made a significant difference to preparedness and the quality of emergency responses.²¹

Multi-year funding for DRR and DRM activities has been highly valued by HPA NGO partners. It has allowed long-term planning and helped build strong partner relationships, including by testing and refining DRR and DRM approaches when seasonal disasters strike. It has also provided the space to test innovative approaches which might otherwise have struggled to attract funding.²² Likewise, multi-year funding for DRR/DRM has contributed to the efficiency of activities by enabling strong alignment with partner government priorities, harmonisation with other donors, and participation in relevant coordination mechanisms.²³

¹⁸ HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.3

¹⁹ HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.3

²⁰ HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.17

²¹ Key stakeholder interview

²² HPA collective report for DRR, DRM and capacity-building activities January 2015, p.2

²³ HPA collective report for DRR, DRM and capacity-building activities January 2015, p.1

DRR and DRM funding under the HPA has given rise to some good examples of collaboration. For example, CARE used school-based DRR learning resources from Plan and Save the Children to support flood recovery in Cambodia in 2014.²⁴ The Humanitarian Leadership Program, led by Save the Children in partnership with a number of other HPA NGO partners, has demonstrated a strategic impact from a relatively small investment. For example, more than 30 graduates and students of the Humanitarian Leadership Program were involved in the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013/14.²⁵

DRR and DRM activities also gave tangible meaning to the HPA partnership during periods of few or no response activations. This allowed for continued momentum in partner relations.

The full achievement of this outcome has been constrained by factors including:

- ***A lack of clarity on expected levels of collaboration between NGO partners.*** Despite collaboration on implementation of DRR and DRM activities being a commitment in the HPA Head Agreement, there seems to have been a lack of clarity on what this commitment means in practise.²⁶ From the outset, individual NGO partners designed their three-year programs independently of each other. A renewed emphasis on collaboration in the latter years of the HPA gave rise to the kinds of good examples listed above. Opportunities for collaboration may have been missed in the initial years of the partnership.
- ***A need for more direction from DFAT on this component of the HPA.*** It is unclear what, if any, directions were given by DFAT to NGO partners at the inception of the DRR and DRM activities. DFAT monitoring of these activities has also been minimal. Consequently, it has been difficult to ensure accountability in the use of these funds. Following a recommendation of the mid-term review, there has been greater technical oversight for DRR activities by the DRR section of DFAT.²⁷ Nonetheless, there are likely to be synergies yet to be achieved between (and opportunities to avoid duplication of) DRR activities funded through the HPA, and DRR activities funded through ANCP and other funding mechanisms.

3.4. Outcome 3: Improved Strategic Dialogue and Partnership

This outcome has been partially achieved.

The HPA was designed to improve “strategic engagement and partnership” between all seven HPA partners (six NGOs and DFAT).²⁸ The Head Agreement defines a number of shared objectives which partners are to work on collaboratively. Shared objectives are a positive design feature of any partnership approach. The Head Agreement also envisaged that partners would engage in dialogue on international policy debates; be involved in policy formulation; collaborate on research, training and advocacy; and share information and lessons learned.

There are, therefore, two features embedded in this outcome. Strategic dialogue on a range of issues is intended to be an element of the partnership. And then there is the partnership itself; which relates to the state of the relationships between the HPA NGOs as well as between the HPA NGOs and DFAT. These two elements of strategic dialogue and partnership interact.

In addition, these two elements need to be understood in the context of the other outcomes of delivering rapid emergency assistance and collaborative DRR and DRM activities. These outcomes have been discussed above and will only be briefly referred to in this section.

²⁴ HPA collective report for DRR, DRM and capacity-building activities January 2015, p.3

²⁵ HPA collective report for DRR, DRM and capacity-building activities January 2015, p.3

²⁶ HPA Head Agreement – Schedule 2 – Agreement 57866

²⁷ HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.5

²⁸ HPA Head Agreement – Schedule 2 – Agreement 57866

In order to assess achievements, the review team has considered the effectiveness and efficiency of both the strategic dialogue activities and of the partnership arrangement.

All HPA members are committed to the partnership, and have invested heavily in partnership processes (i.e. improving the operations of the Response Committee and ensuring better HPA/HRG dialogue). Efforts to reduce transaction costs to improve the efficiency of the arrangements are evident.²⁹ There are many examples of enhanced collaboration and information sharing between HPA NGO partners, and more recently between DFAT and NGO partners.³⁰

Partnership principles of trust and respect are apparent, both between HPA NGOs themselves and between NGOs and DFAT, and appear to have matured over the period of the HPA (although the review team would suggest that this is an area which would benefit from further attention). The HPA Director role has played an important part in building collaborative relationships between HPA NGO partners, DFAT and ACFID. The professionalism, expertise and commitment of all partners to the HPA have also been factors in making the HPA work.

The mix of competitive and collaborative processes within the partnership, has had intended and unintended consequences. While competition may bring players to the decision-making table, and possibly increase the quality of individual proposals, the competitive aspects have also, at times, undermined relationships and the quality of the partnership between HPA NGOs. The lack of an independent technical assessment of proposals within the Response Committee may also, at times, have reduced partners' confidence around HPA NGO decision-making.

Key achievements under this outcome include, but are not limited to:

- Recent dialogue between partners during the Vanuatu and Nepal response, at both the operational and strategic level, including between the CEOs of the HPA NGOs and DFAT's Humanitarian Coordinator
- The cooperation of HPA NGO partners in trialling a 'consortium approach' in an effort to further reduce transaction costs on DFAT
- Joint dialogue on private sector engagement, as a key Australian Government policy priority
- Joint dialogue on international policy issues such as in the lead up to, and around, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai (Japan) in March 2015
- Joint learning events on DRR initiatives, inclusive of HPA and HRG members³¹
- Increased collaboration on DRR programming³²
- Regular joint forums to discuss policy approaches to improve gender equality and disability-inclusive programming
- Joint sharing of the benefits of DRM investments, such as multi-agency participation in the Humanitarian Leadership Program
- Frank and robust policy dialogue on the Syria crisis between HPA members, DFAT and selected non-HPA HRG members.

A key limiting factor in assessing this outcome is that the purpose of the partnership (including the benefits of the strategic dialogue) was not clearly defined during the HPA design. As a result, different partners hold different expectations around their roles and hold different views as to the benefits and costs of investing in partnership processes, including strategic dialogue.

²⁹ Philippines Typhoon Bopha HPA Response Report, June 2013. p15.

³⁰ Vanuatu and Nepal Activations, Minutes of Lessons Learned, June 2015

³¹ Joint Communique: Learning and Recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction, May 2014

³² HPA collective report for DRR, DRM and capacity-building activities January 2015

Partnerships can, and do, mean different things to different people. However, as Roche and Kelly³³ suggest, while definitions matter, it is more important that partners share a common understanding of the *purpose* of a partnership arrangement.³⁴ The HPA Head Agreement does articulate a purpose³⁵, but this focusses on the HPA as a mechanism to respond more effectively to complex humanitarian situations.³⁶ The HPA shared objectives go further than this and emphasise the importance of collaboration on a range of fronts, for example on shared learning. In this way, we might understand that the purpose of the HPA is to “add quality to the work of all partners”.³⁷

Partners have struggled, at times, to get the balance right between discussions around the mechanism (i.e. the funding relationship) and higher level dialogue across the three pillars of the HPA. DFAT’s role as a donor and as a partner is not always clearly portrayed or understood. The particular role the HPA plays in strategic dialogue with DFAT, compared to the role of ACFID and the broader HRG, has never been clearly articulated by the HPA.

The full achievement of this outcome has been constrained by factors including:

- A lack of a clarity around the purpose, or purposes, of the partnership
- A lack of clarity around the strategic dialogue functions of the HPA in relation to ACFID and HRG
- The competitive nature of the peer review which can undermine relationships
- The dialogue amongst HPA NGOs being largely on how to advocate to DFAT for the greater use of the HPA as a funding mechanism
- Limited examples of dialogue on strategic issues
- The high turnover of DFAT with different individuals bringing different understandings of the partnership
- The lack of a visibility plan, which may have limited the achievement of the shared objective to build public awareness of the HPA, its work and its achievements
- No clear learning agenda
- Learning events, which are not always inclusive of the broader HRG membership, and have tended to focus more on process rather than quality of response and/or thematic learnings.

3.5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

A lot of time and effort has been invested by HPA partners in MEL. There has been a willingness and interest among all partners to contribute to learning processes and to improve the HPA mechanism.

Some key features of the HPA MEL approach that have been instrumental in facilitating peer learning include:

- the development of lessons learned and activation reports
- joint field visits by DFAT and NGOs, and
- the Response Committee.

³³ Linda Kelly and Chris Roche, *Partnerships for Effective Development*, ACFID, January 2014

³⁴ Ibid, pg. 14

³⁵ *To strengthen the strategic humanitarian partnership between DFAT and Australian NGOs to respond effectively to disasters and to strengthen community resilience and preparedness.*

³⁶ Kelly/Roche, op.cit, pg. 20

³⁷ Ibid, pg. 21

HPA activations are subject to lessons learned activities, individual and collective reports of partner responses, and, on occasion, whole of response evaluations. These review activities have supported accountability and generated evidence on the extent to which responses have achieved their stated objectives and targets.

Key achievements under this outcome include, but are not limited to:

- The ‘informal’ learning that takes place as partners review each other’s proposals prior to the Response Committee meeting has benefitted HPA NGOs and their in-country partners
- Lessons learned exercises after each HPA activation that improved the mechanism. Specific improvements include: combining all information related to the Response Committee in one document; having a standard agenda with standard timings for every meeting; and reducing the time and cost of lessons learned meetings³⁸
- Development of shorter, clearer collective report summaries (although there is scope for further improvements in reporting)
- The recent development of a recommendations tracking system which will help to ensure evaluation and review findings are systematically followed up.

Learning has been a focus of the HPA. The HPA brings together key humanitarian players and whole-of-government stakeholders with considerable analytical and experiential expertise. As such, it is well positioned to coordinate strategic/meta-evaluations in important areas (e.g. whole-of-government involvement in responses, analysis of thematic and technical aspects of responses, or linkages between HPA humanitarian responses with long term development programs). However, the HPA does not have a clearly defined learning agenda, or dedicated resources to support learning.

The HPA *has* facilitated learning among stakeholders and some valuable information has been generated. However, a lack of investment in ensuring learnings are taken forward has limited the effectiveness of some MEL activities. The collective learnings of the HPA do not appear to have been used for advocacy or for influencing in-country operations and/or in wider policy forums.

Challenges and gaps in MEL stem largely from the lack of an overarching HPA MEL framework. Such a framework could have helped to lay the foundations for data collection, analysis, learning and the use of information generated by the partnership arrangements. The HPA has missed an opportunity to capture and use critical learnings to contribute to broader sectoral knowledge and to communicate the results of the HPA partnership to different audiences.

Partnership performance indicators were outlined in the Head Agreement, and NGO partner collaboration (around planning, assessment, policy development, coordination and visibility) was routinely reported on in collective evaluations. However, clear partnership outcomes and measures of success were not developed, making it difficult to demonstrate, communicate and assess the collective value of the partnership.

The review team was unable to determine the budget allocation and expenditure for HPA MEL. It appears probable that most of the HPA MEL costs have been absorbed by NGO partners.³⁹ The HPA Director holds responsibility for producing aggregated monitoring and evaluation reports. This process is currently supported by a volunteer from Plan International Australia, which would suggest that resourcing of the MEL functions under the HPA is not sufficient.

³⁸ Philippines Typhoon Bopha HPA Response Report, June 2013. p15.

³⁹ Partners are responsible for compiling their own reports and contributing to HPA learning processes and reviews which involves a considerable amount of staff time. The extent to which these costs/inputs are covered by NGOs themselves, or covered by DFAT HPA funding, is unclear.

The full achievement of this outcome has been constrained by factors including:

- Important learnings generated by the MEL have not been taken forward (i.e. the ‘so what?’ dimension of MEL appears to be lacking)
- Protection and other cross-cutting issues (i.e. disability inclusion and child protection) have not been adequately integrated in the MEL
- The inclusion of different stakeholders in HPA learning processes (including non-HPA NGOs and HPA implementing partners) has not been sufficiently considered, resulting in missed opportunities for these actors to contribute to, and benefit from, HPA learning.⁴⁰

3.6. Summary

Overall, the HPA has been an effective mechanism for the Australian Government, with Australian NGOs, to respond quickly to disasters and to strengthen community resilience and preparedness.

The HPA has improved the DFAT-NGO relationship to a point where there is a deeper level of collaboration between all partners in the area of humanitarian response than has ever previously existed. The HPA has consistently delivered fast emergency response funding. In many instances this has enabled Australia to be one of the first donors to get money on the ground after a humanitarian crisis. This is an impressive achievement.⁴¹ The HPA has also demonstrated a strong focus on sharing and implementing lessons, and seen, over time, good coordination of DRR and DRM activities.

However, while the HPA has, and is, functioning well, there are some issues which are constraining the ability of the HPA to achieve its full potential. These include: the competitiveness of the peer review; the appropriateness of the mechanism for protracted crises; the purpose of the partnership and of the strategic dialogue; the lack of public awareness and visibility; and some aspects of monitoring, evaluation and learning.

All partners have invested heavily in making the mechanism work, with time, resources and goodwill. We have therefore assessed that there is a strong base from which to learn from, and from which to build a subsequent mechanism.

4. Lessons to Inform a Future Design

4.1. Introduction

An important aim of this review is to collect lessons relevant to the design of the next mechanism. As part of the review methodology, a *lesson learned working document* was drafted by the review team and shared with key stakeholders to test and refine the lessons. In addition, the review team conducted two case studies of two recent HPA activations in order to assess what is working well

⁴⁰ Key stakeholder interview comment that it would be “helpful to receive a short collective report which outlines how much money was released, how many people were reached, and key lessons learned, highlights, and innovations from other partners”

⁴¹ Quality at Implementation Report (2012)

and what elements could be improved at the activation level. This section presents the key lessons considered relevant to a future design.

4.2. The Partnership Approach

- **The HPA emphasis on collaborative relationships between trusted and respected partners has delivered good outcomes.** The partnership has matured over the life of the HPA. The HPA experience should be seen as a basis on which to build.
- **Clarity of purpose is critical to effective partnerships.** It is important that all partners share a common understanding of the partnership's purpose, its collective value, and the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each partner.
- **Effective partnerships take time,** and require: shared objectives but also an understanding of those objectives which are not shared; positive relationships; risk sharing; and a commitment to trust and equity within the partnership.
- **Ongoing care must be taken in balancing relationships between HPA partners, the broader HRG and ACFID.** There is need to clarify the appropriate channels for, and objectives of, the strategic dialogue. An overarching document that gives clarity on roles, responsibilities and communication between these various stakeholders would be valuable.⁴²
- **Regular and transparent communication between partners is important** for maintaining effectiveness and efficiency.
- **The HPA fosters competition as well as collaboration.** The peer review makes use of partner expertise to improve the quality of response designs. However, it also places partners in a position where they are expected to be objective while they are under pressure to secure funding, compromising the integrity of the process and quality of the relationships.
- **The level of awareness of the HPA among the various sections of DFAT** (including posts) impacts (positively and negatively) on the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanism.⁴³ Deployment of DFAT Rapid Response Team members assisted in mitigating this issue.⁴⁴
- **There are often large, capable non-HPA partners working on the ground that could be consulted with,** and may be in a position to add-value to Australia's collective humanitarian response. Non-HPA NGOs note that they are also partners of DFAT.
- **Shared learning events work well when they focus on the quality** of the response and/or programming (in addition to the process), and are inclusive of the full sector as represented by the HRG.

4.3. Efficiency and Effectiveness of the HPA Mechanism

- **The mechanism is best suited to rapid onset crises.** Initial distributions based on 'coarse' needs assessment data (largely informed by prior experience) enable essential items to be provided quickly. Using this contact with affected communities to enable a more detailed needs assessment proved an effective approach.⁴⁵

⁴² HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.22.

⁴³ HPA mid-term review June 2013, p.19 and Philippines Typhoon Haiyan HPA Response Report, August 2014. p.20.

⁴⁴ Philippines Typhoon Bopha HPA Response Report, June 2013. pp.11-12.

⁴⁵ Philippines Typhoon Bopha HPA Response Report, June 2013. pp. 12-13.

- **The eight week window built into the HPA enhances the planning process.** This enables in-country partners to collect substantive information in the start-up phase.
- **The HPA was not designed for slow onset and protracted crises, yet adaptations have occurred** over the course of the partnership making it more ‘fit-for-purpose’.⁴⁶
- **In protracted crises, DFAT country programs can usefully be involved in decision-making from the beginning,** and decision-making processes should be appropriate to the timeframes (e.g. through including an independent technical assessment of proposals).
- **A separate mechanism (or funding window) for slow-onset and protracted crises could allow for more appropriate decision-making** and response timeframes, as well as targeted selection of the most appropriate partners for specific response types.
- **Capacity mapping procedures,** presenting an up-to-date, verified picture of the nature of existing presence and capacity could support better decision-making.
- **There is potential value in developing a system among partners to trigger discussions about early warning signs** (such as the Ebola crisis) to ensure timeliness of response.
- **HPA funding is particularly valuable to partners in crises in which it is difficult to secure public funding.** The transaction costs are more acceptable to partners in cases where other funding is difficult to obtain (i.e. Horn of Africa and Syrian crises).
- **Efficiency could be improved by increasing the volume of funding through the mechanism.** Conversely, if there is no appetite to increase the funding through HPA, then governance arrangements should be made less time- and resource-intensive.
- **Implementing partners have appreciated the flexibility of funding,** which they have used on ‘softer’ activities such as capacity building in MEL, and trialling new approaches to protection.

4.4. DRR and DRM Activities

- **Long term, predictable funding has supported partners to evolve and deepen their DRR and DRM strategies** over the four year period and has supported them to build and maintain valuable expertise in these areas. Clearer parameters around DRR and DRM funding (i.e. geographic, thematic) could help to focus activities in the future.
- **NGOs are uniquely placed to implement disaster risk reduction work** across these various levels due to their relationships with communities, district and provincial level officials and national government agencies.⁴⁷
- **HPA learning around DRR and DRM has been particularly valuable** as it has allowed partners to build and share expertise in a particular area over a long timeframe. However, these learnings could be used more effectively in programming and advocacy.
- **The DRR component could be strengthened by dialogue with development-focused NGO colleagues** on the importance of mainstreaming DRR into development programming.
- **The emphasis on DRR and DRM learning needs to support sector-wide learning** (rather than simply aim to bring others into HPA DRR/DRM learning events).

⁴⁶ This is illustrated by the Lebanon activation which gave partners an additional two week period to prepare investment concept proposals.

⁴⁷ Joint Communiqué: Learning and Recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction, May 2014.

- **The HPA definition of DRM is different to the shared (UN) definition.** This has created some confusion as to the focus of funding.
- There would be value in ensuring that the **DRR funding within the HPA forms part of a coordinated, strategic approach** to DRR by DFAT.
- **It is important to promote and strengthen links** between DRR, DRM and response.⁴⁸

4.5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

- **The lack of a clear overarching monitoring, evaluation and learning framework** for the HPA has constrained its ability to articulate the value of the partnership.
- **A future mechanism would benefit from a clear MEL framework with defined partnership outcomes** and partner roles in MEL, as well as sufficient budget allocation.
- **The HPA has been valuable in supporting partners to improve their MEL of responses** by funding implementing partners' in-country learning events and staff training in MEL.
- **Partners have benefitted from formal and informal learning** that has taken place under the framework of the HPA. Non-HPA partners have sometimes been excluded from this learning, in which they could have both added value to, and benefited from.
- **'Value for Money' considerations have not been integrated in the HPA MEL making it difficult to assess this issue.** This is particularly problematic given concerns around high transaction costs.⁴⁹
- **A lack of technical/sectoral 'global' indicators has hindered simple aggregated reporting** which would allow DFAT and NGO partners to feed into global reporting, and also provide clearer messaging of impact to the Australian public.
- **Reporting processes have been cumbersome** with NGO partners and the HPA Director spending significant amounts of time compiling sets of data to produce collective reports. The use of online systems such as ANCPs 'Smarty Grants' may be appropriate for the HPA.
- **Much of the HPA learning has occurred in relation to DRR/DRM** which encompasses a relatively stable set of ongoing activities. **Facilitating learning in relation to crisis contexts requires different MEL** that takes into account the nature of working in these contexts.
- The proposal and reporting formats are activity focused which is **appropriate for a rapid onset response**. **Protracted crises warrant a more sophisticated design** which includes a Theory of Change, program strategies and expected outcomes.
- It would be valuable to **share the results and learnings of collective activations**, as outlined in HPA reports and evaluations, **with HPA implementing partners**.

4.6. Management and Governance Arrangements

- **There are many benefits of NGO peer-based decision making**, such as access to operational expertise. However it is often the anticipation of the peer review which improves the quality

⁴⁸ Joint Communique: Learning and Recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction, May 2014

⁴⁹ The challenge around identifying what has gone into (i.e. partner time and resources) and the collective value of the partnership has implications for determining the Value for Money of the HPA (for both DFAT and NGO partners).

of proposals, rather than the peer review itself (i.e. scoring processes and the question and answer session).

- **In certain circumstances, the peer review would benefit from involving an independent technical appraisal** of individual proposals. This would be particularly relevant for slow onset and protracted crises (e.g. Lebanon GBV sector).
- Partners experience a range of pressures during the first phase of a crisis. **NGO participation in scoring and decision making may not be the best use of their time.**
- **In certain circumstances, a decision to distribute available funds evenly among NGO partners may be appropriate to the response context.** It may also be an effective way to minimise transaction costs and foster more effective collaboration.
- **There is no need to establish an HPA-specific coordination mechanism at the country level** for emergency responses additional to existing coordination mechanisms.⁵⁰
- **Additional staffing resources, contributed by the NGO hosting the HPA Director, have been central** to ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the HPA.

4.7. Gender Equality, Disability-Inclusion and Protection

- **The focus on gender equality within the HPA was improved by the introduction of the Gender Action Plans,** and gender-related lessons from early HPA reviews were successfully applied in future activations, such as in the Typhoon Haiyan response. There is an opportunity with a new mechanism to take this work to a higher level.
- **The HPA has supported a focus on protection mainstreaming.** An implementing partner noted that this was highly beneficial and rare compared with other donors.
- **Protection and other cross-cutting issues (i.e. disability inclusion and child protection) have not been adequately integrated into HPA MEL,** making it difficult to assess partner achievements and challenges in relation to these issues.
- **It would be helpful if DFAT clarified its position on protection within HPA activations,** as some partners noted that dedicated protection activities were often removed from proposals in favour of 'harder-edged' frontline responses. As a result, HPA NGO partners have appeared to mainly focus on mainstreaming protection into humanitarian responses.

4.8. Public Awareness and Visibility

- **The rapid release of funds is an important contributor to visibility** of the Australian response to a humanitarian emergency.⁵¹
- **A lack of clarity on what to promote (to who and how), has led to missed opportunities** to showcase the collective achievements of the HPA.
- **There is a conceptual distinction between in-country visibility as a donor (i.e. stickers and signage) and visibility recognition as a global player.** These have not been appropriately distinguished in the implementation of the HPA.
- **The amount of funding that flows through the HPA poses challenges to promoting public awareness and visibility.** In some instance, HPA funding is small relative to public donations;

⁵⁰ Philippines Typhoon Bopha HPA Response Report, June 2013. p.15.

⁵¹ Independent Review of the Period Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (PFA), December 2009. p.5.

and in some countries, the total Australian funding is a small percentage of the global response.

- **The absence of a visibility plan has negatively impacted on public awareness** of the HPA's achievements.⁵²
- **A shared understanding on branding** (i.e. should the HPA have a brand of its own?) and target audiences (to assist with generating case studies) would be beneficial.

4.9. Case Study 1: Vanuatu

On 13 March 2015, the Category 5 Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu. The HPA was activated on 15 March, as follows:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Activation | 15 March 2015 |
| Response Committee | 18 March |
| JERCP Submitted | 18 March |
| JERCP Approved | 22 March |
| Grant Order Signed by DFAT | 24 March |
| Funds received by Lead Agency | 31 March |
| Sub-grant agreement signed between Lead Agency and sub-recipient | 10 April |
| Date first NGO country partner received funds | 13 April |
| Lessons learnt exercise | 24 June 2015 |

The Vanuatu activation of the HPA highlighted the following lessons learned:

- **The consortium approach was a worthy experiment, demonstrating advantages as well as disadvantages.** DFAT appreciated the reduced administrative workload of contracting and liaison, and sub-contracted partners were positive about the arrangement. In this case, pre-existing in-country structures (with Oxfam as chair of the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team) presented an obvious consortium lead. However, sub-contracting is not an NGOs' core business, and pre-arranged agreements were not in place, resulting in some delays. If sub-contracting is to be done by an NGO partner, the pre-arrangement of agreements is necessary. There remain some outstanding questions, including around resourcing for the consortium lead, and responsibilities related to coordination of reporting.
- **Capacity mapping should be strengthened by including consideration of all relevant agreements with partner governments,** as well as through scenario planning. Instances of requisite agreements with the Government of Vanuatu not being in place resulted in some delay, and tension with the Vanuatu Government. Relatively predictable disasters (such as cyclones striking Vanuatu) present an opportunity for scenario planning removed from the

⁵² HPA mid-term review, June 2013, p.21

high-pressure response environment, which could include a comprehensive mapping of NGO capacity.

- **DFAT staff turnover impacts on the efficient operation of the HPA mechanism.** NGO partners report that DFAT's processes for induction, training and rotating staff have led to improved engagement in the latter years of the HPA. Nonetheless, well-intentioned but unexplained deviations from standard procedures – such as DFAT providing scoring and requesting submission of a revised JERCP, and altering dates for spending commencement – led to some confusion. The negative impact of these was reported to be minimal,⁵³ but they highlight the importance of procedures to deal with the frequency of DFAT staff turnover.
- **Collaboration on distribution of supplies is a promising new development, but processes need improving.** Use of Australian Defence Force (ADF) assets to get supplies into the recipient country and use of NGO systems to distribute them to beneficiaries represent a logical development in a partnership of mutual trust. However, clarity is needed on a range of procedural issues including: standard operating procedures (agreed with whole-of-government partners); which agencies ADF assets are available to; the terms on which supplies are gifted; and coordination with the logistics cluster.

4.10. Case Study 2: Lebanon

On 31 March 2015, DFAT activated the HPA to respond to the refugee crisis in Lebanon resulting from conflict in Syria. This was the third activation of the HPA related to the conflict in Syria.

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Activation | 31 March 2015 |
| Response Committee | 23 April |
| JERCP Submitted | 24 April |
| JERCP Approved | 4 May |
| Fund received by NGOs | 23 May |
| Date NGO country partner received funds | 2 June |
| Lessons learnt exercise | 4 June 2015 |

The Lebanon activation of the HPA highlighted the following lessons learned:

- **DFAT country programs have an important role to play in design and implementation of responses to protracted crises.** HPA processes (including timeframes) should facilitate input at the beginning of an activation, including mandating parameters such as location, sectors, number of partners and depth of on-the-ground experience required. Those issues, among others, should be the subject of ongoing dialogue between the DFAT country program and NGO partners. This would draw on DFAT's contextual knowledge, and ensure closer alignment with other DFAT programming strategies.
- **Capacity mapping processes should be strengthened by verifying the nature and extent of partner capacity.** NGO reporting, partner government statements and DFAT staff views from several HPA activations in the Middle East, along with views expressed by NGO partners in

⁵³ At the Reflections Workshop, 26 June 2015

the Lebanon Response Committee, suggest that the nature and extent of different NGO partners' presence varies. A more detailed capacity mapping exercise, including steps to verify claimed capabilities, could lead to better-informed decision-making and more effective responses.

- **HPA Response Committee processes need to be adjusted to maximise collaboration and mitigate overly competitive behaviour of participants.** Specifically, NGO partners agreed in the Lebanon lessons learned exercise to submit questioning of proposals through the HPA Director prior to the Response Committee meeting. The HPA Director was then charged with delivering the questions in an appropriate tone and style that supports the focus on strengthening proposals rather than interrogating them for weaknesses.

4.11. Summary

The experience of the HPA has provided many rich lessons to inform the design of a future mechanism. These lessons identify both aspects of the HPA that have worked well, and areas that could be improved. In many ways, the HPA can be seen as a pilot program that has trialed an innovative approach to supporting cross-sector collaboration around humanitarian response. The HPA provides a good basis on which to develop a future mechanism that will allow DFAT and Australian NGOs to jointly add value to Australia's collective humanitarian efforts.

5. Recommendations

The Review Team recommends that the design process:

1. Builds on the achievements of the HPA, and all the lessons that have been learned as identified in section 4 of this report
2. Analyses other comparable donor mechanisms and other comparable DFAT partnerships to identify best practice in partnering for effective humanitarian action
3. Reviews the recommendations from the Office of Development Effectiveness' evaluation of the ANCP program for their relevance to a future mechanism
4. Considers adaptations to the peer review in order to remove the divisive aspects while maintaining the positive elements of NGO collaboration
5. Assesses funding models that include both a narrow and broad NGO supplier base (or a combination of both), giving prominence to considerations around capacity to respond to different crises, established local capability, access to specialisation and value for money.

The Review Team recommends that DFAT use the design process to:

6. Articulate its expectations around the purpose (or purposes) of a future mechanism
7. Define the role it expects to play, as both a partner and as a donor, acknowledging that a future mechanism must remain effective in the context of DFAT staff turnover
8. Consider funding arrangements that continue to be flexible and adaptive but are also more predictable and long-term
9. Estimate a minimum level of annual funding to be channelled through a future mechanism to enable the design of an appropriately resourced governance and management structure.

The Review Team recommends that during the current phase of the HPA, DFAT together with HPA NGO partners and ACFID, implement the following:

10. In the event that the HPA is activated for a major rapid onset emergency, HPA funding will be evenly split between all partners with established local capacity to respond. The Response Committee would still operate, and have a stronger focus on coordination of quality responses, and collaboration around monitoring and learning.
11. In the event that the HPA is activated for a response to a protracted crisis, the Response Committee's peer review process will be supported by an independent technical assessment of NGO proposals.
12. Partners will review and debate the benefits and costs of the consortium approach that has been used in the Vanuatu and Nepal responses at an HPA/HRG quarterly meeting.
13. Partners will design future HPA learning events to encourage sector-wide learning, be inclusive of HRG members, have a thematic/sectoral focus, and draw in outside agencies (such as academic institutes and/or private sector organisations) as relevant.
14. Partners will review current procedures around capacity mapping of HPA (and non-HPA) NGOs, with the aim of removing any duplication of effort, and improving the accuracy and utility of the information provided to all parties.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

1. Background

The existing Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA) was established in 2011 as a partnership between six pre-selected NGOs (CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia, Save the Children Australia and World Vision Australia) and the Australian Government. The vision of the HPA is:

That DFAT (then AusAID) humanitarian partners will deliver better outcomes for people affected by disasters around the world by enhancing inter-agency collaboration, upholding the highest standards of accountability and ensuring rapid release of funds during crises.

In relation to emergencies, partners agreed a 72-hour turn-around from activation to approval of funding to enable a rapid response. This has enabled timely mobilisation of life-saving assistance. To complement this, the HPA also provides a mechanism for collaboration on programmed Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) capacity building initiatives. As a partnership the HPA was also developed with a view to improve strategic dialogue on policy issues of mutual interest between DFAT (then AusAID) and NGOs.

Through the HPA the six NGO partners have received a total of AU\$31.5 million in emergency funding (via nine activations). This is in addition to AU\$12 million in DRR and DRM funding.⁵⁴ The current HPA mechanism has been extended and is now set to expire in March 2016.

Humanitarian response is an important responsibility of DFAT as part of the Australian aid program. It is reflected in the Government's aid policy under the investment priority 'Building Resilience: Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Risk Reduction and Social Protection'. The HPA is an important part of the Government's humanitarian response options and has provided timely and streamlined funding for humanitarian emergencies. The NGOs under HPA have added value to Australian humanitarian responses, through effective and well-targeted emergency assistance.

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) of HPA was conducted in 2013. The review found that HPA enabled life-saving assistance faster than previous arrangements and that it is evolving into a strong response mechanism providing well targeted and appropriate relief. Areas for improvement included the need to reduce transaction costs and to improve reporting formats and processes. As we near completion of the HPA there is a need to conduct a review of the engagement to assess the success of the mechanism in meeting agreed outcomes. This review and lessons from international donor experience will then inform a design to shape the most appropriate way to engage partners in humanitarian responses after the HPA ends.

2. Overview

The *review* of the current HPA is to determine:

⁵⁴ According to the Schedule 2 Head Agreement, the objective of this funding was to reduce community vulnerability and enhance resilience to disasters, and to strengthen DRM capacities and systems of HPA NGOs and their in-country NGO partners.

- a. whether the outcomes of delivering rapid emergency assistance, collaborative DRR and DRM activities and strategic dialogue were achieved; and
- b. to identify lessons learned from the HPA to inform a design process for emergency response and DRR and DRM.

The HPA, as a humanitarian response mechanism, has been reviewed on numerous occasions over the past 4 years including a Mid-Term Review 2013, annual Quality at Implementation reports, and through specific response reviews and evaluations. This review will synthesise this existing information to assess the success of the partnership approach; the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanism and how appropriate it has been for emergency response and DRR and DRM. This will be complemented by consultation with stakeholders involved in the use and management of the HPA. Further information is contained in *Attachment A*.

Following the review, DFAT will commission a *design* of a mechanism to enable the delivery of effective, efficient and accountable support to crisis affected people, that contributes to more resilient communities.

The design will be informed by the review and associated ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group (HRG) and DFAT responses to the review, consultation with stakeholders, experience of other donors and DFAT policies.

3. Coordination and Direction

The involvement of DFAT and the HRG will be as follows:

- The DFAT HPA Manager will be responsible for the direction and supervision of the review and design team.
- A HRG representative will be nominated to support DFAT in organising meetings with stakeholders during the consultation phases for the review and design.
- The HRG representative will be responsible for coordinating a consolidated formal HRG response to the review report.
- The Investment Concept and Design Document will inform a tender process and to ensure no conflict of interest ACFID HRG representative/members will not be provided copies of these documents in advance of their release to the market.

Part 1 – Review of HPA

1. Scope and Methodology

To determine whether HPA outcomes have been achieved, the review team will address the following criteria:

- a) Effectiveness – have we achieved the results that we expected over the lifetime of the investment
- b) Efficiency – did the investment make efficient use of Australia’s and other partners’ time and resources to achieve investment outcomes?

- c) Monitoring and Evaluation – was an M&E system used to generate credible information which was used to monitor progress towards meeting outcomes and for program improvement, learning and accountability?
- d) Sustainability – did the investment deliver in a way which supports recovery, resilience and long term development?
- e) Protection – did the investment protect the safety, dignity and rights of affected people?
- f) Gender equality – did the investment make a difference to gender equality and empowering women and girls?
- g) Risk Management and Fraud –how was risk managed and fraud addressed?
- h) Innovation and Private Sector – are there any lessons that could inform future approaches to innovation and private sector engagement?

These criteria are based on DFAT’s Humanitarian Response Aid Quality Check.

In order to respond to the criteria (further expanded in Annex 1), the review team will conduct a desk based review of available documents (indicative list provided under Section 2). The desk based review will inform a **brief discussion paper** (no more than 7 pages) which includes initial assessment of the HPA against the criteria and methodology for subsequent stakeholder consultations (suggested stakeholders provided in Section 3).

The discussion paper will be presented to DFAT and the HRG prior to the commencement of the review consultation phase. The methodology for the consultation phase will be agreed by DFAT. DFAT agreement to the methodology will be informed by the views of the HRG members, coordinated and consolidated by the nominated HRG representative.

The consultation process will be flexible and involve face-to-face interviews, teleconferences and email with DFAT, HPA and HRG members. DFAT, the HPA Director and HRG representative will facilitate stakeholder consultation arrangements.

Outcomes of the review process, which includes synthesis of existing review reports and consultations, will be detailed in a **review report** (no more than 25 pages). The review report will provide an assessment on whether HPA has achieved agreed outcomes and identify lessons learned to inform a design process. The review report will be shared with HRG members who will be invited to provide a consolidated formal response to the report. The HRG representative will coordinate the consolidated response to this report. DFAT will provide a formal management response to the report.

The review report and management responses from HRG and DFAT will inform the design process.

It should be noted that the scope of the review does not include:

- a. a comparison of the HPA with other delivery/funding mechanisms available to DFAT for emergency responses;
- b. a comparison of the HPA with other donor emergency response mechanisms; or
- c. face-to-face/tele-based consultations with affected communities, DRM authorities in partner countries where activations have taken place or multilateral stakeholders, such as UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNHCR.

However it is noted that insights into stakeholder views listed above and comparison of other funding mechanisms is presented in existing review and evaluation reports listed in Section 2.

2. Existing Reports

The review team will review existing DFAT policies and HPA reviews, including but not limited to:

- a) DFAT's Humanitarian Action Policy*
- b) DFAT's Investing in a Safer Future: A Disaster Risk Reduction Policy for the Australian Aid Program*
- c) DFAT's Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework
- d) HPA operational documents, including Schedule 2 Head Agreement and HPA Vision document
- e) Quality at Implementation Reports for the HPA
- f) Evaluation of Australia's response to the Horn of Africa humanitarian crises 2011 and Syria Crisis Evaluations (ODE)
- g) HPA Mid-Term Review
- h) Review of the HPA Haiyan response
- i) Review of the HPA Bopha response
- j) Review of the HPA Syria response
- k) Review of the HPA Horn of Africa response
- l) Independent Review of the Period Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (PFA) Final Report – December 2009
- m) HPA Joint Communique: Learning and Recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction
- n) Relevant sector standards for NGOs: ACFID Code of Conduct, Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct for humanitarian action, the Sphere Standards
- o) HPA Level 1 DRR and DRM reports submitted in 2014 which provide an overview of Years 1, 2 and 3, and Level 2 reporting against joint activities.
- p) Level 2 joint agency reports on each HPA activation

3. Key Stakeholders

The review team will meet with representatives from the following areas of DFAT to draw on their experience activating and implementing agreements under the HPA. Where possible, roundtable meetings will be held with the areas listed.

- a) Humanitarian Division, to discuss the partnership, emergency responses, disaster risk reduction, protracted crises, early recovery, gender and protection issues
- b) Desk/Post where the HPA has been activated (Philippines, Solomon Islands, Syria, Africa and Pakistan)

- c) NGO and Volunteers Branch
- d) Office of Development Effectiveness

The review team will also meet with representatives from HPA and HRG members to draw on their experience activating and implementing agreements under the HPA (listed below). Where possible, roundtable meetings will be held with the stakeholders listed.

- a) ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group members, including HPA and non HPA NGOs
- b) HPA members
- c) HPA Director, Chair and Vice-Chair
- d) Local implementing partners, those who received funding through HPA partners during activations (teleconference as organised by HPA)

4. Specification of Team

There will be two review team members. DFAT will ensure the team has a mix of expertise including:

- Humanitarian expertise – experience and knowledge of the humanitarian sector, specifically best practice in responding to sudden onset emergencies and protracted crises.
- Partnership expertise – demonstrated knowledge of partnership principles and practical application of these.
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Risk Management – experience and knowledge of best practice and practical approaches to DRR and DRM.
- Monitoring and Evaluation expertise – demonstrated experience in developing robust monitoring and evaluation approaches/systems, ideally in the humanitarian sector.
- Policy experience – an understanding of DFAT’s policies and cross-cutting issues.

The two team members are expected to have specific responsibilities as detailed below:

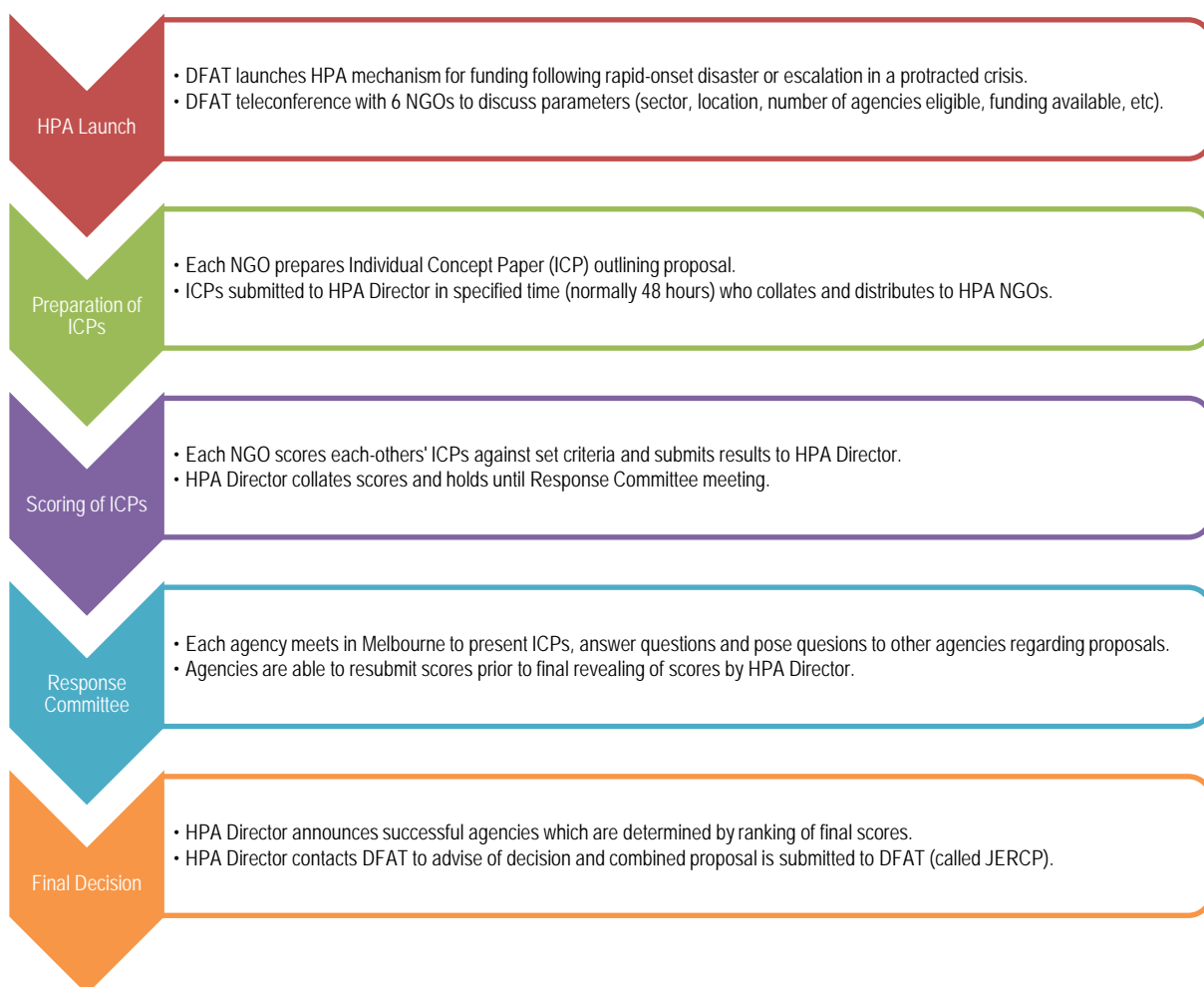
- Team Leader role – determination of whether HPA has met expected outcomes across the three elements of the agreement (partnership, emergency response, DRR/DRM) and lessons learnt to inform the design of the next mechanism. Responsible for finalising and delivering the brief discussion paper and review report to DFAT and HRG representative.
- Team Member role – contribute to the overall review and support the Team Leader to meet all requirements. This includes providing key inputs (based on the individuals area of expertise) into the review of the HPA mechanism.

Annex 2: HPA Funding and Activation⁵⁵

| Month/ Year | Disaster | CARE | Caritas | Oxfam | Plan | Save the Children | World Vision | Total |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Apr-15 | Leabanon - Syria Refugees | 0 | \$1,500,000 | | 1,500,000 | | | \$3,000,000 |
| Apr-15 | Nepal - Earthquake | \$640,000 | \$640,000 | \$640,000 | \$640,000 | \$640,000 | \$800,000 | \$4,000,000 |
| Mar-15 | Vanuatu - Cyclone Pam | \$500,000 | \$0 | \$300,000 | \$0 | \$1,000,000 | \$1,200,000 | \$3,000,000 |
| Oct-14 | Ebola - Liberia & Sierra Leone | \$0 | \$625,000 | \$0 | \$650,000 | \$600,000 | \$625,000 | \$2,500,000 |
| Mar-14 | Solomon Islands - Floods | \$0 | \$0 | \$467,000 | \$0 | \$313,000 | \$720,000 | \$1,500,000 |
| Nov-13 | Philippines - Typhoon Haiyan | \$833,333.33 | \$833,333.33 | \$833,333.33 | \$833,333.33 | \$833,333.33 | \$833,333.33 | \$4,999,999.98 |
| Jul-13 | Syria #2 - Conflict | \$800,000 | \$800,000 | \$800,000 | \$0 | \$800,000 | \$800,000 | \$4,000,000 |
| May-13 | Syria #1 - Conflict | \$1,350,000 | \$640,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$0 | \$1,010,000 | \$0 | \$4,000,000 |
| Dec-12 | Philippines - Typhoon Bopha | \$0 | \$747,095 | \$569,811 | \$0 | \$683,094 | \$0 | \$2,000,000 |
| May-12 | Sahel - Drought | \$1,500,000 | \$0 | \$1,000,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$0 | \$5,000,000 |
| Sep-11 | Pakistan - Floods | \$0 | \$0 | \$770,000 | \$730,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$0 | \$2,500,000 |
| Jul-11 | Horn of Africa - Drought | \$990,000 | \$455,000 | \$800,000 | \$800,000 | \$1,500,000 | \$455,000 | \$5,000,000 |
| TOTAL | | \$6,613,333.33 | \$6,240,428.33 | \$7,180,144.33 | \$6,653,333.33 | \$9,379,427.33 | \$5,433,333.33 | \$41,499,999.98 |
| 2011- 2016 | DRR & DRM Capacity Building | \$2,250,000.00 | \$2,250,000.00 | \$2,250,000.00 | \$2,250,000.00 | \$2,250,000.00 | \$2,250,000.00 | \$13,500,000.00 |
| | | | | | | | Total HPA Funding | \$54,999,999.98 |

⁵⁵ \$0 does not necessarily reflect an unsuccessful bid for funding. Partners may have chosen not to submit a funding proposal for this activation.

Steps in the HPA⁵⁶



⁵⁶ With thanks to Caritas Australia for this graphic, taken from '*Caritas Australia and the HPA, internal lessons learned document, draft*'.

Annex 3: Approach to Consultations

Purpose of the Review

- The *primary purpose* of the review is on learning – i.e. to identify relevant lessons from the operations of the HPA to inform a design process for a subsequent mechanism to deliver rapid emergency response, and DRR and DRM
- The *secondary purpose* of the review is on accountability – i.e. to determine whether the HPA outcomes of delivering rapid emergency response assistance, collaborative DRR and DRM activities and strategic dialogue were achieved.

As such, the Review Team's approach to consultations focussed efforts on 'looking forward', with a secondary focus on 'looking backwards'.

Approach to Consultations

The Review Team pursued two key themes of enquiry:

1. Consultations to *identify and clarify useful and actionable lessons learned* relevant to designing a subsequent mechanism
2. Consultations to *inform an assessment* of whether the HPA outcomes have been achieved.

The consultations included:

Key-informant interviews, guided by a set of critical review questions developed by the Review Team. These semi-formal interviews were conducted face-to-face and via telephone with individual stakeholders prior to holding a reflections workshop.

A reflections workshop bringing stakeholders together, including HPA partners (recognising their roles as both HPA members and experts) to consider the evidence and inform the Review Team's final recommendations. To support this workshop, the Review Team drafted a **lessons learned working paper**, which was shared with Australian-based stakeholders prior to the workshop.

The consultations were supported by a:

Further document review to fill current gaps in evidence or verify issues raised in stakeholder discussions

Lessons learning case studies of the Vanuatu and Lebanon response, to provide a closer look at two recent HPA activation: to assess what is currently working well and what is not; what elements should remain and those that can be improved.

Annex 4: List of People Consulted

| Name | Title | Organisation |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| DFAT | | |
| Jamie Isbister | First Assistant Secretary | DFAT Humanitarian, NGO and Partnerships Division |
| Michael Hassett | Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Richelle Turner | A/g Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Jess Petersen | Senior Emergency Officer | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Jonathan Thorpe | Policy Officer | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Jemma Malcolm | Senior Emergency Officer | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Ray Bojczuk | Assistant Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Steve Darvill | Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Gabby Harrold | Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Pilar Cossio | Senior Policy Officer | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Christine Pahlman | Assistant Director | DFAT Humanitarian Response Branch |
| Niamh Dobson | Second Secretary | DFAT Nairobi Post |
| Hannah Gregory | Executive Officer | DFAT Africa Branch |
| Simon Buckley | Assistant Director | DFAT Investment Design Section |
| Matt Lapworth | Director | DFAT Middle East Section |
| Barbara Ratusznik | Senior Policy Officer | DFAT Middle East Section |
| Lawrence Phillips | Executive Officer | DFAT Middle East Section |
| Christina Munzer | Director | DFAT NGO and Volunteers Branch |
| Michael Bergmann | Director | DFAT NGO and Volunteers Branch |
| Angela Neumann | Assistant Director | DFAT NGO and Volunteers Branch |
| Natalia Aueb-Charles | Executive Officer | DFAT Vanuatu Section |
| Karyn Murray | Assistant Director | DFAT Vanuatu Section |
| Siddharta Chakrabarti | Attaché | DFAT Vanuatu Post |
| HPA NGO partners | | |
| Julia Newton-Howes | CEO | CARE Australia |
| Paul Kelly | Principal Executive, International Programs | CARE Australia |
| Adam Poulter | Manager, Humanitarian Emergency and Response Unit | CARE Australia |
| Paul O'Callaghan | CEO | Caritas Australia |
| Jamie Davis | Head of International Programs | Caritas Australia |
| Richard Forsythe | Manager, Humanitarian & Emergencies | Caritas Australia |
| Suzy McIntyre | Humanitarian Emergencies Coordinator | Caritas Australia |
| Alexia Huxley | International programs Director | Oxfam Australia |
| Meg Quartermaine | Humanitarian Director | Oxfam Australia |
| Richard Young | HPA Director | HPA |
| Chrissy Galerakis | Volunteer | HPA (Plan Australia) |
| Dave Husy | Programs Director | Plan Australia |
| Ro Kent | Disaster Risk Manager | Plan Australia |
| Paul Ronalds | CEO | Save the Children Australia |

| | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Stuart Schaefer | Director International Programs | Save the Children Australia |
| Nichola Krey | Head of Humanitarian Affairs | Save the Children Australia |
| Majella Hurney | Manager of Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs Team | World Vision Australia |
| Julianne Scenna | Director of Government and Multilaterals | World Vision Australia |
| Non-HPA NGOs / HRG members | | |
| Megan Williams | Humanitarian and Human Rights Advisor | ACFID |
| Beth Sargent | Head of Policy | ACFID |
| Ben Fraser | Peace-building Team Manager | Act for Peace |
| Michelle Higelin | Deputy Executive Director | Action Aid Australia |
| Beryl Hartmann | Humanitarian Program Officer | ADRA |
| Hayley Lanzon | Program Officer | ALWS |
| Steve Ray | Manager International Emergencies | Australian Red Cross |
| Sanwar Ali | Senior DRR Advisor | Child Fund |
| Peter Chamberlain | Consultant | Child Fund |
| HPA implementing partner organisations | | |
| Sandrine Wallez | Director | ACTIV association (Vanuatu) |
| Michelle Ryan | Program Manager | Catholic Relief Services (Lebanon) |
| Sarah Workman | Regional Technical Advisor for Business Development - Europe, Middle East and Central Asia Region | Catholic Relief Services (Lebanon) |
| Others | | |
| Louise Searle | Director | Humanitarian Advisory Group |

Annex 5: List of Documents Reviewed

Policy

1. *Humanitarian Action for Results*, ACFID policy paper on strengthening Australia's approach to preventing and responding to disasters and conflict overseas, April 2014.
2. *Humanitarian Action Policy*, AusAID humanitarian policy, December 2011.
3. *Investing in a Safer Future*, AusAID DRR policy, June 2009.
4. *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework*, AusAID protection framework, July 2013.
5. *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs – Equal Opportunities*, IASC handbook on gender in humanitarian action, December 2006.
6. *Learning and Recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction*, HPA NGOs Joint Communiqué, May 2014.
7. Humanitarian Partnership Agreement, Schedule 2.
8. *Partnerships for Effective Development*, Linda Kelly and Chris Roche, ACFID, January 2014

Reviews

9. Mid-term review of the HPA, June 2013.
10. Independent Review of the Period Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (PFA), December 2009.
11. Typhoon Bopha (Philippines) HPA Response Review, June 2013.
12. Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines) HPA Response Review, August 2014.
13. Horn of Africa Crisis HPA Response Review, November 2012.

QAE and QAI reports

14. HPA Quality at Entry report, July 2010.
15. HPA Quality at Implementation report, March 2012.
16. HPA Quality at Implementation report, March 2014.

Lessons Learned

17. Horn of Africa Crisis HPA Joint Lessons Report, September 2012.
18. Typhoon Bopha (Philippines) HPA Joint Lessons Report, August 2013.
19. Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines) HPA Joint Lessons Report, August 2014.
20. Syria HPA activations Joint Lessons Report, December 2014.
21. Niger HPA Joint Lessons Report, August 2013.
22. Pakistan HPA Joint Lessons Report, June 2012.
23. Note from HPA Director to HPA Review team, 25 March 2015.
24. 'Caritas Australia and the HPA', internal lessons learned document, draft.
25. 'One Size Doesn't Fit All', joint paper on Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu) response, June 2015.
26. Lebanon HPA Joint Lessons Report, June 2015
27. Vanuatu and Nepal Joint Lessons Report, June 2015

DRR and DRM reports

28. Collective Report for DRR, DRM and Capacity Building Activities, January 2015.
29. CARE final DRM report.
30. CARE final DRR report.
31. Caritas final DRM report.
32. Caritas final DRR report.
33. Oxfam final DRM report.
34. Oxfam final DRR report.
35. Plan final DRM report.
36. Plan final DRR report.
37. Save the Children final DRM report.
38. Save the Children final DRR report.
39. World Vision final DRM report.
40. World Vision final DRR report.