

Solomon Islands Medical Partnership for Learning, Education and Research (SIMPLER) Independent Review Management Response

This document outlines DFAT's management response to the independent review of the Solomon Islands Medical Partnership for Learning, Education and Research (SIMPLER) commissioned by Australian Volunteers International. 'Agree in principle' has been used where the recommendation requires implementation that can not be taken forward as the program has now concluded. Where relevant, learnings from the SIMPLER program will inform DFAT's future health sector support to Solomon Islands.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan
1. DFAT should seek to establish a coordination function with other Australian not-for-profit organisations supporting Solomon Islands health system to ensure the coherence of volunteer and technical assistance provided and alignment with the National Health Strategic Plan.	Agree	There are many active and long-standing partnerships between Solomon Islands and Australian clinicians, with a particular focus on the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in Honiara. DFAT is exploring options to increase coordination and coherence.	Options for increasing coordination, coherence and visibility of clinical partnerships will be explored as part of the design of the next phase of Australia's health sector support to Solomon Islands.
2. DFAT and AVI should establish systems to ensure all proposed volunteer assignments are aligned with the National Health Strategic Plan priority areas, such as decentralisation, and other Australian health sector investments.	Agree in principle	Alignment with the Solomon Islands National Health Strategic Plan is a requirement for all Australian health investments and activities, including volunteer assignments.	The role of clinical partnerships including through volunteering will be explored as part of the design of the next phase of Australia's health sector support to Solomon Islands.
3. Reporting against higher level outcomes of the program should be standard, with succinct six monthly reports provided directly to the NRH Executive highlighting the key program achievements for the period. Reporting systems, including DFAT approval processes need to be	Agree in principle	DFAT agrees with the intent of this recommendation including the importance of timely, regular and informative reporting to NRH officials.	Learnings from the SIMPLER program in this area can inform future support to NRH.

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streamlined to ensure this happens on a timely basis.			
4. All outcome-focused program reporting should be structured so it specifically identifies which Strategic Objectives and Priorities in the National Health Strategic Plan the outcome is contributing to.	Agree in principle	DFAT agrees with the intent of this recommendation, noting the expectation that all health investments and activities align with the National Health Strategic Plan.	Learnings from the SIMPLER program in this area can inform future support to NRH and clinical partnerships more broadly.
5. AVI should work with the Australian High Commission in Honiara to develop a calendar of strategic communications, highlighting the contribution that SIMPLER is making to Solomon Islands health system and maximising the public diplomacy benefits derived from the program.	Agree in principle	Implementing partners play an important role in ensuring that the achievements and impacts of Australia's development assistance is communicated to the community, health sector and government.	DFAT will continue to work with implementing partners to ensure content is provided to support public diplomacy efforts.
6. Adequate program funding and resources should be provided in both Solomon Islands and Australia to effectively manage the program, including key stakeholder relationships and the production of quality outcome-based reports.	Agree in principle	Program management arrangements need to be tailored to the Solomon Islands context, with in-country presence a key enabler for stakeholder relationships and performance.	Learnings from the SIMPLER program in this area can inform future support to NRH and clinical partnerships more broadly.
7. Pre-departure training should be tailored, or an additional day added for SIMPLER volunteers that talks specifically about the context SIMPLER operates in and leverages the expertise of previous volunteers, providing volunteers with as much program-specific information as possible.	Agree in principle	Pre-departure briefing, along with in-country orientation, is a key enabler of successful volunteer assignments.	Learnings from the SIMPLER program in this area can inform future support to NRH and clinical partnerships more broadly.