

## Management Response

### Mid-Term Review of the *Strategy for Australia's aid investments in education 2015-2020*

#### Summary of management response

DFAT welcomes this timely and important Mid-Term Review (MTR). The MTR was undertaken to satisfy accountability requirements and to inform future strategy development.

DFAT notes the significant MTR conclusion that strategies are a good investment of time and resources. This accords with DFAT's view and is an encouraging finding as DFAT considers next steps. The MTR provides a considered position on the rationale for strategies. Informed by the views of other donors, the MTR includes a useful discussion on the advantages/disadvantages of single sector and multisector strategies. This information will be considered as DFAT determines its approach to future strategy preparation.

The MTR affirms the findings of internal reviews about DFAT's development assistance programming capacity challenges. DFAT commits to continue exploring opportunities to address these constraints in an innovative manner. DFAT broadly accepts the recommendations and notes that several initiatives, including efforts to enhance capacity, are already underway.

DFAT notes that the proposed methodology was affected by the limited availability of posts to host in-country missions leading to a reduction in expected country perspectives. Despite mitigation efforts such as additional telephone interviews with in-country stakeholders, it is possible that the lack of in-country consultations may have affected the robustness of some of the findings.

## Individual management responses to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p><b>Senior leaders and policy makers at DFAT should define the relative priority of education in relation to other sectors</b></p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>The relative priority given to education in development assistance, and what sectors to invest in (ie. early childhood, basic education, skills) is determined by a range of factors including Australian government policy, consultation with countries in the region and consultation with other development partners and relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>DFAT leaders and Ministers will consider Australia's approach to education and other sectors through the development of a new international development policy.</p>	<p>Alongside 2020/21 budget development processes and timeframes.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p>The Education Section should take actions to update the Strategy in the context of the SDGs</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The current <i>Strategy for Australia's aid investments in education 2015-2020</i> was endorsed just prior to agreement of the SDGs. Apart from the Strategy itself, which has not yet been updated, all other resources including DFAT's guidelines and E-Learning resources have been updated to reflect the SDGs.</p>	<p>DFAT will ensure the next DFAT Education Strategy or equivalent reflects the context of the SDGs.</p>	<p>Expected update to occur during 2020/21.</p>

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<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p>Senior leaders at DFAT should increase the accountability for education investments and address the capacity implications for realising the principles of the Strategy.</p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Strong accountability mechanisms already exist including internal and external scrutiny through quality assurance requirements at all stages of the programming cycle (concept, design, implementation, and completion).</p> <p>However, DFAT agrees that there is scope to provide increased technical support for education across the program cycle.</p> <p>DFAT also recognises the important role of its locally engaged staff working on education, many of whom bring extensive sectoral experience and long standing in-country networks.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to address issues of accountability and transparency through its organisational performance planning and monitoring reform program.</p> <p>DFAT established an International Capability Task Group in 2018 to consider how best to attract, retain and grow international development capability including in education. This includes developing specific strategies to retain skilled Locally Engaged Staff.</p> <p>As part of this approach targeted recruitment for sector specialists, including in education, is currently being trialled.</p> <p>In addition the Education Section will work to enhance staff capability on education through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishment of a new technical assistance panel including a focus on education</li> <li>• continued support for an active DFAT Education Community of Practice including biennial Education Policy Forums for DFAT and external partners</li> <li>• contract country-focused education specialists proportionate to complexity</li> <li>• technical advice integrated into program partnerships, resources permitting.</li> </ul>	<p>Commenced and ongoing.</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> The Education Section should deploy more effective mechanisms to communicate the Strategy and disseminate the Guidance Notes to support the implementation of the Strategy.</p>	<p>Agree</p>		<p>DFAT (Education Section) will update the Education Strategy and related resources in line with the new International Development Policy and refresh its communication strategy at the same time.</p> <p>DFAT (Education Section) will use its existing Community of Practice (including regular meetings, quarterly newsletters and forums) to communicate the updated Strategy and related resources.</p> <p>DFAT (Education Section) hosted an Education Forum on 4-5 November 2019 with strong engagement from DFAT staff working on education and external stakeholders from NGOs, academia, multilateral organisations and contractors. Discussions will directly inform update of guidance and resource notes during 2020.</p>	<p>Commenced and ongoing. Annual surveys of education stakeholders will assist to ensure our efforts are effective going forward.</p>
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