

Mid-term review of Australia's Support Program to the National Program for Village Development (PNDS-SP) 2014-2017

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Initiative Summary

Initiative Name			
AidWorks initiative number	70592		
Commencement date	1 July 2014	Completion date	30 June 2017
Total Australian \$	26 million		
Total other \$	Not applicable		
Delivery organisation(s)	Cardno Emerging Markets		
Implementing partner(s)	The Asia Foundation (research, monitoring and evaluation component only)		
Country/Region	Timor-Leste		
Primary sector	Community Development, Rural Development		
Initiative objective/s	<p>The goal for the Australian PNDS-SP is "Community members attain increased social and economic benefits".</p> <p>The contract with Cardno Emerging Markets represents the majority of the GoA funding for PNDS-SP. The program outcomes are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sufficient GoTL resources (staff, funds, assets, etc.) are secured and allocated to implement the program 2. Counterparts understand and utilise PNDS systems 3. Counterpart demonstrates sound leadership and management practices. <p>From 2014-17 GoA also funded policy research, and monitoring and evaluation of PNDS through The Asia Foundation.</p>		

Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Objective:

This mid-term review aimed to verify and quality assure PNDS-SP claims of success and progress towards End of Program Outcomes over the first phase (2014-2017). The review also aimed to inform the next phase of PNDS-SP (2017-2021), provide recommendations for any adjustments to End of Program Outcomes and program implementation, within the context of the PNDS-SP design, progress and achievements to date, lessons learned and context changes.

Evaluation Completion Date: 13 February 2017

Evaluation Team: Deborah Rhodes (Team Leader), Francesca Law-Davies (community-driven development expert, DFAT representative) and Reinaldo Borges (Timor-Leste team member).

DFAT's response to the evaluation report

DFAT welcomes the report's findings that Australia has made a substantial contribution to the success of PNDS to date, and that the Support Program has been delivered through a respectful and highly effective partnership. DFAT agrees with all the findings and recommendations.

DFAT's response to the specific recommendations made in the report

The Mid Term Review provides 24 recommendations.

Recommendation	Actions
Recommendations for PNDS Support Program in Phase 2 (2017-2021)	
<p>1. Continue to provide assistance to further embed and strengthen systems and skills, with a progressive shift in focus of operational support from national to municipal level, including a focus on operations and maintenance and sustainability of infrastructure</p>	<p>Support Program will revise its work plan to identify activities that progressively shift the focus to municipal support and on operations and maintenance. This may include the recruitment of municipal advisers and work with other government institutions and DFAT development programs on operations and maintenance standards.</p>
<p>2. Continue to contribute to institutional capacity of PNDS at all levels, with an appropriate and coherent mix of methods. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the PNDS Secretariat with change management processes in light of decentralisation and new and anticipated revised Decree Laws on PNDS • a progressive reduction of advisory support, based on ongoing capacity assessments • organization and funding for continued professional development of PNDS facilitators, with social facilitators as the first priority • integrated training across all facilitators to strengthen consistency and coherence 	<p>Support Program will update the program's Strategic Overview in partnership with PNDS leadership to reflect this recommendation.</p> <p>The Support Program's Senior Stakeholder Engagement Advisor will be reallocated to work within the office of the Vice Minister of State Administration to improve coordination and support on change management processes, particularly decentralisation, budget development and revisions to relevant Decree Laws.</p> <p>Based on a training needs analysis of social facilitators, the Support Program will provide Certificate III Community Facilitation Skills and conflict resolution training in 2017. Other training opportunities will continue to be delivered to all facilitators (technical, finance and social) including in project management, excel, community facilitation and specialised technical/engineering skills. The Support Program will improve development and use of training assessment tools to guide future training opportunities and strengthening consistency and coherence.</p>
<p>3. Engage more deliberately in inter-sectoral coordination to support service delivery and economic opportunities at community level associated with other DFAT programs</p>	<p>Embassy to use the monthly management meetings and initiate at least 6-monthly program Team Leader meetings to improve coordination across the bilateral program, with a focus on Partnership for Human Development (PHD) investments, Roads for Development and the Governance for Development programs.</p> <p>As a dedicated activity, the Support Program will work with PHD and relevant Government of Timor-Leste bodies to develop an improved national approach to maintenance for water projects at the community level.</p>

<p>4. Consider ways to support PNDS to enhance broader social accountability, i.e. build stronger relationships between citizens and local government, on the basis of PNDS experience to date</p>	<p>Support Program will update the program's Strategic Overview in partnership with PNDS leadership to reflect this recommendation. The program will continue to use and strengthen the community accountability monitoring tool developed in 2016.</p>
<p>5. Support a more coherent quality assurance system, incorporating MIS, periodic research and improved use of monitoring data</p>	<p>PNDS Management Information System and updated guidelines to be prioritised for completion in 2017.</p> <p>Embassy to discuss with PNDS secretariat and Support Program how external monitoring research support could be structured for Phase 2.</p>
<p>6. Support PNDS to respond to decentralization in ways which maximize the use of and support for community-driven development approaches</p>	<p>Support Program and Embassy to maintain a watching brief on decentralisation policy and laws and remain flexible and responsive to GoTL requests for support. Support Program will work more closely with Governance for Development program on developments.</p> <p>Support Program will revise its work plan to identify activities that progressively shift the focus to municipal support which may include the recruitment of municipal advisers.</p>
<p>7. Prioritize preparation of quality materials and organisation of events to publicise community achievements through PNDS and the impact of PNDS (including for the new Government to be installed in 2017)</p>	<p>Support Program to revise work plan for stakeholder engagement, including the continued production of newsletters, website updates and updated infographic on PNDS achievements. The program will also commission new communications products such as videos, billboards and brochures. This will be complemented by strategic engagement with new GoTL leadership on the program. The Support Program will also utilise the Embassy's Facebook page to publicise the achievements of PNDS.</p>
<p>8. Support the Ministry to navigate the complexities associated with new donor engagement in community-driven development and support the incorporation of good practices, as appropriate</p>	<p>Support Program will provide appropriate support to improve collaboration between programs, as requested by the Ministry of State Administration and PNDS Secretariat. This may include development of guidelines for communities on the technical and financial management of playground and police housing projects.</p> <p>The Embassy will set up and chair a donors working group to improve harmonisation of activities using PNDS systems.</p>
<p>9. Continue efforts to deepen and broaden engagement with decision-makers to help build support for and shared ownership of PNDS across Government and Parliament</p>	<p>Embassy to use bilateral meetings with key Timor-Leste decision-makers to build support for PNDS and Phase 2 of PNDS-SP, with the support of the Senior Stakeholder Engagement Advisor. The Advisor will continue to engage within senior Timorese leadership and decision makers across Government and Parliament to build support for PNDS.</p>

<p>10. Progressively strengthen culturally-appropriate disability inclusion approaches and practices, through raising awareness in PNDS and negotiating priorities with disabled people's organisations</p>	<p>Support Program to use DFAT Disability Inclusive Development Funds to pilot new approaches to disability inclusion and awareness-raising.</p> <p>Support Program to work with PNDS and DPOs to improve inclusion in all stages of PNDS projects and to improve monitoring and evaluation of the inclusion of persons with disability in the program, and the benefits.</p>
<p>Recommendations for the Australian Embassy</p>	
<p>11. Revitalize high level channels with Government of Timor-Leste leaders, including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negotiate the implications of the decision to suspend new infrastructure grants for 2017, for PNDS-SP in the short and longer terms • negotiate renewal of the Subsidiary Arrangement on PNDS that sits under the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on development assistance. 	<p>The Ambassador met with Vice Minister, State Administration in March 2017 to discuss GoTL plans for PNDS and GoA expectations.</p> <p>Maintain bilateral dialogue between the Embassy and PNDS Secretariat.</p> <p>Post renewed the Australia - Timor-Leste Subsidiary Arrangement for PNDS through an exchange of letters in April 2017 to cover the one year extension period for the Support Program.</p>
<p>12. Support more regular and formal communications with PNDS and PNDS SP to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximize the partnership quality overall and strengthen the sharing of benefits and risks • jointly consider the value of ongoing collaboration between PNDS, PNDS-SP and other sectoral aid programs • identify opportunities for collaboration at national, municipal and suku levels, within the context of Timorese priorities and systems 	<p>Embassy to initiate regular bilateral meetings with Vice-Minister of State Administration and key PNDS Secretariat decision makers from February 2017. Cardno to provide secretariat support for meetings.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings between Embassy and PNDS Secretariat.</p> <p>Embassy to initiate regular team leader meetings with the Support Program and other sector programs, particularly PHD and G4D to identify opportunities for collaboration.</p>
<p>13. Organise a new contract for the current contractor, on a 1 year plus 3 years basis, subject to inclusion of infrastructure grants in the Government of Timor-Leste budget for 2018 and indications of long term commitment from the Government of Timor-Leste of continuing their investment in the program</p>	<p>The current contract for PNDS-SP includes an option to extend for up to 4 years.</p> <p>In April 2017, the Embassy finalised contract negotiations with Cardno for a 1 year plus 3 years contract extension.</p>

<p>14. Support the conduct of major studies and evaluations on PNDS processes and achievements, providing evidence for policies and program adjustments (e.g. 3rd Technical Audit)</p>	<p>The following studies and evaluations will be carried out by the Support Program in 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3rd Technical Audit - Joint Ministry of Finance Audit <p>The following research studies will be carried out by The Asia Foundation in 2017, with the assistance of the Support Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of Local Authorities in PNDS implementation - Perceptions Study - Community Score Card Evaluation - Best Practice Case Studies for Community Contribution / Local Leader involvement <p>The evidence generated through these studies will be shared with the Government of Timor-Leste as well as more broadly through cable reporting and the Community-Driven Development community of practice.</p>
<p>15. Consider ways to maximise donor harmonisation in collaboration with Timorese leaders, to navigate the implications of new donor initiatives for PNDS and PNDS-SP in the short and longer terms</p>	<p>The Embassy will set up and chair a donors working group to improve harmonisation of activities using PNDS systems.</p>
<p>16. Facilitate opportunities for other Australian aid programs to increase understanding of community-driven development approaches, PNDS systems and benefits</p>	<p>The Embassy will facilitate opportunities for the Support Program to share its approaches and lessons learned with other programs. This will also support improved collaboration, cross programing, integrated support to GoTL and resource sharing. The Embassy will facilitate reciprocal presentations with PNDS-SP, TOMAK, the Partnership for Human Development and the Nabilan, Ending Violence Against Women program. Embassy staff working on other sector programs will be invited to attend 6-monthly PNDS-SP progress report presentations and provided the opportunity to join PNDS monitoring visits. The Support Program will also represent PNDS at the Australian development cooperation showcase in March 2017.</p> <p>The Embassy will also provide regular cable updates on PNDS and the Support Program and participate in the community-driven development community of practice.</p>

<p>17. Facilitate greater coordination and coherence in the provision of M&E and research information to PNDS and its use, e.g. by processing findings from The Asia Foundation through or with PNDS-SP</p>	<p>The Asia Foundation (TAF) PNDS research is funded through the ‘Strengthening good public policy’ program, which finishes in June 2017. Ongoing funding will be reviewed by the Embassy by mid-2017. While the agreement remains active, the Support program will continue to work with TAF to support preparation for research, the analysis and utilization of data. The newly recruited M&E Manager for the Support Program will provide guidance on how Post can better integrate the TAF activities into the PNDS-SP M&E framework.</p>
<p>Recommendations for PNDS-SP in 2017 assuming no grants for new infrastructure</p>	
<p>18. Support PNDS, as usual, in the construction, quality assurance and monitoring of infrastructure related to cycles 1 and 2, especially Phase 1 and 2 Cycle 2 village infrastructure</p>	<p>Support Program will continue to support the construction, quality assurance and monitoring of infrastructure. This will be implemented through training, updated guidelines, Field Support Team village visits, field-based monitoring systems and independent evaluations of infrastructure quality. In 2017, the program will focus on completion of 240 projects funded in the 2016 GoTL budget.</p>
<p>19. Support appropriate implementation of and coordination with NZ and Korean supported pilot projects</p>	<p>Support Program will provide appropriate support to improve collaboration between programs, as requested by the Ministry of State Administration and PNDS Secretariat. This may include development of guidelines for communities on the technical and financial management of playground and police housing projects.</p>
<p>20. Bolster operations and maintenance systems, initially for water projects, to maximize sustainability of benefits</p>	<p>Support Program will work with the Partnership for Human Development and relevant Government of Timor-Leste bodies to develop an improved national approach to maintenance for water projects. Water projects currently account for 40 per cent of all PNDS projects.</p>
<p>21. Support planning for infrastructure grants in 2018, to ensure early 2018 construction, the extent possible, in particular for Phase 3 Cycle 2 projects but for all villages for Cycle 3 projects</p>	<p>Support Program will support PNDS to begin socialisation for the next phase of PNDS implementation in October 2017, focused on approximately 209 villages across the 13 Municipalities.</p>
<p>22. Support PNDS to develop new rural development and infrastructure policies which take decentralisation into account, as requested by the Minister, including support with the revision of the PNDS Decree Law, and development of the PNDS Public Institute Decree Law</p>	<p>Support Program will assist PNDS in finalising Technical Construction Standards and develop a roadmap for livelihoods enhancement through PNDS by the end of 2017.</p> <p>The Support Program, particularly through the Senior Stakeholder Engagement Adviser, will continue to support PNDS leadership on the revision of the PNDS Decree Law and development of the Public Institute.</p>

23. Update and formally reissue the PNDS Operations Manual in light of learning and experience to date to support 2017 implementation and planning for 2018	Support Program will revise and reissue the Programs Operations Manual by December 2017.
24. Support PNDS to provide training for new Xefe Sukus and new Suku Council members, in particular the new female aldeia representatives, on PNDS principles and processes	Support Program will revise its work plan to include this activity. Training will be delivered to all new village leaders following the re-issue of the revised Programs Operations Manual.