



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Vietnam

Program Completion Report
(and M&E Report 2015)

February 2016 (Final)



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Abbreviations

AAF	Australia Awards Fellowships
AALP	Australia Awards Leadership Program
AAS	Australia Awards Scholarships
AAV	Australia Awards in Vietnam
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADS	Australian Development Scholarships
ADSIV	Australia Development Scholarships in Vietnam
ALA	Australian Leadership Awards
ALAF	Australia Leadership Awards Fellowships
ALAS	Australian Leadership Awards Scholarships
ANU	Australian National University
AUD	Australia Dollar
AVPHRD	Australia-Vietnam Program on Human Resources Development
CA	Central Agency
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (Vietnam)
DCS	Development Cooperation Strategy
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPO	Disabled Persons Organisation
GE	Gender Equality
GOV	Government of Vietnam
GPA	Grade Point Average
GDVT	General Department of Vocational Training
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resources Development
HRM	Human Resources Management
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSC	Joint Selection Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MC	Managing Contractor
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training (Vietnam)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Vietnam)
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade (Vietnam)
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Vietnam)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OASIS	On-line Australia Awards Scholarships Information System
OSHC	Overseas Student Health Cover
PCC	Program Coordinating Committee
PCE	Pre-Course English
PDD	Program Design Document
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPI	Priority Public Institution
PWD	Person with Disability
ReAP	Reintegration Action Plan
SGS	Small Grant Scheme
SBV	State Bank of Vietnam
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VGAC	Vietnamese Graduates of Australia Club
VID	Vietnam International Education Development
VNAC	Vietnam National Alumni Conference

Executive Summary

GOAL:

Economic growth and poverty reduction in Vietnam is facilitated by access to new professional and technical capacity and leadership skills contributed by an expanded group of Vietnamese graduates from Australian tertiary programs and study placements

DURATION:

October 2009 – January 2016

SCHOLARSHIPS WERE TARGETED TOWARDS:



Profile 1

Local government officials and staff from Vietnamese NGO and provincial enterprises



Profile 2

Central Agency officials

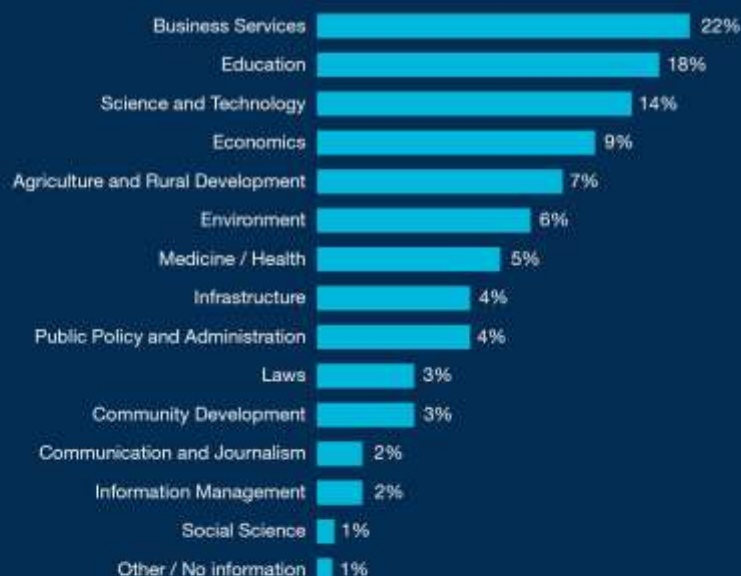


Profile 3

Tertiary lecturers (including TESOL) and researchers

OUTCOME 1: ALUMNI IN VIETNAM MAKE PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Australia Awards Scholarships strongly align with the HRD priorities of Vietnam

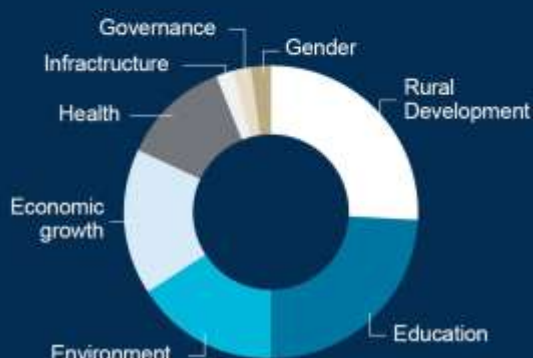


As of 2014, 65 alumni received small grants to implement activities in the following areas:

About 7,000 people accessed the research results produced with small grants



About 1,250 people had been trained in grant activities



OUTCOME 2: ALUMNI IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS IN VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITIES, AND SUPPORT THE NATIONAL PROGRAM TO EXPAND SKILLS IN ENGLISH



Almost **94%** of alumni made improvements in at least one area of their organisation in the last three years



In the 2014 tracer study, about **47%** of profile 3 alumni reported having improved the teaching programs in their university or research institute



As of 2014, **23%** of alumni who work in Universities and colleges contribute to English Language Development (by position) in Vietnam

OUTCOME 3: WOMEN AND MEN HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OF OBTAINING MASTERS AND PHD SCHOLARSHIP

A total of **1,322** scholarships awarded between 2010 and 2015:



59%



41%

The Equity of Access Fund is a significant program innovation to facilitate **equal access** for all to the Australia Awards - Vietnam:



A total of **71** applications received from people with disability



28 scholarships awarded to people with disability over the life of the Program



65 scholarships offered to ethnic minorities and **103** to other rural disadvantaged

Innovation in communication means that more rural disadvantaged and people with disability applicants are reached via Facebook, SMS, telephone, email, and mass media across Vietnam.

OUTCOME 4: ALUMNI RETURN WITH AND MAINTAIN LINKAGES AND POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF AUSTRALIA THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Individual connections between Vietnam alumni and Australia represent valuable, broader relationships.



In the last three years, **52%** of alumni have been in contact with other Australia Awards students, **24%** with former university alumni associations, **21%** with former lecturers and **14%** with Australian students.



55% of Australia Awards alumni reported that their organisation has professional or business link with an Australian organisation; **85%** of alumni in these organisations were involved in such links.

1 Overall Assessment of the Program: Implementation and Delivery Outcomes

The AAV program team's assessment is that the program did provide Vietnam access to new professional and technical capacity and leadership skills through an expanded group of Vietnamese graduates from Australian tertiary programs and study placements. The team assessment is that outcomes one, two and three were achieved and outcome four was partially achieved.

Outcome 1: Australian scholarship and fellowship Alumni in Vietnam make personal contributions to priority development areas. The program's assessment is that this outcome was achieved: In 2014, more than 91% of alumni were working full-time. Almost 96% were either working full-time, working more than one job, or enrolled in further academic study. In the 2014 tracer study, almost 96% of alumni said that the knowledge and skills that they acquired in Australia were relevant to their current job, while 65% of alumni said they were highly relevant.

Outcome 2: Australian PhD-qualified alumni improve the quality of teaching and research programs in Vietnamese universities, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)-qualified alumni support the national program to expand skills in English. The program's assessment is that this outcome was achieved: In 2014, about 36% of alumni were working in education or research institutes. In the 2014 tracer study, about 47% of alumni respondents working as lecturers or researchers reported having improved the teaching programs in their university or research institute. Almost 55% of alumni respondents indicated that in the last 3 years they had transferred their skills and knowledge to colleagues through formal training or teaching to a great or medium extent. Also, 178 alumni who had studied TESOL or linguistics in Australia were working in the English language or foreign languages, literatures or linguistics departments of universities or colleges in Vietnam comprising 23% of the 769 alumni (in the AAV database) who worked in universities and colleges.

Outcome 3: Women and men have equal opportunity of obtaining masters and PhD scholarship in order to: develop and utilise new skills; and contribute to development in the priority areas and to gender equality in Vietnam. The program's assessment is that this outcome was achieved. Although statistics are in favour of women (e.g., 60% of all applications; 59.3% of ADS/AAS and ALAs awarded between 2010 and 2015) AAV maintained gender sensitivity and gender equity in the approaches to promotion and to the identification and selection of awardees – hence everyone had equal opportunity to get a scholarship. Also, while there is disparity in the number of men and women alumni making contributions to development areas, working in senior management positions, or getting promotion, such quantitative disparity is more an influence of the social and organisational norms that thrive in Vietnam, and are beyond the design of AAV. The preparatory design study for the HRD Program in Vietnam (next phase) indicated that achievement of this objective has been supported by: (i) a Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy and Plan; (ii) and an Equity of Access Fund.

Outcome 4: Alumni return with and maintain linkages and positive perceptions of Australia that contribute to strengthening the Vietnam-Australia bilateral relationship. The program's assessment is that this outcome was not fully achieved: More than 95% of the 45 alumni in the longitudinal case histories (LCH) mentioned how they

valued the personal growth from the study experience and 100% said they had a positive perception of Australia. However, alumni have maintained closest contact with other Vietnamese alumni and with AAS alumni from other countries. They maintain contact with their Australian networks far less frequently and often less than one per year. On the other hand in 2014, about 47% of Vietnamese alumni were involved in a professional or business link with an Australian organisation to some extent but most often only *to a small extent*.

It appears that the human development investments made by Australia through the program will be sustainable. **Sustainability** refers to the continued use of new skills and knowledge by the alumni for the benefit of their organisations and/or Vietnam's development. Years after returning to Vietnam, most alumni reported continuing to use the skills and knowledge they acquired in their studies. Most often they reported continuing to use the soft skills they acquired (e.g. work planning skills, time management).

To this extent the team concludes that the program investments were **relevant** and critical to the delivery of the four program outcomes. This implies that investments promotion, selection and pre-departure training activities and outputs **effectively** converted into the use of acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace and communities by alumni. This is especially true of outcomes one and two in the logic model. Importantly, the AAV program was designed to contribute to the areas of social and economic development in the Australia Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy – 'Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Vietnam 2010-2015'. The program has delivered this contribution.

Consideration in regard to the **efficiency** of the core program delivery areas includes: promotion; selection; academic advising; placement mobilisation; reintegration; and alumni support. Overall budget utilisation is lower than planned (sum of annual plans' budgets) with actual program expenditure at 85%. It could be concluded that the program therefore efficiently delivered all planned program activities and outputs. However, it would be valuable for the DFAT and program teams to consider program implementation and whether the program had too strong a focus on the delivery of activities and outputs and budget, and potentially less focus on strategic adjustment options to improve the end-of-program position and the successful delivery of outcomes, or adjusting the outcomes to make them more evaluable and achievable. It would be useful to identify key strategic decisions and analysis and the influencing factors that drove decisions.

The above analysis is important because whilst efficient delivery at the implementation and contract compliance level can be considered good **value-for-money**, if outcomes are not fully achieved, then this brings into question the relevance of the strategic program investments. If investments are not completely relevant, then value-for-money is reduced.

Whilst not strongly articulated during implementation, the program **innovated** during implementation. The program innovated effectively and continuously through five groups of activities at both policy and implementation levels: i) the policy level through the reintegration program and the Equity of Access Fund; ii) the implementation level including the highly effective use of Facebook and Google (shifting to a total non-print media marketing strategy), special English language support to the disadvantaged and greater alumni support through small grants; and iii) at the incremental level including using the Facebook page as an interactive channel to answer applicants' questions; iv) through the introduction of new public diplomacy events and products including high profile alumni events for the Embassy and Aid Briefs to promote Australia's support to Vietnam's development and contribution to economic growth; and v) through restructuring reintegration workshops to integrate first language facilitation and continued on-line support with a clear focus on enhancing support to awardees with greater needs.

2 Background

The Australia Awards Vietnam (AAV) program (previously the Australian Scholarships for Development in Vietnam), is the successor project to the ADS Pre-Departure Project. The AAV program encompassed Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS), formerly Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) the Australian Leadership Awards Scholarships (ALAS); and Australia Awards Fellowships (AAF), formerly Australia Leadership Awards Fellowships.

Coffey International Development was awarded the contract to manage the AAV program. The first phase commenced on 1 October 2009 and ended on 31 January 2012. The contract with Coffey was extended to manage the second phase of the contract until 31 January 2016 following a mid-term review in April 2011.

Governing Arrangements

The AAV program comes under the extended Memorandum of Understanding on Development Cooperation between the Australian and Vietnamese Governments (signed on 27 May 1993) and a Subsidiary Arrangement between the Embassy and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).

The coordinating agencies for the AAV program are MOET representing the Government of Vietnam and DFAT (Hanoi), representing the Government of Australia. They comprise the Program Coordinating Committee (PCC). MOET and DFAT cooperate in the selection process and are the final decision-makers on awarding Australia Awards Scholarships through their membership of the Joint Selection Committee (JSC).

Program Design

Through the AAV program “Australia seeks to support Vietnam’s continuing economic development by assisting in the creation of a greater pool of specialists with the highest level of education, and to link the acquisition and use of new knowledge to making contributions to areas of economic and social development that are identified in the Joint Australian-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy 2010-2015.”¹

The program is directly relevant to the Vietnamese Government’s HRD plans by contributing to the following two Government of Vietnam strategies that are intended to accelerate Vietnam’s development:

1. improving the quality of higher education programs by expanding the proportion of university teachers that have PhD qualifications, and
2. improving the quality of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs through expanding the number of TESOL teacher-trainers who have post-graduate qualifications in TESOL.

Program Goal

Economic growth and poverty reduction in Vietnam is facilitated by access to new professional and technical capacity and leadership skills contributed by an expanded group of Vietnamese graduates from Australian tertiary programs and study placements.

¹ Program Design Document p.13

Program Outcomes

The program is designed to achieve four outcomes:

1. Australia Awards scholarship and fellowship alumni make personal contributions to the priority development areas in the Country Strategy.
2. Australia PhD qualified alumni improve the quality of teaching and research programs in Vietnamese universities; and TESOL qualified alumni support the national program to expand skills in English language.
3. Women and men have equal opportunity of obtaining Masters and PhD scholarships in order to develop and utilise new skills and contribute to development in the priority development areas and to gender equality in Vietnam.
4. Alumni return with and maintain linkages and positive perceptions of Australia that contribute to strengthening the Vietnam – Australia bilateral relationship and are supported to enhance their contribution to development objectives by applying what they have learnt and through diffusion of learning to others.²

Program Outputs

In order to achieve expected outcomes, the program delivered a range of outputs in pre-award, on-award and post-award periods. The program outputs are outlined in section 3.

Program Components

The AAV program has three distinct components³:

1. Selection and support for scholars and alumni – including promoting the scholarships, selecting and mobilising the awardees to Australia for their study, monitoring progress during their study, supporting their re-integration into the workplace following graduation and providing post-award support for their professional development, networking opportunities and enhancement of links with Australia.
2. The provision of English Language training – to those who need additional assistance to gain the required IELTS score to be admitted to their chosen course of study. This component is implemented in a separate DFAT contract for an English Language provider for pre-departure training in Vietnam (currently RMIT Vietnam).
3. Monitoring and evaluation – to assess the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the program in contributing to Vietnam's development and the Australia-Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy (DCS) priority areas against the program's four outcomes.

Program Targets

To be eligible for scholarships, applicants had to belong to one of three Profiles. In the first year of the program there were five Profiles. In the 2011 round, the five Profiles were telescoped into three Profiles but with essentially the same program targets. There was also some readjustment to the percentage of allocations and a narrowing of eligibility in Profile 1 in the 2014 round. The Profile categories and percentage allocations in the last two rounds were:

Profile 1 – Local government officials and staff from Vietnamese NGOs and provincial enterprises (35%)

Profile 2 – Central Agency officials (30%)

² This was recommended by the Mid-Term Review (2011) and added to the updated Scope of Services for the extended MC contract with DFAT.

³ Program Design Document pp 19, 20

Profile 3 –Tertiary lecturers (including TESOL) and researchers (35%)

The target for PhD awards from Profile 3 was 20%.

3 Performance against Outputs

3.1 Output 1 – Promotions /Applications

AAV attracts good quality applicants who meet the program's criteria

Over the six selection rounds, the AAV program was consistently able to attract sufficient numbers of good quality applicants to reach the overall awards target for each round. The total number of applications received over the six rounds (7,151) exceeded by 5.4 times the number of awards offered (1,322). This difference varied from year to year, with the smallest difference (3.7 times) in the 2011 round (the transitional year when OASIS was introduced), when the number of applications (985) was the lowest of the six rounds, and when the second highest number of awards (266) was offered. The biggest difference was in 2015 (10 times), as the number of awards was significantly reduced to 100 from the previous round's 185.

Profile 3 attracted almost half (49.2%) of the total number of applicants over the six rounds, followed by Profile 1 with 38.5% and Profile 2 with 12.3%. The low number of Profile 2 applications was largely due to the significant changes that took place in 2011, with the introduction of OASIS and the consolidation of the five Profiles into three.

One consequence of these changes was the Post decision not to continue with the Priority Public Institutions (PPI) Program, which was a closed program with pre-selection undertaken by selected Central Agencies (CAs) for Profile 2⁴. At the same time, it was decided to narrow the Profile 2 eligibility basis by transferring applicants from research institutes affiliated with CAs to Profile 3 and removing PhD studies as an option for Profile 2 applicants. These actions significantly reduced the pool of Profile 2 applicants. The doubling of eligible Profile 2 agencies by Post did not compensate for this smaller pool, principally because of poor English levels in most of these new agencies.

The number of PhD applications peaked in 2014 with 355 applications. The large number of PhD applications reflects MOET's requirements for academics to upgrade their qualifications. With this large pool of PhD applications the PCC had no difficulty selecting high quality candidates to meet the 20% PhD award target. In total over 6 rounds, 268 PhD (F: 139; M: 129) scholarships were awarded representing 20.3% of total awards.

The program also gave priority to attracting applications from disadvantaged sectors of Vietnamese society (people with disability, ethnic minorities and the rural disadvantaged). Over the program period there were 773 applications from the disadvantaged and 194 awards. This includes 71 applications from and 28 awards to persons with disability which increased sharply in the final three years of the Program, as a result of the Program's and DFAT's heightened attention to this group. (See section 5.5 for more details on applications and awards for the disadvantaged.)

3.2 Output 2 – Selection

DFAT and GoV jointly select and offer awards to the best female and male candidates short-listed by AAV

⁴ One option would have been to continue with hard copies for Profile 2 and upload successful applications onto to OASIS but this option was not actively canvassed.

AAV and Post worked to ensure the annual selection process was comprehensive, transparent, fair and equitable. The selection process comprises three stages: screening for eligibility, assessment of the written application and panel interview of all short-listed candidates⁵. The interview assessment overrides the written application assessment. The Joint Selection Committee (JSC) shortlists candidates for interview and approves conditional awards.

Applicant assessments take into account the applicants' academic competence, work experience/career goals, personal and leadership qualities and potential development impact in Vietnam. For Profile 1 applicants and disadvantaged applicants (rural disadvantaged and persons with disability), the minimum academic requirements (respectively GPA 6.0 and 6.5) are lower than in Profiles 2 and 3 (GPA 7.0) to take into account their disadvantaged educational opportunities.

The changes in Profile 2 processes and application eligibility outlined above gave rise to a selection issue that dogged the three selection rounds from 2011 to 2013, viz. the inability to meet the original 40% Profile 2 target. The consequent decision in 2014 by the PCC to reduce the target to 30% and to eliminate the Profile 2 IELTS requirement at application led to the reduced target being met in the 2015 round.

However, it is important to note that, it is likely that the original 40% Profile 2 target was either met or close to being met, if the awardees from the research institutions associated with the Profile 2 agencies, but transferred to Profile 3, are included. Moreover, since the shortfall in Profile 2 places was reallocated by the JSC to well qualified Masters candidates in Profile 3, the overall high quality of awardees was maintained. This reallocation meant that at the end of the program, Profile 3 with 38.7% of total awards exceeded even its revised target of 35%, which had been increased from its original 30%.

Over the program period, 1,322 awards were offered to Vietnamese men and women. In total 784 awards (59.3%) were offered to women and 538 (40.7%) were offered to men. Similar percentages were reflected in each selection round.

3.3 Output 3 – Placement

AAV places awardees in appropriate study programs that match their academic background and/or work experience, their organisations' needs and Vietnam's development objectives.

Over the 6-year period, 1,519 awardees were placed in 35 Australian universities. The JSC decision to award a candidate a conditional scholarship reflected the JSC's assessment that the candidate met the respective Profile selection criteria and that the study program was appropriate. At the placement stage, the study program where a conditional awardee was placed had to be in the same area of study approved by the JSC.

The International and Local Academic Advisers' role was to advise on the academic suitability of candidates for their selected study programs. The International Adviser focused on research candidates providing advice to the JSC whether they were ready for research studies in Australia. The Local Adviser counselled short-listed candidates / conditional awardees on their choice of courses and checked that all conditional awardees met the academic and English requirements of their selected universities.

⁵ It should be noted that the interview panels were not chaired by a senior DFAT officer as required in the Australia Awards Scholarships Assessment and Selection Guide as such officers at Post could not be made available for the lengthy interview times consisting of two panels working over two periods of two weeks each. Instead a DFAT representative (generally a locally engaged staff member) was a member of each three-member panel. The panels were chaired by an expatriate MC consultant or the Team Leader. Post informed DFAT of this arrangement, no objections were raised.

The effectiveness of the selection and placement processes is demonstrated by the high level of performance by Vietnamese awardees during their studies in Australia. The data available by semester from 2011 to 2014 show that 94.4% to 96.7% of awardees obtained 'satisfactory' progress, with those classified as 'unsatisfactory' ranging from 2.6% to 5.4%. In the same period, 'High Achievers' ranged between 8% and 21% of awardees, varying among semesters. Terminations due to poor academic progress were few and until end of 2015 only eight awardees had their scholarship terminated for this reason. Another awardee had this scholarships terminated due to fraud while he was studying in Australia.

3.4 Output 4 – Course Completion

Awardees complete courses in Australia and return to Vietnam

DFAT data (from OASIS) show that 96% of Vietnamese Australia Awards scholars completed their studies. Up to the end of October 2015 (i.e. excluding scholars graduating in second semester 2015) 1,140 Australia Awards scholars have graduated. Of this total, a little more than half (587) were selected under the previous ADS program and 553 selected under the AAV program. 12 PhD graduates selected under AAV have returned to Vietnam.

Only a small fraction of graduates applied for a change of visa to stay in Australia.

3.5 Output 5 – Reintegration and Alumni Engagement

AAV assists alumni with reintegration, professional development, small grants and networking opportunities

Activities under AAV's reintegration and alumni strategy have assisted alumni reintegrate into the work place, enhancing their skills and knowledge and strengthening their networks and links with Australia. This has been achieved in a variety of ways.

Reintegration

The 2012-2013 Annual Plan added an innovative reintegration strategy following the increased DFAT attention to the successful reintegration of alumni. Prior to this, reintegration activities were limited to a workshop conducted by the International HRD Adviser in Vietnam for Profile 2 returnees. Implementation of the strategy, which features a series of two interrelated, half-day workshops (the first in Australia 2-3 months before scholars return to Vietnam, and the second in Vietnam after they resume work) commenced in November 2012 with a pilot program. Since then AAV has completed seven workshops in Australia and six follow-up workshops in Vietnam.

Integral to the strategy is the preparation of a Reintegration Action Plan (ReAP) - the focus of the Vietnam workshop. In developing the reintegration strategy, lessons were drawn from the Australia Awards Indonesia program's experience with action plans. It was decided not to institute the ReAP at application or pre-departure, but on the scholars' return so that the ReAP could be made relevant to the scholars' learning in Australia and their current workplace needs. (Detailed analysis of the reintegration strategy can be found in section 5.5.)

Professional development

Foremost in promoting alumni skills utilisation and knowledge enhancement has been the professional development activities, which have formed the backbone of the alumni support program. These activities have taken the following form: i) half-day seminars on topical issues, ii) training workshops of up to two days in soft skills development, and iii) academic conferences, as exemplified by the Vietnam National Alumni Conference (VNAC) in December 2013. Topics for the professional development activities normally emerge from consultations with the alumni core groups. The high attendance rates at these events show

that they meet alumni needs and interests. In most cases, except where there is an outside speaker, alumni who are experts in their field act as presenters and chairpersons of events.

Another form of professional development has been the free access provided to academic databases, introduced in 2011 following alumni requests. By the end of 2015, 1,281 alumni had subscribed to this facility. Activities supported by the alumni program have been supplemented by locally initiated activities, such as the lunch time talks' series in HCM City.

Vietnam National Alumni Conference

The highlight of AAV's alumni support activities was VNAC which promoted both alumni professional development and alumni links with Australia, under the theme - *Celebrating 40 years of Australia-Vietnam: Education for Development: Future Collaboration and Directions*. The conference, the first ever organised for Vietnamese alumni, tackled seven development sub-themes and provided opportunities for research sharing, policy advocacy and networking. A total of 331 alumni (largely Australia Awards), attended the event.

Small Grant Scheme

Another important modality for enhancing alumni skills and knowledge as well as links with Australia is the Small Grant Scheme (SGS). The scheme funds four types of eligible activities, which are designed to enhance alumni skills and knowledge in various ways. Two activities, presentations at conferences and research, in particular, contribute to strengthening links with Australia, either through networking at conferences in Australia, or research involving former Australian university supervisors and lecturers as advisers/consultants.

Altogether, five SGS rounds have been conducted with a total of 137 submissions and 83 grant approvals totalling AUD 438,396. As of December 2015, a total of AUD 366,257 in small grants has been disbursed to alumni grantees (with a further AUD 32,000 in grants to be disbursed by early January). AAV has developed a strong process for acquittal and it is expected that all grants will be fully acquitted at the end of the Program. Fifty-five percent of the grant recipients were women. The breakdown of grants by activity type is: conference presentations (22), research (19), organisation of training courses, seminars and workshops (39) and organizational change, added to the fifth round (3).

An assessment was undertaken in February 2014 by the AAV M&E Adviser on the SGS's efficiency and effectiveness. Key positive conclusions were that (i) the SGS has performed effectively with regard to its purpose and objectives, (ii) almost 90% of grantees enhanced and capitalised on their knowledge and skills gained in Australia, and (iii) more than 70% of grantees strengthened their professional links with Australian organisations.

As a result of the assessment the SGS guidelines were substantially revised to streamline the application and appraisal processes and included an innovative Proposal Evaluation Criteria Grid to assist alumni address all criteria in their applications and to provide a consistent and transparent basis for proposal appraisal. The approval by Post of all 24 5th round submissions recommended by the AAV office and the quick approval turnaround time demonstrated the effectiveness of the revised guidelines.

Social networking events

The three large-scale, social networking events in the form of Family BBQs organized in Hanoi (2012 and 2015) and HCM City (2013) also contributed to strengthening alumni links with Australia and expanding their networks with other alumni. The 2015 Hanoi BBQ, which featured an alumni photography exhibition on gender issues and special children's activities, was particularly successful, with 224 alumni and 251 family members attending.

4 Performance against Targeted Outcomes

4.1 Outcome 1 – Alumni Contributions to Development

Australian scholarship and fellowship Alumni in Vietnam make personal contributions to priority development areas. The Program's assessment is that this outcome was achieved: In 2014, more than 91% of alumni were working full-time. Almost 96% were either working full-time, working more than one job, or enrolled in further academic study. In the 2014 tracer study, almost 96% of alumni said that the knowledge and skills that they acquired in Australia were relevant to their current job, while 65% said they were highly relevant.

4.1.1 Alumni Use Knowledge and Skills Acquired in Australia

Awardees acquire valuable skills in Australia

Vietnamese scholars acquired valuable skills and knowledge while they were on-award. As of July 2015, 72% of the courses completed by Vietnamese alumni were for Master's degrees or graduate diplomas. Another 4% of alumni had achieved their doctorates. About 20% of the courses that alumni (in the AAV alumni database) completed were for undergraduate degrees (see Exhibit 1. Awards by level of study in Annex 1)

The Program estimated that 85-90% of alumni remain in Vietnam on return. A majority of 'untraceable' alumni were found to have returned to Vietnam.

Alumni use their knowledge and skills in performing their work duties

Alumni see their knowledge and skills as relevant to their current job. In the 2014 tracer study, almost 96% of alumni said the knowledge and skills they acquired in Australia were *relevant* to their current job, while 65% of alumni said they were *highly relevant*. Alumni working in the education sector were most likely, and alumni in the private sector least likely, to have said that their skills and knowledge were *highly relevant* to their current job.

Studies on the impact of alumni on the environment sector and on education management conducted in 2013 reinforced the finding that men and women were as likely to apply their skills and knowledge in their work. A slightly lower percentage of female respondents than male respondents said that they were able to improve the performance of their organisations and contribute to the development of their community

Alumni in all employment sectors said that they used their skills and knowledge to a *great extent* or a *medium extent*. Almost 75% of alumni said they have regularly used three skills – working independently, analytical and critical thinking, and time management.

Alumni produce knowledge outputs at work

About 96% of returning alumni produced at least one of the following outputs related to their skills and knowledge in the last three years: presentations, reports, briefings, memos, or teaching course and materials. About 50% of alumni produced at least one presentation or report. Recently-returned alumni were more likely than other alumni to report producing the listed outputs. Men were more likely than women to produce all types of knowledge outputs except teaching materials and blogs (see Exhibit 2: Alumni knowledge outputs by sex)

More alumni in Cohort 1 than any other reported producing the outputs in listed in Exhibit 2. Women comprised 61% of the survey respondents in Cohort 1. Cohort 1 alumni returned to Vietnam in the period 2010 to 2012.

Alumni face conditions in the workplace that affect their use of skills and knowledge

Alumni have identified various factors enabling or constraining their ability to use and transfer their knowledge and skills in the workplace. The factors include, for example, the seniority of alumni in their organisations, the attitudes of supervisors and colleagues about change and new ways of working, the way alumni are tasked with work, and the support given by the program to alumni after they have returned from their studies.

In 2014, the Program developed a model and instrument for identifying the conditions in organisations affecting the use of employees' skills and knowledge. The model incorporated 12 areas within four organisational functions: (1) Strategic leadership; (2) Human resources management; (3) Work management; and (4) Work climate. The Program found that conditions in only four of 12 areas examined were generally facilitative of alumni using their knowledge and skills in the workplace. They included:

Staff planning and recruitment;

Training and development;

Work supervision; and

Motivation and commitment.

The conditions in another four areas have constrained the use of knowledge and skills by alumni: change management; performance appraisal and promotion; information and knowledge management; and learning and continuous improvement. The conditions in another third of the 12 areas were both positive and negative in their impact on alumni.

The 2014 tracer study corroborated some of these findings. It found that foreign and international organisations were better than Vietnamese organisations at creating conditions that enabled alumni to make contributions. It also found that a majority of alumni received support from supervisors and colleagues for the use of their knowledge and skills when performing their work duties. About 77% of alumni said their supervisors provided a *great level or medium level* of support. Alumni reported receiving good levels of support from colleagues, but they received more support from supervisors.

Similarly, in 2014 the alumni reintegration survey determined that the main factors in the successful implementation of Reintegration Actions Plans (ReAPs) were the relevance of its activities to organisations, colleagues, and the supervisors. In fact, supervisors played a key role in the design and implementation of ReAPs. The main factors constraining the implementation of ReAPs were lack of support from supervisors and colleagues in the organisation, insufficient funding, inadequate time allocated to the plan, and the mindset of Vietnamese leaders and managers.

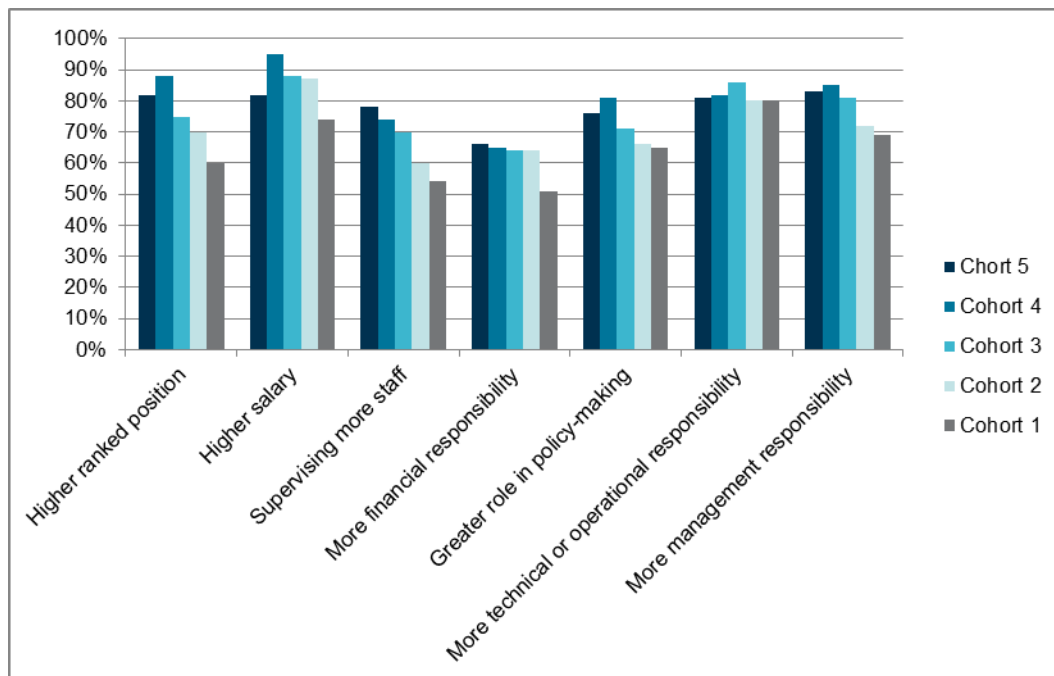
4.1.2 Alumni Improve their Organisations

Alumni make improvements in policies, programs, systems, services and procedures

In 2014, almost 94% of alumni reported making improvements in at least one area of their organisation in the previous three years. The main areas improved were procedures, programs and management systems. Men were more likely than women to make improvements in their organisations. Significantly more men made improvements to management systems and policies. Men were also more likely to improve linkages with other organisations. Women were more likely to improve their organisation's programs. A significant portion of alumni improving programs were in professional positions in Cohort 1.

The main areas that alumni helped to improve were procedures, programs and management systems. This represents a valuable return on investment in their studies.

Figure 4.1: Improvements in Alumni Job Status and Responsibility (by Cohort)⁶



Alumni in each employment sector made contributions in areas of importance to their organisations.

Alumni in private sector made significant contributions to work management and implementation in their organisations. Alumni in Vietnamese companies were more likely than others to have made improvements in management systems, procedures, policies and services in their organisations.

Alumni transfer their skills and knowledge to colleagues

Alumni have made a significant and valuable contribution to HRD in their organisations. A majority of alumni have improved their colleagues' skills. The skills that alumni were most likely to share were analytical and critical thinking skills, English language skills, technical or subject matter knowledge, communication skills, and working independently. Work colleagues were the main beneficiaries of the initial activity of 73% of ReAPs.

Employer organisations benefit in two ways when alumni transfer their knowledge and skills to colleagues. (1) They benefit from skills development among more employees. At least 62% of alumni have transferred their highly-valued skills to colleagues. (2) They also benefit from the improved performance of alumni who transfer their skills and know-how. Alumni who transferred their skills to colleagues were 7% more likely to have used their skills and knowledge in their work duties than those who didn't.

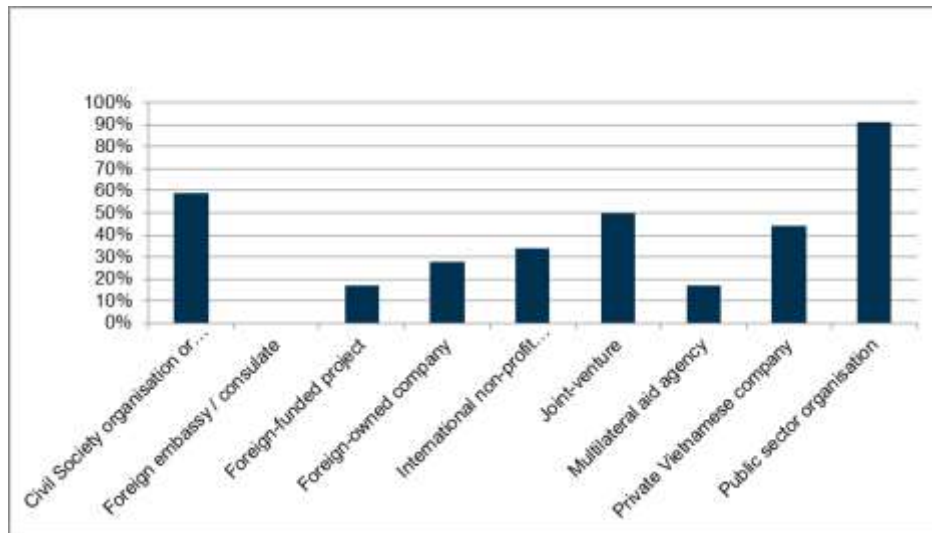
Alumni in the private sector were least likely to have transferred their skills and knowledge to colleagues. This might mean that alumni in the private sector were given fewer opportunities to make the transfer compared to alumni in education institutes and aid delivery agencies. In any case, private sector firms have benefitted less in terms of alumni contributing to HRD compared to public and not-for-profit organisations.

⁶ In June 2014, the AAV program sent an electronic survey to 2,337 alumni who returned to Vietnam in the 15-year period from 1998 to 2012. The program identified five cohorts of alumni among respondents – each covering a 3-year period. Cohort 1 returned to Vietnam between 2010 and 2012; Cohort 2 between 2007 and 2009; Cohort 3 between 2004 and 2006; Cohort 4 between 2001 and 2003; and, Cohort 5 between 1998 and 2000.

Alumni move into senior positions in their organisations

Alumni contributions to their organisations are shaped by their employment position. Almost 71% of alumni returning from Australia returned to their previous employer. About 92% of alumni working in public sector organisations returned to their previous employer, while 37% of alumni who didn't work in the public sector returned to their previous employer.

Figure 4.2: Alumni Who Returned to Previous Employers in Vietnam (by Employment Sector⁷)



Alumni said that their studies influenced changes in their employment situation. The biggest influence was on alumni getting a higher ranking position. About 39% of alumni who returned to their previous employer returned to a higher position than the one they left. About 59% of alumni returned to the same position (or the same level position). The 2014 tracer study indicated that men were more likely than women to return to their previous employer and return to a higher ranked position. Among tracer survey respondents, about 29% of men returned to a higher position than the one they had prior to their studies, while about 20% of women did the same. Men were also more likely than women to receive a promotion at work within two years of returning to Vietnam.

A majority of alumni re-entered the workforce in professional positions and moved into management positions over time. In 2014, 50% of alumni were professionals and 40% were managers. Alumni in younger cohorts were more likely to work as professionals, while alumni in older cohorts were more likely to work as managers.

In 2014, men were more likely than women to be in senior positions in all employment sectors involving Vietnamese organisations. This included Vietnamese private companies, central government agencies, research institutes, state-owned enterprises, education institutes, local governments, unions/mass organisations and vocational colleges. The employment areas where more women or almost the same number of women were in management positions were foreign invested companies and international organizations including embassies (See Exhibit 3: Alumni in Vietnam in senior / leadership positions by employment sector; and Exhibit 4: Alumni in Management Positions, by Gender in Annex 1).

⁷ The term "NGO" that is used in this chart refers to Vietnamese NGOs as opposed to international NGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, or World Vision.

Alumni promote gender equality and social inclusion in their organisations

In last 3 years, 50% of alumni have promoted gender equality in their organisations through informal means *to a great extent* or *a medium extent*. Only 17% of alumni have not promoted GE at all. Women were more likely than men to have promoted GE in the work place.

Relatively few alumni have promoted disability inclusion in their organisation in the last three years. Only one-third of alumni promoted disability inclusion in their organisations. Generally, alumni have promoted gender equality to a greater extent than they have disability inclusion. Men were more likely than women to promote disability inclusion in their training or teaching activities.

4.1.3 Alumni Contribute to Development in Vietnam

Awardees study in fields that are relevant to development priorities

About 89% of alumni said that the knowledge and skills they gained in Australia had some relevance to Vietnam's development priorities. Alumni have completed courses in 16 fields of study. Almost 81% of all scholarships were concentrated in seven fields of study – business services, education, science and technology, economics, agricultural and rural development, the environment and medicine/health. The largest percentages of alumni contributed to development priorities in areas of governance and financial management and economics.

Twenty-eight alumni in the AAV database have completed studies in areas that DFAT has identified as priority crosscutting issues. Fifteen alumni have completed courses in human rights, eight in gender equality, and five in disability issues.

Men were more likely than women to report making contributions to Vietnam's development. Women were more likely to report making contributions to education and public health, but men were more likely to make contributions in all other development priority areas.

About 28% of women reported making contributions to education, 25% to economics, and 25% to governance and financial management. The remaining 22% reported making contributions to other development priority areas (see Exhibit 5: Awards by Field of Study in Annex 1).

Alumni work in development organisations

In 2014, about 7% of alumni worked in development organisations in Vietnam. This included about 5% of alumni who worked in local or international non-governmental organisations, and about 2% who worked in international institutions such as the World Bank or United Nations' organisations such as the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). About 140 female alumni worked in these development organisations, including about 24 female alumni who worked in leadership or senior management positions.

Alumni in aid delivery agencies⁸ were most likely to have contributed to current policy priority areas. Significant percentages of these alumni made contributions to community development (45%), public health (30%), environment (30%), agriculture (27%), and governance and financial management (22%).

Alumni working in aid delivery agencies could be seen as the top performers in two-thirds of the areas examined in the tracer study. They were most likely to report having used their acquired technical or subject matter knowledge in performing work duties. They reported making more use of their skills and knowledge than other alumni. They were most likely to

⁸ 'Aid delivery agencies' refers to international non-profit organisations, civil society organisations or NGOs, multilateral aid agencies, and foreign-funded projects. It does not refer to foreign embassies and consulates.

have made improvements in their organisations. They were most likely to have transferred their skills and knowledge to colleagues. They were most likely among alumni to have used their skills and knowledge in their volunteer work with local organisations. See exhibit 6: Alumni in Vietnam by employment sector, in Annex 1.

Alumni contribute to the body of knowledge in their professional fields

Alumni have contributed to the body of knowledge in their professional fields. In the past three years, 40% of alumni have published a work that was related to their studies. About 44% of these alumni were published in peer-reviewed national academic journals, and about 37% in university-level publications. Younger cohorts were more likely than older cohorts to have published a work.

The knowledge that alumni acquired in Australia was recognized by the peers. In the past three years, 12% of alumni have received a grant and 10% have received an award or prize related to their studies. In the same period, about 18% of alumni presented a paper at an international conference. Male and female alumni were just as likely to present a paper at an international conference, receive a grant, and receive an award or prize related to their studies.

In 2014, the Program reviewed the effectiveness and value for money in the Small Grants Scheme. In four rounds of grants, 65 alumni had received \$222,523 in funding for professional development activities. Almost 90% of the grantees enhanced and capitalised on their knowledge and skills gained during their studies. About 7,000 people had accessed the research results that were produced with small grants and about 1,250 people had been trained in grant activities. Through the grant scheme, selected alumni made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in their professional fields.

Alumni strengthen communities

Alumni made contributions to community development through their volunteer work with local organisations. A majority of alumni respondents to the 2014 tracer survey have used their knowledge and skills to strengthen community organisations. Some alumni have said that their studies gave them confidence to volunteer.

Alumni in Vietnam were more likely to volunteer with local councils and business organisations, than mass organisations or religious organisations. They tended to volunteer in local organisations that reflected their employment sector. For example, alumni working in the private sector were most likely to volunteer their time in business organisations. About 68% of alumni working in foreign-owned companies and 59% of alumni working in Vietnamese companies used their skills *to a great extent* or *medium extent* while volunteering.

4.2 Outcome 2 – Alumni Improve Teaching and Research

Australian PhD-qualified alumni improve the quality of teaching and research programs in Vietnamese universities, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)-qualified alumni support the national program to expand skills in English. The Programs assessment is that this outcome was achieved: In 2014, about 36% of alumni were working in education or research institutes. In the 2014 tracer study, about 47% of profile 3 alumni reported having improved the teaching programs in their university or research institute. Almost 55% of alumni indicated that in the last 3 years they had transferred their skills and knowledge to colleagues through formal training or teaching to a great or medium extent. Also, 178 alumni who had studied TESOL or linguistics in Australia were working in the English language or foreign languages, literatures or linguistics departments of universities or colleges in Vietnam comprising 23% of the 769 alumni in the database who worked in universities and colleges.

4.2.1 Alumni Improve their Organisations

Alumni move into senior positions in universities and research institutes

In 2014, about 36% of alumni were working in education or research institutes. In fact, education institutes were the single largest employer of alumni. Almost 29% of alumni worked in universities and colleges.

Overall, 35.6% of alumni who were employed and living in Vietnam were leaders and senior managers in their organisations.⁹ Leaders and senior managers comprised about 46% of profile 1 alumni, 29% of profile 2 alumni, and 26% of profile 3 alumni.

Alumni improve teaching and programs

Alumni in education institutes have made achievements associated with their sector. In the 2014 tracer study, about 47% of alumni working as lecturers and researchers reported having improved the teaching programs in their university or research institute.

In 2014, the review of the Small Grants Scheme found that about 20% of 50 grants contributed directly or indirectly to teaching and research programs. At least 5 of the 10 grants were used to help improve the contents and assessment of English language teaching and programs.

Alumni transfer teaching skills to colleagues

Almost 55% of alumni working as lecturers and researchers indicated that in the last 3 years they had transferred their skills and knowledge to colleagues through formal training or teaching to a great or medium extent. Alumni working in education institutions were more likely to use formal means of transferring skills and knowledge than other alumni.

Alumni make improvements in policies, programs, systems, services and procedures

The extent to which alumni make contributions in public sector organisations correlates to the relevance of their studies. Alumni in education institutes improved programs and alumni in government improved policies. Alumni in both public sector organisations and

⁹ Leaders and senior managers are defined by their positions in their organisations. They are heads of departments or higher in education; deputy heads of departments or higher in research institutions; deputy heads of departments in central and local governments; CEOs, board members, owners/principals/directors and heads of departments in foreign invested companies, Vietnamese private businesses, and state-owned enterprises; and CEOs, directors and heads of departments/programs in international and local NGOs, international/UN agencies, and embassies.

education institutes were less likely than alumni in other employment sectors to contribute to management systems, procedures, processes and services.

Alumni promote GE and other equity goals in universities and research institutes

Alumni in education institutes were least likely among alumni to have promoted gender equality in the work place. Many profile 3 alumni who promoted GE did so in their research topics. The Program used small grants to facilitate this work, including by one alumnus who was highlighted in a vignette in the M&E Report 2014 for her work studying the impact of the cultural context of gender socialization and its impact on women's political participation in Vietnam.

4.2.2 Alumni Contribute to Development in Vietnam

Alumni work in TESOL related departments at universities or research institutes

In 2014, 178 alumni who had studied TESOL or linguistics in Australia were working in the English language or foreign languages, literatures or linguistics departments of universities or colleges in Vietnam. They comprised about 23% of the 769 alumni in the database who worked in universities and colleges in Vietnam (see Exhibit 7: Alumni who contribute to English Language Development in Annex 1)

Alumni contribute to priority development areas

Alumni in universities and research institutes contributed to a range of development areas. About 46% of alumni working in the education institute contributed to education as a development priority area. About 22% of them contributed to agriculture as a priority area, 21% to environmental studies, 19% to economics, 19% to governance and financial management, and 18% to HRD.

4.3 Outcome 3 – Equal Opportunity for Men and Women

Women and men have equal opportunity of obtaining masters and PhD scholarship in order to: develop and utilise new skills; and contribute to development in the priority areas and to gender equality in Vietnam. The Program's assessment is that this outcome was achieved. Although statistics are in favour of women (e.g. 60% of all applications; 59.3% of ADS/AAS and ALAs awarded between 2010 and 2015) AAV maintained gender sensitivity and gender equity in the approaches to promotion and to the identification and selection of awardees – hence everyone had equal opportunity to get a scholarship. Also, while there is disparity in the number of men and women alumni making contributions to development areas, working in senior management positions, or getting promotion, such quantitative disparity is more an influence of the social and organisational norms that thrive in Vietnam, and are beyond the design of AAV. The preparatory design study for the HRD Program in Vietnam (next phase) indicated that achievement of this objective has been supported by: (1) a Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy and Plan; (2) and an Equity of Access Fund.

4.3.1 Women Access Awards for Studies in Australia

Women are selected for awards

In the past six years, the Program had no difficulty attracting female applicants. About 60% of all applications were made by women. This ratio was true of applications across all profiles and levels of study, and among provincial government employees and ethnic minority applicants.

From 2010 to 2015, 7,151 Vietnamese applied for ADS/AAS and ALAs. This included 4,348 women and 2,803 men. Over the same period, 1,322 Vietnamese applicants were given

awards, including 784 women and 538 men. That is, women were awarded 59.3% of all scholarships in the six years. About 18% of female applicants and 19.2% of male applicants were given awards.

Exhibit 4.1: Awards as Percentage of Applications, 2010 to 2015 (by Gender)

Gender	Applications		Awards		Awards as % of Applications
	No.	%	No.	%	
Women	4,348	60.8	784	59.3	18.0
Men	2,803	39.2	538	40.7	19.2
Total	7,151	100%	1,322	100%	18.5

In July, 2015, the program database contained exactly 4,000 alumni of the scholarships program. Of these alumni, 51% were women and 49% were men. The program has awarded more scholarships to women than men in every annual round since 2008.

4.3.2 Women Use Knowledge and Skills Acquired in Australia

Women use knowledge and skills in performing their work duties

See section 4.1.1 (Alumni use their knowledge and skills in performing their work duties).

Women produce knowledge outputs at work

See section 4.1.1 (Alumni produce knowledge outputs)

4.3.3 Women Improve their Organisations

An assessment of whether women move into senior positions in their organisations

See section 4.1.1 (Alumni move into senior positions in their organisations).

An assessment of whether women improve policies, programs, systems, services, procedures and linkages

See section 4.1.2

Women promote gender equality and other equity goals in their organisations

See section 4.1.1 (Alumni promote gender equality and social inclusion in their organisations).

4.3.4 Women Contribute to Development in Vietnam

Women study in priority areas of development

See section 4.1.3 (Alumni study in fields that are relevant to development priorities).

Women work in development organisations

See section 4.1.3 (Alumni work in development organisations).

4.4 Outcome 4 – Links with Australia

Alumni return with and maintain linkages and positive perceptions of Australia that contribute to strengthening the Vietnam-Australia bilateral relationship. The Program's assessment is that this outcome was not fully achieved. More than 95% of the 45 alumni in the LCH mentioned how they valued the personal growth from the study experience and 100% said they had a positive perception of Australia. However, Alumni have maintained closest contact with other Vietnamese alumni and with AAS alumni from other countries from among the people they met during their studies in Australia. They maintain contact with their Australian networks far less frequently and often less than one per year. On the other hand, in 2014, about 47% of Vietnamese alumni were involved in a professional or business link with an Australian organisation to some extent, but most often only *to a small extent*.

4.4.1 Alumni Maintain Positive View of Australia

Alumni regard their scholarship experience positively

Almost all of the 45 alumni who participated in the longitudinal case histories said that they had a positive experience studying in Australia. More than 95% of the 45 alumni mentioned how they valued the personal growth from the study experience. Alumni became more independent, and learnt to be more critical, analytical and objective in their thinking.

Almost all alumni said that they were satisfied with their course and were successful in their course work. The course provided alumni with knowledge, access to facilities, and support to their research. A high level of returning alumni reported having participated in alumni engagement activities. This is also a reflection of the positive view of the scholarship experience of awardees.

Alumni maintain positive perceptions of Australia

All 45 alumni in the longitudinal case histories said they had a positive perception of Australia. Various alumni reported being impressed with the Australian educational system. Alumni were impressed with their university's library system, academic resources, professors, and services provided by International student center.

4.4.2 Alumni Maintain People-to-people Links with Australians

Alumni maintain contact with other AAS alumni

Alumni have maintained closest contact with other Vietnamese alumni and with AAS alumni from other countries from among the people they met during their studies in Australia. In fact, alumni were almost five times more likely to remain in contact with other scholarship alumni than with Australian students from their course. In the 2014 tracer study, 47% of alumni said they were in contact with other alumni at least monthly, while 16% said they were in contact with other alumni weekly or daily.

For many alumni, the value of the award is threefold: the skills and knowledge acquired, the overseas experience gained, and the networks developed among peers. Networking is especially important for alumni in the Vietnamese context. Awardees begin developing their networks in the pre-award stage; networking continues on-award; and it increases in the post-award stage with support from the program. Networking is a drawing card for awardees' involvement in program activities.

Alumni maintain contact with Australians in the university

In the 2014 tracer study, most alumni were in contact with Australians in the university community only once or twice in a year or less frequently in many instances. This included infrequent contact with former lecturers and staff, former university alumni association, and former Australian students. Recent cohorts were more likely than older cohorts to have

maintained contact with Australians (see Exhibit 8: Type and Frequency of Contact Made by Alumni, in Annex 1).

Considering that 31% of alumni in education sector have maintained weekly or monthly contact with former lecturers and university staff, the vast majority of non-academic alumni have very little contact with Australians in the university.

Alumni maintain contact with Australians in the community-at-large

Even fewer alumni have maintained contact with Australians in the community-at-large. Most alumni have lost contact with Australians in local communities, homestay families and former employers. Many alumni said that they were never in contact with them.

4.4.3 Alumni Involved in Organisational Links with Australian Organisations

Alumni work in Vietnamese organisations with links to Australian organisations

In 2014, about 55% of alumni said their organisation had a professional or business link with one or more Australian organisations. Public sector organisations were more likely than private sector organisations to have links with Australian organisations. About 60% of alumni in education institutions said their organisation had a link with Australian organisations, while 54% of alumni in government organisations said the same. Vietnamese companies were the least likely employers to have maintained links with Australian organisations. About 23% of alumni in Vietnamese companies said their company had a link with Australian organisations.

Alumni involved in their organisation's professional links with Australian organisations

In 2014, about 47% of Vietnamese alumni were involved in a professional or business link with an Australian organisation to some extent – most often only to a small extent. Men and women were just as likely to participate in a professional link between Vietnamese and Australian organisations.

Vietnamese universities and research institutes were almost three times more likely than Vietnamese companies to have links with Australian organisations.

5 Management of the Scholarship Cycle

5.1 Relevance

The Australia Awards Scholarship and their ADS predecessor have gained a solid reputation in Vietnam as prestigious and of high quality and are eagerly sought after. Informal feedback from alumni and applicants indicate the scholarships are attractive and very competitive for a range of reasons – the high, international standards of Australian education generally, the availability of pre-course English language training, the comprehensive package of financial support, and the pastoral care and support provided by Australian universities, especially through the Student Contact Officers (SCOs).

Australia is also seen as a safe and secure living environment, say compared to the US. The relatively short distance of Australia from Vietnam compared to other English language countries also facilitates family visits to scholars on award. The high number of scholarships annually has contributed to their international competitiveness compared to the smaller numbers of scholarships from other countries, although this factor is diminishing with the decrease in number of scholarships.

Australia Awards Scholarships have additional value, as apart from Ford Foundation scholarships which ended several years ago, they are the only scholarships that focus on the provinces and the disadvantaged, especially ethnic minorities and persons with disability. The attention paid to applicants with disability is particularly welcomed by the GoV as indicated by the MOET representative on the JSC and PCC.

In ensuring AAV remain competitive and relevant, the MC responded to or aligned with a number of policy changes / shifts in DFAT and GoV over the life of the contract.

Alignment with Australian sector priorities for Vietnam

The program design sought to achieve greater development impact by the scholarship program with a more targeted approach to fit with the Australia Vietnam Development Cooperation Strategy – '*Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Vietnam 2010-2015*'. This strategy contained three core areas: Human Resource Development, Economic Integration and Environmental Sustainability.

In addition to these three core areas, DFAT and the scholarship program have given priority to three cross-cutting issues: gender equality, disability and human rights.

The three core areas above are very broad, so it could be said that all the scholarships awarded under the AAV program contributed to the core area of Human Resource Development. Scholarships awarded to Australia Awards Scholarships recipients have been classified under 14 priority themes in OASIS. Most of these fields of study can be grouped under the three core areas (see Annex 2).

Alignment with GoV policies

Outcome 2 in the program reflected two GoV strategies¹⁰ to which the AAV program was designed to contribute: i) expanding the proportion of university teachers that have PhD qualifications and ii) expanding the number of TESOL teachers. In relation to the first policy the design posited a 20% target for PhD applications throughout the life of the program. This target was maintained each selection round and altogether 268 PhD awards, just over 20% of applicants, were offered over the program, thus ensuring the relevance of the PhD awards to the GoV's HRD objectives.

As for the second policy to increase TESOL teachers, the selection results show that the AAV program fell short of the original target of 10% set out in the program design, with 114 awards (8.6%) out of a total of 1,322 awards. The biggest shortfall in TESOL awards took place in the 2015 round when only three TESOL award were offered, since this round was considered by the JSC to be a transition to the new AVPHRD program, where TESOL was no longer a target sector.

Implementation of the Australian Government's policies on gender equality, disability and social inclusion

The MC developed a Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy in 2010-2011 Annual Plan which was updated in subsequent Annual Plans to maintain the strategy's relevance. An analysis of the strategy's implementation and selection results can be found in sections 5.4 and 5.5.

Alignment with the Australian Government's policies on alumni

The AAV program in cooperation with Post has implemented the Australia Awards Alumni Network Strategy for Administrators 2013-2015. Almost all the benchmark and good practice activities set out in the strategy have been carried out under AAV's alumni support program (see Section 3.5 for more details). Efforts were also made to strengthen the

¹⁰ Design Document p. 14

Australia Awards network in Vietnam by facilitating three regional consultations with Australia Awards alumni to ascertain their views on the future organisation of the alumni network.

Following the alumni consensus that a national Australia Awards alumni organisation should be established an alumni working group was set up to progress this objective. The development of a new global alumni engagement policy by DFAT in early 2015 which aimed to engage all alumni who have studied at an Australian institution, led to the working group changing direction and opening discussions to join the Vietnam Graduates of Australia Club (VGAC) as a separate 'chapter'. This would enable the Australia Awards to maintain their separate identity and still receive DFAT support through the alumni support program. This strong sense of alumni identity with the scholarship program and the data shown in section 4 of this report on the benefits alumni have derived from their studies in Australia indicates that the scholarship program has also remained very relevant to the alumni beneficiaries.

5.2 Efficiency

Throughout the life of the program activities were delivered on time; application and selection timetables were achieved, including the rapid introduction of OASIS; deadlines for placement were met; and all planned alumni support activities were carried out, including a Vietnam's first national alumni conference. The program operated within the overall budget and with few exceptions within line budgets annually (see Annex 6 Financial Management for further information).

Promotion

Promotion over the period has been marked by continuous improvement to ensure cost effective promotion activities. Various media have been utilized in each selection round, results and costs analysed, assessments made of their respective cost effectiveness, and recommendations made for the following selection round. The print media was finally assessed as not cost effective, compared to commercial online advertising, and was discarded for the 2015 round. A similar assessment comparing the cost effectiveness of Google and Facebook advertising versus commercial website advertising resulted in two initially popular websites, Vietnamnet and VnExpress, being dropped. See Annex 3 for data on cost per eligible application and award from 2011 after the promotion and selection of the former ADS and ALAS were combined.

A key strategy in the AAV program's promotion has been the visits to targeted, disadvantaged provinces, especially those with large concentration of ethnic minorities. The visits which generally included meetings with the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) and public information sessions, altogether covered 26 provinces in five regions. Provincial/regional universities located in these provinces were also targeted.

Some correlation can be seen when applications (and eligible applications) more than doubled after the introduction of visits to the north central coastal provinces. The effectiveness of the visits to targeted provinces can be also demonstrated by the accumulated effect of visits over time. This is illustrated by the data showing that over the 6 selection rounds, 60% more applications and twice the number of awards have been generated from the 26 targeted provinces (1,222 applications and 251 awards) than the 31 provinces (excluding the 6 cities) not targeted (764 applications and 123 awards).

The cost effectiveness of provincial visits can be shown with some validity by taking the expenditure on provincial visits and the total number of applications from all 26 targeted provinces in a particular year. On this basis in comparing the last four rounds, there have been significant decreases both in the cost of provincial visits and provincial visit costs as a

percentage of total promotion costs. At the same time, there has been a continuing small upward trend in the number of applications from all targeted provinces during the same four rounds, despite the decreasing amount of funds spent on visits.

Selection

The OASIS system fundamentally altered the selection processes applied in the first 2010 selection round. Although Canberra did not require adoption of OASIS for the 2011 round, because of the short time before applications opened, the Post and MC decided to adopt the new system forthwith. Transitional arrangements involving both online and hard copy applications were put in place for the 2011 round. Other changes by Post, aimed at reducing the complexity of the design, occurred along with the introduction of OASIS and simplified the application process. OASIS also ended the separate selection and promotion processes for ALAS. This substantially reduced duplication of material resources, human effort and costs.

With a single online application system for all applicants the application and selection processes were streamlined and overall efficiency enhanced. Detailed guidelines on how to use the system were developed by the MC and uploaded on the AAV website. Vietnamese applicants quickly adapted to the new system and very few issues emerged.

Placement and mobilisation

As reported in section 3.3, over the six selection rounds (from 2010 to 2015), 1,519 awardees were successfully placed and mobilized for studies in Australian universities. The number of placements peaked at 331 in 2012 (an increase of over a third from the previous year), as the selection round scheduling was brought forward three months by Canberra, due to the introduction of OASIS, and this led to an overlapping of placements from three rounds. AAV put efficient processes in place to meet the additional workload and to ensure effective placements.

Two policy changes presented challenges for the generally smooth and efficient placement and mobilization processes, which have marked the scholarship program. The first change occurred in 2011 when Pre-Course English (PCE) in Australia was eliminated by Post except for disadvantaged awardees. A major reason for the change was to reduce the substantial costs of PCE. Another reason was to give awardees greater incentive to improve their English during in-country EL training.

However, end of PCE in Australia resulted in many awardees having to change their course preferences and universities. This in turn led to intensive interaction and time consuming negotiations between the MC and universities so as to obtain awardee acceptance by universities, often with reduced English requirements. With the cooperation of the SCOs there were very few instances when acceptance could not be obtained.

The second policy change occurred in 2012, when visa processing for awardees was moved from Hanoi to HCM City. This resulted in an additional step in visa processing with visa lodgements being made at the IOM (later VFS Global) office in Hanoi and this required many additional supporting documents from awardee applicants. The first impact of this change was the delayed visa issue and thus late departure for 13 awardees in January 2013. As a result of extensive consultations between the visa office in HCM City, Post and the MC, agreement was reached in August 2013 streamlining visa issuing procedures. Since then visa processing has been smooth and efficient, with no awardee's departure delayed because of late visa issue.

5.3 Effectiveness

Promotion

The purpose of the promotion campaign has been to raise general awareness of the Australia Awards scholarships in general and specifically to recruit sufficient quality, eligible applicants to reach both annual scholarship targets and individual Profile targets as well as to attract priority category applicants. Scholarship promotion has been made more effective by the introduction of the Australia Awards branding and the eventual elimination of the ALAS as a separate scholarship. The clear and coherent messaging and consistent Australia Awards formats were designed to have greater promotion impact. Over the life of AAV, annual application numbers were maintained at levels that provided the program with sufficient pool of candidates to fill the total available scholarships.

Based on DFAT 2015 Arrival Survey, 98% of alumni respondents said that they used the information (other than PDB) provided by the Australia Awards Vietnam in preparing to come to Australia. Also, 91% found that such information (other than PDB) was essential and very useful in preparing to come to Australia.

Selection

Two unexpected issues arose in the 2014 round relating to selection. One was the sharp increase in ineligible applications to 32% from 25% in 2013, due largely to a narrowing of the eligibility of Profile 1 applicants; the second was a noticeable increase in fraudulent

applications, which was mainly due to applicants not declaring they already had an equivalent second degree. Remedial action was taken by the MC to mitigate against the reoccurrence of these two issues in the 2015 round. This was done mainly by strengthening the messaging on the AAV website on eligibility and DFAT's zero tolerance on fraud. These remedial actions were effective and the ineligibility rate dropped in the 2015 round to a record low of 21% for the Vietnam program, and only one case of fraudulent activity was detected.

English Language Training

At the commencement of the AAV program, ACET was the English language provider for Australia Awards Scholarships with a separate contract with DFAT. However, under the AAV program the MC no longer had a formal monitoring role of the English language provider, unlike its predecessor. In September 2012, RMIT Vietnam won the new contract for English language training (ELT) provision, replacing ACET. ACET continued the ELT program for conditional awardees for the 2011 round, while RMIT commenced the language training for conditional awardees from the 2012 round. At RMIT, the ELT program was delivered at their Saigon South and Hanoi campuses.

One advantage of the change in the ELT provider was the extension of the maximum length of training from 9 months to 12 months. However, the initial training scheduling by RMIT led to a gap of up to 8 months from the end of training to departure for Australia. Following discussions with Post and AAV this gap was subsequently reduced by rescheduling the training and compensated by the introduction of an online, interactive English language program called 'Keep Sharp'.

The ELT program catered for Australia Awards conditional awardees who did not have sufficient IELTS score to meet their selected courses' English language requirements. Awardees were placed in the most appropriate starting level (based on their most recent IELTS results) and progressed through the ELT levels, culminating in an IELTS preparation course.

Over the four-year ELT program, a number of changes were made by RMIT to the policies and procedures to improve the effectiveness and quality of the training program, notably:

- Required completion of Level 7 (ultimate level of the ELT program) to ensure adequate preparation of academic literacy skills, even if awardees achieved a self-funded IELTS test before completion;
- Adjustments to placement in RMIT ELT levels to include other factors than just their most recent IELTS results (including adjusting awardees' levels after a comprehensive diagnostic test in the first week of classes);
- Beginning IELTS test preparation classes earlier in the ELT program, instead of upon completion of Level 7;
- Improved communication of ELT policies and procedures, including the publication of an ELT handbook for each cohort, comprehensive orientation program for each cohort, and other initiatives.

Overall, despite variances in the mean numerical improvement in awardees' IELTS band scores upon completion of the program, from group to group and from year to year, the vast majority of awardees who undertook ELT eventually achieved an IELTS result which met the requirements of their selected university. To date, only two awardees have not met the English language requirements of their university upon completion of the ELT program.

Placement and mobilisation

In 2013, it was decided to assess all conditional awardees at placement. This contributed to a more effective placement process and to lower numbers of variation requests for scholars on award. The new Local Academic Adviser, being an IELTS expert also assisted in strengthening English language training policy, especially for disadvantaged awardees.

A day long Pre-departure Briefing is held before the commencement of each semester for both Australia Awards Scholarships and Endeavour Awards recipients in Hanoi and HCM City at which the DFAT material on study and life in Australia and awardees' obligations is presented. Sessions are also held on reintegration, the alumni support program, gender, HIV/AIDS and personal security. The interactive session with recent alumni is the session most appreciated by the awardees according to their feedback. In the 2015 DFAT Arrival Survey, 91% of alumni respondents said that the AAV pre-departure briefing was very useful / essential in preparing them to come to Australia.

Reintegration and alumni

The six years of the scholarship program have seen the effective consolidation of the Australia Awards Alumni network in terms of organization, direction, participation and branding.

Organisation. The network has evolved from a few segmented, sectoral alumni groups undertaking narrowly-focused activities into four regionally-based, elected core groups, conducting activities with broader appeal and with support from the Australia Awards Alumni program.

Direction. The Australia Awards alumni are moving towards establishing more formal, nationally organized 'chapter' of the Vietnam Graduates of Australia Club (VGAC)

Participation. Participation has broadened to include older alumni, alumni with young children, and alumni from the provinces. This has occurred through organising large, social networking events, such as family barbecues, professional seminars with cross-generational interest, and the Vietnam National Alumni Conference in 2013.

Branding. Branding has been strengthened under the unified Australia Awards brand by the change from a solely ADS alumni network to one encompassing all designated Australia Awards alumni, including AAF, Endeavour and ACIAR.

5.4 Gender Equality

The AAV Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GDSI) Strategy has the following objective:

"Women, men, people from ethnic minorities and people with disability (i) have equitable access to scholarships and new skills and (ii) use their new skills to contribute to gender equality and social inclusion in Vietnam (target of 50% participation by women) and to development in the priority areas."

The GDSI Strategy was developed by the MC's Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser assisted by a local gender adviser and first included in the 2010-2011 Annual Plan. The Strategy contained the Vietnamese policy context for gender equality and a gender analysis including constraints to gender equality and gender gaps in the education sector. The Strategy and its annual updates undertaken in consultation with the MC's Adviser have outlined relevant mainstreaming strategies covering the scholarship cycle. The updates took into account constraints working in the restrictive context of central and provincial governments as well as developments in the AAV program.

Attracting women applicants has not been a promotion issue in the AAV program. Women have almost consistently been in the majority in all Profiles and targeted categories. For the five rounds from 2011 to 2015, a total of 107 women received PhD scholarships, just over half of the total 212 awarded.

Promotion of gender equality including gender studies has generally been linked to the same promotion activities undertaken for other disadvantaged groups. This has occurred with the annual briefing visits by the MC's Adviser around the last three application rounds, AAV visits to targeted provinces, where the provincial Women's Union is invited to PPC meetings or information sessions and in briefings with Central Agencies, including the Vietnam Women's Union. Key agencies dealing in gender issues are sent information relating to female applicants/awardees and gender studies' awards and on scholarship application requirements. The Adviser has also conducted staff training on gender issues.

At the twice-yearly pre-departure briefings, in addition to the special sessions on gender and HIV/AIDS briefing is given on issues that in particular affect female awardees, such as child care facilities and insurance relating to pregnancy. Female alumni are invited to share their experiences at the pre-departure briefings as well as the reintegration workshops ensuring that female perspectives are given.

Women play a prominent role in the alumni network. Two of the four alumni core group coordinators are women and generally comprise most of the participants in alumni professional development and social networking activities are women. Of particular note was the overall very high proportion of women (70%) participating in alumni events in 2015. The annual Family BBQ with strong family themes have been particularly successful in attracting female alumni with young children.

AAV has made considerable efforts to establish and mobilise an 'alumni gender expert group' which refers to alumni who have undertaken gender-related studies or are working on gender issues. Membership of this group has more than doubled to 40 over the past two years. While members of this group have played prominent roles in two alumni seminars relating to gender equality¹¹ efforts to establish a more formal network for gender group or to engage them in consultations on gender policy issues have not been so successful. Apart from the two seminars on gender, another activity to raise awareness of gender equality issues among the alumni community was the photography contest on "Gender Equality through Alumni's Lenses" held in conjunction with the Family BBQ in Hanoi and on 7 March and International Women's Day on 8 March 2015.

5.5 Cross-cutting Issues

Special attention was given to cross-cutting issues of gender equality and disability. Preliminary findings of a regional review of DFAT's disability policy indicated that the Vietnam program was an example of best practice across global Australia Awards Scholarship program.¹²

Key targeted promotion activities have included: i) briefings by the MC's Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser to key agencies, ii) mapping and mailing relevant agencies, iii) briefing sessions with People's Disability Organisations (DPOs); iv) targeted provincial visits, and v) feature articles and success story videos on AAV website, Facebook and YouTube. The MC also arranged and participated in two television shows: one featuring ethnic minority alumni and awardees and the other alumni and awardees with disability¹³.

¹¹ "How equal are we at home and work" in April 2013 and "Leadership Pathways for Australia Awards Female Alumni" in June 2015

¹² Vietnam-Australia Partnership Human Resource Development Final Design Document p. 11

¹³ The Warm Nest program in 2011 and Education Story program in 2013

Equity of access principles and considerations have been implemented to assist disadvantaged applicants and awardees participate equally in the scholarship program. These have included lower application requirements for GPA, IELTS certificates and work experience as well as additional bonus points. Interview panels have been briefed on the sensitivities of inclusive interview processes.

Additional English language support for the disadvantaged has been provided. This involved more flexibility during selection in consideration of disadvantaged applicants with less than the minimum 4.5 IELTS and supplementary English language training by an outside provider for disadvantaged conditional awardees having difficulties with their English language training at RMIT. This supplementary training has proven effective with nine disadvantaged conditional awardees improving their English and gaining acceptance at Australian universities (including three undertaking PCE in Australia).

A key program approach to help ensure equity of access to the scholarship program by the disadvantaged was the development of the Equity of Access Fund. The Fund and beneficiaries of the Fund are outlined in Section 5.6 Innovation. Key statistics on Disadvantaged applications and awards are presented in Annex 5.

The selection results for studies relating to gender equality and disability show that promotion activities have to a large degree been effective. Over the last five rounds 102 applications were received for studies on gender equality issues and 19 awards offered, while 91 applications were received for disability related studies and 36 awards offered.

Challenges were also encountered for persons with disability undertaking English language training at RMIT. Academic support for awardees with disability was provided by RMIT's Disability Unit and AAV provided non-academic support and some initial, additional academic support for two awardees with sight impairment.

The status and condition of individual awardees with disability is monitored by the MC. Awardees with disability are also encouraged to link up with the CBM-Nossal Institute Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development for networking and capacity building purposes.

Only a few awardees with disability have completed their studies to date. The MC has paid particular attention to the reintegration needs of new graduates with disability and they are followed-up when they return to Australia.

5.6 Innovation in Program Management

Innovation in response to policy changes

The development of the reintegration strategy is a good example of innovation in response to policy changes from Canberra. The strategy's development was guided by experience (AAV and other programs), and alumni feedback. Such learning process led to the introduction of an in-Australia series of reintegration workshops in 2013, to the piloting of online workshops for distant small groups of scholars/alumni in Australia and Vietnam.

The Equity of Access Fund is another innovation that filled in the gaps in terms of support for the disadvantaged to participate in the AAS. During its implementation, the Fund has effectively supported the needs of the disadvantaged (a total of 19 supported), especially persons with disability. This was confirmed with the beneficiaries through a survey undertaken by the MC in October 2015.

Innovations initiated by the MC

The MC piloted Google and Facebook advertising to promote the scholarships. The success of this approach (in terms of cost efficiency) led the MC to abandon advertising on some less efficient commercial websites.

The requirement of a research proposal summary from PhD and Masters by research applicants enabled more effective assessments of a candidate's research studies readiness. Another innovation was the introduction of a two-day research design workshop for new conditional research awardees. This prepared them for their Australian research studies.

Another innovation was the English language strategy developed by the MC in cooperation with Post and RMIT Vietnam to provide special English language support for disadvantaged applicants.

Innovative incremental changes

There have been a variety of other incremental innovations that have improved program efficiency and effectiveness. For the last two rounds, the Facebook page has been used as an interactive channel to answer applicants' questions. The placement process was made more efficient by MC's initiative in sending placement schedules with full student details to universities and by updating them about awardees' IELTS test plans.

The participation of the newly-appointed HRD Manager at the workshops in Australia in October 2015 has stimulated additional innovative approaches to strengthen the reintegration process. These approaches include: i) experimenting with facilitation in Vietnamese at the Australia workshops, which facilitated more lively interaction¹⁴, ii) making reintegration support more demand driven to meet individual reintegration needs with follow-up, conducting on-line reintegration workshops and support sessions and iii) identifying potentially active alumni for later follow-up.

An innovative financing arrangement was demonstrated with the short course in Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) for rectors and managers of technical and vocational education colleges, when the GoV and DFAT shared the cost of the course. This arrangement helped to ensure GoV ownership of the course and value for money (See Section 6 for details about the course and its follow-up)

5.7 Sustainability

The sustainability of AAS program benefits is demonstrated by alumni's use of skills and knowledge acquired in their studies. Alumni reported being able to use their soft skills (e.g., time management, work planning and problem solving) immediately upon their return and in virtually all work contexts. They continued to use these skills as their careers developed. However, fewer alumni made use of their technical or subject-matter knowledge than made use of their soft skills. Continuing use of technical knowledge by alumni in the workplace is a good indicator of the sustainability of program benefits.

Sustainability of the use of professional or technical knowledge was a different challenge. The basic strategy for creating the 'right' conditions in participating organisations was achieving a critical mass of alumni in key organisations. But, as a group, scholarships alumni are highly mobile in the employment sector. Significant numbers either changed employers or got promoted to new jobs with existing employers within a few years of returning to Vietnam. The program learned that it was important to foster the 'right' conditions in organisations, but that doing so was a challenge. This lesson affected the design of the next phase of the HRD program.

Sustainability of linkages with Australia is dependent on organisational conditions more than individual contacts. The benefits of linkages are experienced by organisations. The program had planned to carry out a study on linkages in part to define these benefits more

¹⁴ The success of the HRD Manager's role in the Australia workshops and in the online workshop for Perth scholars together with the continuity this provides with the Vietnam workshops suggest that future workshops in Australia might be better conducted by the HRD Manager instead of the International Adviser.

clearly. However, the linkages study was removed from the work plan in the context of budget cutbacks.

5.8 Risk Management

In 2013, the program modified its approach to risk management. The Risk Management Matrix (RMM) in the 2008 *Program Design Document* and the 2012 *M&E Strategy and Plan* identified 36 risks to various processes and components of the program. Despite the large number of risks identified in these documents, the program was faced with relatively few uncertainties, especially in the most critical areas. The MC focused on only the high-level risks in its annual plans and reports.

Given this, the program made three changes to further integrate risk management into its M&E approach. First, it reduced the number of risks in the RMM significantly and focused on fewer critical risks. Second, it rated *residual risk* not just *initial risk* so that DFAT and other parties responsible for risk management could understand the level of risk they still faced after the implementation of the risk response actions. Third, it identified the particular outputs and outcomes in the theory of change that were affected by each risk identified in the RMM.

In the updated RMM in the 2015 Annual Report, there were no high residual risks and two medium Likelihood residual risks out of a total of ten Likelihood risks. The two remaining medium Likelihood risks were:

1. Development Capacity. *There is a risk that that cultural, institutional and personal influences impede the ability of men and women to equally participate in and benefit from the scholarship program.*

2. Institutional Capacity. *There is a risk that conditions in employer organisations, including weak HR capacity, inhibit alumni's reintegration in the workplace and constrain their use of knowledge and skills acquired from their study in Australia.*

A third risk that *applicants provide information that is false, inaccurate, or otherwise insufficient, which decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of application and selection process* was raised from very low to medium in the 2014 Annual Report, due to the eleven cases of suspected fraud detected during the application and selection process in the 2014 round. All the cases were related to false or inaccurate documentation, in particular not disclosing that they already had a Masters degree and applying for a second one.

However, due largely to the risk response taken by the program for the 2015 round in strengthening information about fraud on the AAV website and the country profile and checking the validity of applicants' information with employers, only one case of fraudulent documentation was detected. Thus the Likelihood of this risk has been reduced to Low in the updated RMM.

Prior to 2014, only four cases of fraud were detected, two cases involving false information in the application, one case of dishonesty while undertaking English language training in Vietnam, and one case involving an attempted bribe of a staff member on behalf of a relative who was an applicant. In the latter case, the Vietnamese police were notified. In 2013, the program developed "Procedures for Risk Management of Fraud in the Scholarship Selection Processes" to provide guidance in mitigating against fraud.

Although the RMM was substantially altered in 2013, one notable risk that has continued over the program has been 'weak HRD capacity and/or lack of HRD policies in targeted agencies', which is reflected in Likelihood risk 2 above. Other high risks have been mitigated over the last few years, such as: (i) low level of applications from targeted groups,

(ii) low response rates for evaluations of returned graduates, and (iii) low attendance rates at reintegration workshops.

6 Management of Ad Hoc Activities

6.1 Short Courses

Short courses other than in the Australia Awards Fellowship context were not part of the original AAV program design. However, in FY 2011/2012 Post organised a pilot short two week course on human resource development in Australia for 19 PPI coordinators funded by DFAT. In mid-2014, DFAT Post responded positively to a request from the General Department of Vocational Training (GDVT) for a short course in management and leadership in Australia for 47 rectors and managers of high-performing technical and vocational education colleges. A key component of the course was the development of 'return to work plans'. This was a co-financing arrangement with the costs roughly equally shared between the GoV and DFAT and can be seen as innovative.

One issue identified by participants was the limited two weeks course duration considering the large amount of content and activities in the course design. The recommendation was that future courses should consider alternative approaches to facilitate more in-depth learning, e.g. streamlining course content to address the most pressing issues.

As proposed by the MC, a follow-up assessment of the effectiveness of the course and the workplans including workshops for participants and site visits took place in July 2015. Only half of the participants submitted their workplan progress reports as required for the workshops. Nevertheless, the consultant was able to observe a change of mindset and work practices as a result of the course and the workplans, such as expanded vision, improved self-discipline, better time management, enhanced focus on innovation and the need for greater pro-activity.

6.2 Australia Awards Fellowships

The only form of short-term training included in the program design involved the Australia Awards Fellowships (AAF). The MC's role was to promote the AAF among relevant target groups and to facilitate liaison between Vietnamese agencies interested in AAFs and potential partners in Australia, such as Central Agencies (CAs), universities and Provincial Peoples' Committees (PPCs). The MC's efforts were more successful in facilitating links between CAs and Australian universities. The MC has facilitated five such partnerships for training programs.

The MC worked with the Australian National University (ANU) to facilitate an 8 week course on university leadership involving three AAV targeted provincial/regional universities but ANU decided not to make the submission, partly out of concern for the low AAF trainer salary levels. There has been little interest in AAFs by PPCs despite the AAF program being promoted by the MC at PPC briefings. The MC has received no formal reports on the impact of these training courses.

7 Collaboration with Key Partners

7.1 Hanoi DFAT

The MC's key relationship has been with Hanoi DFAT. The relationship has been one of partnership and close and effective collaboration. The effectiveness of the partnership was particularly evident in relation to two critical events during program implementation. The first event was the decision by Hanoi DFAT and the MC to implement the OASIS application system for the 2011 round, even though time was very short before applications opened, and Canberra did not require implementation that round. To ensure adequate preparations there was constant dialogue between the two offices and a sharing of drafting tasks. The second event was the organization of the Vietnam National Alumni Conference, when frequent consultation between the two offices ensured that preparations for the conference were thorough and that arrangements on the day went smoothly and efficiently.

The past two years have seen increasingly close collaboration between the program and the Department of Education at Post. This has occurred in a number of ways including: participation of Endeavour awardees in the Pre-departure Briefings, attendance of Endeavour awards alumni in reintegration workshops/ welcome back ceremonies and in a number of DFAT funded alumni activities, including the Vietnam National Alumni Conference 2013; collaboration in respect of DFAT and Endeavour alumni attending the Mobility Forum, and collaboration on workshops/presentations by visiting Australian academics.

7.2 Government of Vietnam

MOET's involvement with the AAV program has been at a very professional level as a member of both the PCC and the JSC. The key MOET representative, Director General of the Vietnam International Education Development (VIED), has taken an active role in both committees. The JSC meets twice, firstly to short-list candidates for interview and secondly, to decide on conditional awards. The PCC meets once a year after the second JSC meeting, reviews selection results and considers any significant policy matters. No contentious issues arose on either committee during the course of the program. If any substantive issues emerged between JSC and PCC meetings, the VIED Director General was consulted.

Both the PCC and JSC meetings provided the opportunity for MOET and Hanoi DFAT to share information and exchange views on policy developments and training priorities. Very useful briefings were provided on the GoV's scholarship program and other donors' programs by the MOET representative, who also acknowledged the useful lessons learnt from AAV program.

The MC's relationship with VIED Director General has been a closely collaborative one, cemented by a long professional and personal relationship by the Team Leader with the VIED incumbent for the first five years of the program.

7.3 English Language Providers

The MC established effective, cooperative relations with ACET and its successor provider, RMIT Vietnam. AAV and RMIT Vietnam collaborated closely to ensure the most effective ELT program for the Australia Awards Scholarship awardees. This collaboration included the development of annual ELT plans to improve training and course timeframe options to enable awardees with different English levels to absorb new skills and improve their English. This was done in the context of the tight schedule for placement and mobilisation

at Australian universities. Both parties maintained regular communication to update the academic performance of awardees during their ELT program and to tailor supporting interventions if required. In cases of a welfare incident (an awardee has unexpected pregnancy, family commitment or health issues), that is detected by RMIT or AAV, and which could affect significantly an awardee's progress, the incident was reported to the other party in a timely manner.

The strong, effective collaboration between RMIT Vietnam and AAV on the ELT program provided an image of a comprehensive Australia Awards Scholarship program with coherent strategies and policies that foster awardees' overall achievements, rather than separate activities carried out by two independent contractors.

7.4 Central Agencies

As has been outlined in the report, the nature of the relationship with the CAs changed with the introduction of OASIS. The close working relationship established in the first year with the CAs, especially the PPI coordinators and personnel officers, changed with the end of the PPI program. Henceforth, relations were maintained with the CA coordinators primarily to promote the scholarships. Meetings with most CA personnel officers took place on an annual basis only.

7.5 Provincial People's Committees

The MCs visits to targeted provinces depended on the cooperation of the PPCs. Normally meetings were held at the Vice Chairperson level at the first and/or second visits or when a new Vice Chairperson was appointed. The PPCs usually appointed either the Department of Education and Training (DOET) or the Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) to be the responsible agency for the visits.

7.6 Universities

Visits have also been welcomed at provincial/regional universities as they see the scholarships program as an opportunity to raise the academic qualifications of their staff.

8 Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1 M&E Approach

The program emphasised M&E during the 6-year phase. The M&E approach involved the use of a theory of change for predicting and measuring results; the preparation of annual M&E plans and reports; the strategic use of M&E inputs for learning and continuous improvement; and the implementation of operational reviews, thematic studies, cluster studies, and tracer studies to measure effectiveness, efficiency and impact. In the case of tracer studies, the program followed the methodology of the global tracer study with various improvements to the questions asked. There is still room for other improvements, for example, to generate better data about the promotion of gender equality and the value of linkages with Australia. These studies have been used as evidence in this report.

The main lesson from the M&E approach is that strategic thinking and long-term planning in the M&E function can increase the utility of the evaluation findings and evidence produced for decision makers.

Theory of Change approach

M&E involved the use of a theory of change/logic model for predicting cause-and-effect in the program, and for measuring results. This approach, which involves developing short-term and longer-term results statements, performance indicators and targets, is used by most donor agencies including DFAT.

During the phase, the program improved its ability to predict and measure results for alumni and their organisations. According to its 2010 theory of change, the scholarships program would achieve these outcomes:

- Alumni succeed in study, return to Vietnam, and either return to their organisations or find other relevant employment;
- Alumni return with and maintain positive perceptions of Australia;
- Alumni establish links with Australians and other alumni;
- Alumni are able to apply skills and knowledge (including soft skills) in their work and daily life;
- Alumni help to improve the performance of their respective organisations;
- Alumni make contributions to Vietnamese development in their respective areas of expertise; and
- Selected alumni contributions and improved organisational performance support poverty reduction and economic growth in Vietnam

The program implemented various M&E activities in 2012-2014 which suggested that it may not be reasonable to expect the scholarships program to achieve all of seven outcomes. AAV has invested directly in some outcomes, but only indirectly in the others. In 2014, the program modified its theory of change to better distinguish between its direct and indirect influence on the achievement of stated outcomes.

Through M&E activities, particularly cluster studies and the study of lessons learnt, DFAT determined that to achieve an impact on development, the scholarships program would need to integrate with other elements of the HRD delivery strategy or country program. The 2011 *Mid-term Review of the ASDIV Program* made recommendations along these lines. This learning is reflected in the design of the new HRD program.

M&E Planning and Reporting

The M&E approach also involved the preparation of annual M&E plans and reports. During the phase, the program improved its ability to predict results and provide analytical reports on results. This is reflected in the quality of the results data as well as the way that new M&E activities were introduced. For example, the 2013 study of lessons learnt stemmed from the results of earlier cluster studies scrutinising the impact of alumni on their organisations.

M&E Inputs

The M&E approach also involved the use of an International M&E Adviser's inputs. While the level of effort changed each year, the M&E Adviser carried out about 4 months of work on average each year. These were sufficient days for the M&E Adviser given the use of M&E inputs for studies and reviews more than capacity building. During the phase, the Program improved the use of these inputs to result in better analysis for continuous improvement in the program. As a learning agenda focused on HRD and OD priorities emerged in the program, the MC was able to use the M&E inputs more strategically while DFAT was able to achieve better value-for-money in the M&E resources. For example, DFAT carried out the initial phase of the study on conditions and practices in organisations

that affect the use of skills and knowledge by alumni. The CPO is of greater value to DFAT and the HRD program than a cluster study that DFAT considered but opted not to undertake with limited M&E resources.

The Gender Adviser also provided inputs to an assortment of M&E activities. In addition to reviewing draft M&E reports and tasking notes, the Gender Adviser reviewed the instrumentation used in the 2014 tracer study and the SGS review. In the former instance, all but two of the Gender Adviser's suggestions for improvements to the survey instrument in the tracer study were incorporated into the instrument. The two suggestions for changes to the survey instrument that were not acted upon were related to questions about the impact of the scholarship at the household level, which is beyond the expected outcomes and the program's M&E framework. The M&E Adviser also liaised closely with the gender consultants who prepared a study on gender & HRD issues.

Measurement Activities

The M&E Adviser implemented a number of measurement activities each year:

Longitudinal Case Histories (2010-2014)

Alumni Tracer Study (2011)

Impact Study of Scholarship Program on Central Government Agencies (2012)

Cluster Study On Alumni Contribution to Promoting English Language Training (2012)

Cluster Study On Alumni Contribution to Gender Equality in Vietnam (2012)

Lessons Learnt in the Scholarships Program in Vietnam (2013)

Cluster Study on Alumni Contribution to Education Management in Vietnam (2013)

Cluster Study on Alumni Contribution to Environmental Sustainability in Vietnam (2013)

Operational Review of Alumni Small Grant Scheme (2014)

Alumni Tracer Study (2014)

Review of the Reintegration Strategy of AAV (2014)

Special Study of the Conditions and Practices in Organisations affecting the Application of Alumni's Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace in Vietnam (2015)

As suggested, the M&E approach evolved during the phase to result in better analysis for continuous improvement. For example, the program adopted a new approach in its tracer studies and longitudinal case histories in order to understand the impact trajectory of the scholarships program. The program designed a special study on the conditions and practices in organisations affecting the use of alumni knowledge and skills based on data from the alumni tracer surveys, which showed a gap between the number of alumni who acquired skills and the number who utilised these skills in the work place.

9 Summary of Conclusions, Lessons Learnt, Recommendations

Program delivery

A prominent feature of the AAV program delivery has been the MC's ability to respond quickly and efficiently to changes initiated by Canberra and Post and to trial and adapt to new delivery modalities. The most significant change was the introduction of OASIS, which

had profound implications on the selection process and on promotion. OASIS and related changes stemming from the complexity of the design led to fundamental changes to the delivery modalities and even the design itself.

The most significant change was the discontinuation of the PPI program which led to a substantial dilution of the institutional capacity building objective of the PPI program. This was acknowledged in the Mid-Term Review and resulted in recommendations for a HRD support program involving multiple HRD interventions. These recommendations were ultimately encapsulated in AAV's successor AVPHRD program design.

Another major change was the amalgamation of the 5 Profiles into 3 Profiles and the rationalisation of the levels of study. These changes maintained the relevance of the program's original targeting and at the same time streamlined the application and selection process.

Experience with the AAV program has shown that program designs should be flexible and be able to respond to changing policies or circumstances.

There are benefits from consulting with other scholarship programs to learn from their experience in introducing new delivery modalities.

A key lesson learnt was the close, cooperative partnership established between the MC and Post which enabled quick adaption to the program changes and facilitated the effective implementation of the AAV program.

Promotion

The promotion strategy was successful in disseminating awareness about the scholarship program and generating sufficient high quality applicants to meet the annual award targets, and individual Profile targets and in attracting priority category applicants. The only exception was the difficulty in reaching the original Profile 2 40% target because of structural changes in Profile 2 eligibility criteria.

A key lesson was the innovative use of online communication channels such as Google and Facebook which proved to be cost effective in bringing readers and potential applicants to the AAV website. Both these channels were more cost effective than commercial news websites. Hard copy newspapers were found to be no longer effective vehicles for scholarship promotion in Vietnam.

Recommendation: Priority should be given to both paid and non-paid Google and Facebook channels in promoting the scholarships through the mass media.

Over the six selection rounds there were 60% more applications received from visited targeted provinces than from provinces not visited with double the number of scholarships awarded to the targeted provinces. This shows the overall effectiveness of targeted provincial visits. It is important that initial meetings with the PCC at Vice Chairperson level should be held to enhance gain PPC support for the program. DOET and/or DOHA should be engaged in the visits.

Recommendation: Visits to targeted, disadvantaged provinces should continue as a means of attracting the rural disadvantaged and ethnic minorities to submit applications and the PCCs should be engaged at the Vice Chairperson level with DOET and/or DOHA involvement.

Selection

The introduction of online applications through OASIS led to a more efficient application and selection process and Vietnamese applicants quickly adapted to the new system

The eventual demise of the ALAS in 2013 and the introduction of the common Australia Awards brand were very conducive to a more streamlined, less labour-intensive selection process as well as a more coherent and effective communication strategy

Interviewing all short-listed candidates has been a key lesson in scholarship selection bringing greater transparency, objectivity and fairness to the selection process.

Three-person interview panels consisting of an expatriate MC consultant, a DFAT officer and an alumni representative have been effective and gave continuity and consistency to the interview process over successive rounds.

Reintegration and alumni

An innovative reintegration strategy was developed in consultation with DFAT Hanoi and the Indonesian scholarship program and the strategy has been continuously adapted and improved in light of implementation experience and participants' survey results.

Through innovative practices the attendance rates at the workshops in Australia and in Vietnam have been increased significantly in 2015 to 86.1% and 61.3% respectively from initial low rates of 50% and 44.4%.

A key lesson in the strategy's implementation is that there is no easy way to obtain effective involvement of supervisors/employers in the reintegration process in a situation where the scholarship program exerts little or no leverage over supervisors/employers. Ensuring the returning graduate develop and implement their ReAPs also remains a significant challenge.

An effective reintegration program requires sufficient staff resources, as intensive follow-up is required for workshop invitations, submission of ReAPs, assisting individual alumni having reintegration difficulties, and liaison with supervisors.

Conducting online reintegration workshops is a cost effective way of reaching participants in distant locations and increasing workshop participation.

Recommendation: There should a comprehensive review of the reintegration strategy to ensure its maximum effectiveness.

The alumni network has been consolidated in terms of organization, direction, participation and branding.

A key lesson behind AAV's successful alumni support program has been that the professional development and social networking activities need to be relevant to the needs of the Australia Awards alumni both in terms of their content and timing. Activities which enhance alumni soft skills have proven to be popular and also meet program objectives.

Recommendation: The overall success of the Vietnam National Alumni Conference in December 2013 suggests that alumni conferences should be a regular feature of the alumni support program focusing on a specific theme and be held once every two years.

Recommendation: As Family BBQs have shown to be an effective way to broaden participation by alumni, especially alumni with young families, and to reinforce positive attitudes about Australia, they should be held annually, alternating between Hanoi and HCM City.

Recommendation: Seminars, training and reintegration workshops conducted on weekends, especially Saturday mornings, should continue as this has proven to be the most convenient time to maximise alumni/scholars participation.

Recommendation: Special facilities for children at events should be provided where feasible to encourage alumni with young families to attend.

Recommendation: Given the effectiveness of cost sharing at the Family BBQ and training workshops in the south, further exploration should be made of the feasibility of expanding the cost sharing approach with alumni.

Recommendation: The widely used access to academic databases is an important professional development activity and should continue.

While the activation of the alumni gender group has been challenging, the keen interest shown by alumni in seminars on topical subjects such as green growth and gender equality and the increasing alumni seniority suggest there is scope to promote the formation of alumni sector groups, which would enhance alumni networking and provide opportunities for advocacy on sector and bilateral issues.

Recommendation: Alumni sector specialist groups should be promoted to strengthen alumni networking and to act as advocacy groups on Vietnamese Government policy and Australia-Vietnam bilateral issues.

The Small Grant Scheme has been popular with alumni and has been an effective modality for alumni to enhance their research skills and transfer their knowledge and skills to others, through conference presentations, research and conducting training courses and workshops. The Scheme has also contributed to alumni strengthening their links with Australia. The amended guidelines resulted in more speedy and effective processing and approvals. Small grants allowed the program to extend its intervention into the post-return period and affect the impact trajectory of the investment in scholarships.

Recommendation: The next round of the Small Grant Scheme should be implemented as soon as possible under the new AVPHRD program using the revised guidelines.

Gender and Social Inclusion

The sharp increase in applications from and awards for persons with disability has been a key program achievement and the AAV' program has been regarded as best practice on disability by DFAT.

A comprehensive Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy and a focused promotion campaign targeting persons with disability and disability studies involving the MC's Gender and Social Inclusion Adviser have comprised a key lesson for implementing DFAT's policies on disability.

Collaborative relationships between the MC's Gender and Social Inclusion Advisor, gender and disability focal points at Post and the Regional Social Development Specialist, South East Asia Hub have contributed to more effective integration of gender, disability and social inclusion into mainstream planning and activities.

The innovative Equity of Access Fund has been very useful in providing support to persons with disability, although few disadvantaged rural applicants have sought support from the Fund.

Recommendation: Flexibility in terms of GPA, IELTS scores, work experience and work location should continue to be given for persons with disability in the selection process.

Recommendation: Additional English Language training support for disadvantaged conditional awardees and access to PCE in Australia has allowed more disadvantaged applicants to benefit from the scholarship program and this should continue.

The seminar on the DFAT study titled 'Strategies for Promoting Leadership Pathways for Female Australia Awards Alumni in Vietnam' showed the keen interest of alumni women in this subject and resulted in useful recommendations.

Recommendation: Development of future gender strategies and activities should consider the findings, in particular the discussion on enablers and barriers to women's career progression and leadership aspirations, in the 2015 DFAT study and seminar on 'Leadership Pathways for Female Alumni study'.

Recommendation: Due attention should be made by Post and MC to ensure gender-responsive M&E work.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The program introduced a number of innovative approaches in the M&E function in the scholarships program. Some key innovations included:

The program carried out a study of the lessons learnt in the scholarships program in Vietnam over a 10-year period from 2003 to 2012. DFAT used these lessons as it prepared the design of its HRD delivery strategy for Vietnam. The most significant lesson focused on the relationship between the type of intervention and the type of result achieved. The study concluded that, if the expectation was for change at the organisational level (or indeed at the community or sector level), then the program needed to include activities that were directly aimed at these results.

The program introduced modifications to risk management focusing on fewer risks in the Risk Management Matrix, and making it more of a strategic management tool; it rated residual risk, as opposed to initial risk, assuming the effectiveness of its risk response;

The program developed an analytical model and assessment instrument for identifying the conditions in organisations affecting the use of employees' skills and knowledge. The analytical model incorporated four organisational functions: (1) Strategic leadership; (2) Human resources management; (3) Work management; and (4) Work climate. It identified 12 areas within these functions in which conditions and practices exist. Conditions are the circumstances that exist within the organisation that affect knowledge and skills use.

The program made a number of innovations to the alumni tracer study approach. Working from the DFAT-issued guidelines for tracer surveys, the program made changes to the questionnaire and the analytical approach. Some questions were removed or modified based on prior experience and the availability of data.

The program found that the questions about the promotion of gender equality were limited in terms of what they could tell about the changes that alumni were making in their organisations.

Recommendation: The alumni tracer should collect information on the improvements made that stem from the promotion of gender equality.

In terms of the analysis of survey data once collected, the program found that the cohort approach was useful in helping to understand the impact trajectory of the scholarship experience. Looking at results through the lens of the employment sector was key in understanding a lot of the results for alumni, perhaps more so than the cohort they were in or their gender.

Annex 4 lists down a number lessons learnt about the program that M&E function produced.

** Annexes available upon request*

