

DFAT Management Response to The Independent Evaluation for the Australia – World Bank Strategic Partnership (ABP2)

February 2026

The Australia – World Bank Strategic Partnership, phase 2 (ABP2) is a 9 year program (2017-2026) valued at AUD50 million. It supports Viet Nam’s development agenda in key areas by sharing knowledge and strengthening policies and programs for selected development priorities, with a particular focus on gender equality. The Program was extended 3 times during implementation. Building on earlier phases of collaboration, the third extension of the Program, ABP2+, commenced in July 2023 with 6 thematic pillars: (1) Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment, (2) Climate-Resilient Development in the Mekong Delta, (3) Inclusive Development, (4) Economic Management and Growth, (5) Digital Transformation, and (6) Low-Carbon Infrastructure Development.

To ensure accountability and learning, ABP2 has undergone two independent evaluations - a Mid-Term Review (2019) and a Qualitative Impact Evaluation (2021). A third independent evaluation, conducted between July and October 2025, assessed ABP2+ performance during the period from July 2023 to mid-2025. While the World Bank led all evaluations, DFAT has engaged in various ways including shaping the terms of reference, nominating evaluation team members, engaging with the evaluation mission, and verifying and finalizing the reports.

This evaluation assessed performance against key criteria—relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of gender equality and inclusion—and summarized achievements, challenges, and insights under each thematic pillar. Using a qualitative approach combining stakeholder interviews, document review, and 6 in-depth case studies (one per pillar), it illustrates how ABP2+ technical assistance supported Viet Nam’s reforms, World Bank operations and Australia’s objectives. The report also provides recommendations to inform the design and resourcing of a potential next phase, ABP3.

Summary of Management Response

The evaluation found the investment performed strongly across all criteria, confirming that the partnership model delivers high-impact, mutually beneficial support for Viet Nam’s development. It highlighted 3 areas for enhancing impact in a future phase.

DFAT and the World Bank concur with these findings, and the responses below were developed in consultation with the World Bank. Some actions are being incorporated into the design of ABP3.

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Individual management response to the recommendations

Recommendations	Response	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1: Greater alignment on the relevance of activities:</p> <p>a) Streamline the thematic structure in the subsequent phase with reduced and consolidated pillars to avoid dispersing resources across too many themes.</p> <p>b) Strengthen joint prioritisation and feasibility assessment at concept note stage</p>	Agree	<p>DFAT is working closely with the World Bank to finalize the thematic pillars for the ABP3 design. The revised pillars will directly target areas that advance Australia's strategic interests and values outlined in the Australia-Vietnam Development Partnership Plan (DPP), while also addressing World Bank and GoVis priorities.</p> <p>DFAT and the World Bank will improve collaboration in the ABP3 to maximise the partnership's impact. Governance arrangements will be refined to enable joint prioritisation and feasibility assessment at concept note stage. Both parties will agree on a partnership document that sets out guiding principles, outlining principles, ways of working, approval processes and key decision points.</p>	During ABP3 Design Jan – Apr 26
<p>Recommendation 2: Ensure adequate resourcing for any subsequent phase, including required staffing capacity.</p> <p>a) Maintain flexible trust-fund resources.</p> <p>b) Sustain robust national and international expertise within the Bank through close collaboration with Australian counterparts.</p> <p>c) Maintain sufficient human resource to match to the scale of ambition.</p>	Agree	<p>DFAT will work closely with the World Bank to shape funding allocations, define priority areas, and establish effective ways of working that leverage Australia's expertise, ensuring Phase 3 delivers maximum impact.</p> <p>The World Bank is committed to maintaining a robust team structure and strengthening collaboration with Australian team and experts during ABP3.</p>	During ABP3 Design and Agreement negotiation Jan – May 2026

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<p>Recommendation 3: Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) to better demonstrate outcomes and support adaptive management</p> <p>a) Adopt a harmonised results framework across pillars, with a refreshed indicator set reviewed at least annually.</p> <p>b) Introduce common reporting standards and schedules for pillar-level reviews</p> <p>c) Systematically capture qualitative contribution evidence</p> <p>d) Strengthen cross-theme learning</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT will engage with the World Bank to establish a practical MEL framework for Phase 3, setting clear reporting standards and an annual review process. This framework will standardise data collection and reporting, enabling accurate measurement of outputs and outcomes to inform management decisions. The framework will be reviewed and updated throughout the 5-year implementation period in close collaboration with DFAT.</p> <p>DFAT and the World Bank will ensure integration of GEDSI and other cross-cutting issues across all pillars and support cross-theme learning.</p>	<p>During ABP3 Design Jan - Apr 2026</p>