

Six Year Evaluation of Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development - Management Response

Summary

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) welcomes this evaluation and agrees with the overall conclusion of that the Pacific Women Shaping Development (*Pacific Women*) program "has broadened the reach of the Australian aid program to vulnerable women and girls and is supporting key civil society and women's organisations in the Pacific. The long-term nature of funding has raised public awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment; and the program is an asset to Australia's partnership with Pacific governments. The work should be continued and further developed going forward".

However, the operating context for advancing gender equality in the Pacific has changed since the evaluation was undertaken in late 2019. In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic and has subsequently had a significant and disproportionate health, economic and social impact on women and girls, deepening already high levels of inequality in the region. This is recognised in Australia's new development policy, [Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response](#) which outlines a strong focus on supporting women and girls' health, safety, economic security and leadership over the next two years.

DFAT has commenced the design for a new gender equality program that will be the successor to *Pacific Women*. The design team has read the evaluation and is now looking at how Australian support can best respond to emerging needs created by the pandemic, in line with *Partnerships for Recovery*, while also recognising and responding to longer-term challenges such as unequal gender norms. The new program will build on the strong foundations of *Pacific Women*, including its early steps to respond to COVID-19, and will seek to further strengthen Australia's partnerships with regional and local organisations.

DFAT has agreed in full to seven out of 10 recommendations and agreed in part to the remaining three. These last three recommendations require further consideration as part of the new program design.

Individual management response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation I: <i>The Australian support for women’s empowerment and gender equality, particularly those activities implemented through Pacific organisations, should be maintained.</i></p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Agree that Australia’s support for women’s empowerment and gender equality should be maintained, and where possible this will include activities implemented through Pacific organisations. The intent of the new design is to continue delivery of essential services for women and girls. However, the design will also need to examine whether existing activities remain relevant to the changed regional context, and how Australian support will be delivered through global, regional and bilateral programs.</p>	<p>To be pursued through the design process.</p>	<p>By February 2021</p>
<p>Recommendation II: <i>Redesign Australia’s support for women’s empowerment and gender equality in the Pacific, making use of a co-design process that identifies and addresses the interests and objectives of the Australian Government and National governments and women’s organisations in the Pacific.</i></p>	<p>Agree</p>		<p>To be pursued through the design process</p>	<p>By February 2021</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation III: <i>Australia's future support to gender equality and women's empowerment in the Pacific should continue to include a comprehensive approach including women's leadership, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and increasing agency as outcomes.</i></p>	Agree	Agree, noting that the new program will be aligned to Partnerships for Recovery and also cover women and girls health.	To be pursued through the design process	By February 2021
<p>Recommendation IV: <i>The ongoing program of support should continue to support local organisations providing holistic care for survivors of violence; ramp up efforts to address disability issues and maintain attention to violence prevention.</i></p>	Agree		To be pursued through the design process	By February 2021
<p>Recommendation V: <i>The ongoing program of support should build on the evidence base of promising practices in women's economic empowerment and leadership, through sharing of evidence and further development of these approaches.</i></p>	Agree		To be pursued through the design process	By February 2021

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation VI: <i>Pacific Women’s convening role in countries with national governments, donors, civil society organisation and donor programs should be developed further. Work should be undertaken to ensure that core program lessons are integrated into DFAT Pacific bilateral programs and are positioned to influence the work of other donors in-country.</i></p>	Agree		To be pursued through the design process	By February 2021
<p>Recommendation VII: <i>The redevelopment of the modality for future support should give explicit attention to the mutual and different interests and objectives of Australia and other stakeholders. The systems and procedures underpinning any future support should be transparent and well communicated to all stakeholders.</i></p>	Agree		To be pursued through the design process	By February 2021
<p>Recommendation VIII: <i>Strengthen the strategic leadership of the program by transitioning program management and oversight from DFAT in Canberra to the Pacific Regional office in Fiji.</i></p>	Agree		This has been completed.	Completed in May 2020.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation IX: <i>Capacity building work should be strengthened and extended during the last phase of the program and in any future program support, with a view to better enabling DFT Posts, Pacific Women partners and government departments to both understand and address the challenges for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Pacific.</i></p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>This recommendation is being examined through the design process, and may be applied differently to bilateral and regional elements of Australia’s support.</p>	<p>To be pursued through the design process</p>	<p>By February 2021</p>
<p>Recommendation X: <i>The Pacific Women Advisory Board and leaders of Pacific women’s organisations including faith-based organisations, should provide strategic oversight for the proposed redesign process.</i></p> <p><i>The roles for these leaders within any future program of support should be explicitly identified in the new design.</i></p> <p><i>In line with further development of the current capacity building strategy, future programming should continue to focus on building the capacity of Pacific women leaders at multiple levels, in government, community and the private sector.</i></p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Agree that the role for an Advisory Board and Pacific leaders should be identified in the new design. The Pacific Women Advisory Board is providing strategic advice throughout the design. Programming to build the capacity of Pacific women leaders will be considered through the design process.</p>	<p>To be pursued through the design process</p>	<p>By February 2021</p>