

HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP



SUBMISSION TO INFORM AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

February 2020

SUMMARY

Australia's role in humanitarian response in the Indo-Pacific region, and globally, is evolving. This review provides an opportunity to reflect on Australia's existing humanitarian aid and to leverage learning to strengthen future effectiveness.

ABOUT HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

Humanitarian Advisory Group is an ethically driven business that combines the passion of humanitarians with the agility and innovation of entrepreneurship. Over the past eight years, we have brought fresh thinking, research and new evidence to the humanitarian sector, seeking to elevate the experience and perspectives of humanitarian action in the Indo-Pacific region to the global level.

LEVERAGING EVIDENCE, LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE TO ENHANCE AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN AID

Our strategic research program, *Humanitarian Horizons 2018-2021*, produces evidence to support more effective humanitarian action. We have a strong understanding of current Australian humanitarian programming and policy, as evidenced by our provision of technical support to DFAT, and leadership of multiple design and evaluation processes for Australia's humanitarian programs.¹ Some of the common issues and themes that have emerged from our work are outlined in this submission.



RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Australia has a strong focus on supporting nationally led disaster response in our region.² Our independent research through *Humanitarian Horizons 2018-2021*, as well as our evaluations of Australia humanitarian aid, show that relationships and partnerships between international and national actors are vital. Our *100 Days Practice Paper Series* on national leadership in the Rohingya crisis and the Sulawesi earthquake responses, and the *Localisation of Humanitarian Action in the Pacific* research stream, demonstrate that strong relationships support effective national leadership.³ They help international actors to maximise the quality and timeliness of localised responses. Lack of strong relationships in advance of a crisis can make constructive discussions about complementarity and coordination processes more difficult, reducing the quality of the response. Our four localisation country baselines produced with the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) show that although there has been

some progress on developing equitable partnerships between national and international actors in the Pacific, national actors perceive room for improvement to support more effective and efficient response.⁴ This is supported by evidence outlined in the submission by the Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University on the importance of effective relationships in determining the success of not only development and humanitarian interventions, but broader approaches to public diplomacy and international cooperation.

CONSIDERATION 1

The Australian Government should continue its focus on supporting national leadership in humanitarian action through strengthening relationships and partnerships with national humanitarian actors in the Indo-Pacific.



INVESTMENT IN MULTI-YEAR FUNDING IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING AND GRAND BARGAIN FUNDING COMMITMENTS

Humanitarian Advisory Group's evaluations of Australia's humanitarian programming in Myanmar and the Syria package demonstrate the benefits of investing in multi-year funding for protracted crises. In the multi-year funding package for the Syria crisis, for example, efficiency gains included greater value for money through reduced time investment for partner contracting and proposal development, improved ability to negotiate longer-term contracts, and reduced time in obtaining annual government approvals. Effectiveness gains included better needs assessments, planning and learning across multiple years.⁵ This learning has been subsequently applied in the DFAT program designs for Syria and the Bangladesh-Myanmar humanitarian program.

Australia, as a signatory to the Grand Bargain, has committed to providing 25 per cent of its humanitarian funding to local

and national actors. However, evaluations of Australia's recent responses, such as the mid-term review of the Cyclone Gita response in Tonga, as well as Australia's self-reporting on the Grand Bargain, demonstrate that this funding is difficult to track in practice, in particular when provided through intermediaries.⁶ Australia can further support the implementation of this commitment by requiring international partners to report their funding to national partners, including overhead or administration costs.

CONSIDERATION 2

The Australian Government should continue to build in multi-year funding for protracted crises, and continue to prioritise Grand Bargain funding commitments.



CONTEXTUALLY APPROPRIATE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Evidence highlights that contextually appropriate capacity development that local partners have prioritised is important in supporting nationally led disaster response in the region. Our research with the Australian Red Cross in the Pacific, *Going Local*, as well other research such as the Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships project, shows the perceived and actual benefits of investing in long-term capacity development in which local and national partners prioritise needs, and outcomes.⁷ Our localisation baseline series in the Pacific, as well as our practice papers on the Sulawesi and Rohingya crises, show

that capacity development investment by international actors does not always meet needs identified by local partners.⁸

CONSIDERATION 3

The Australian Government should continue to invest in long-term, contextually appropriate capacity strengthening that supports national and local partners to lead response.



DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

The impact and extent of diverse and inclusive leadership in humanitarian response is a growing area of research. Initial research, including under our *Diverse and Inclusive Humanitarian Leadership* research stream, suggests that leadership amongst humanitarian organisations is not very diverse or inclusive. It also suggests a link between diverse and inclusive leadership and more effective and accountable humanitarian action.⁹ Whilst ongoing research is examining these ideas, Australia can support diversity and inclusion in humanitarian leadership by exploring this issue with partners.

Australia maintains a strong thematic focus on supporting disability inclusion and gender equality in humanitarian response.¹⁰

Emerging research and evidence around best practice for diversity and inclusion shows the importance of applying an intersectionality lens to programming that addresses the range of ways in which groups may be marginalised. Australia can work with other donors and partners to explore this issue in humanitarian programming more broadly.

CONSIDERATION 4

The Australian Government should continue to explore diversity and inclusion issues in humanitarian leadership and programming with partners and other donors.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION THAT SUPPORTS NATIONALLY LED HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Recent reviews, evaluations and program designs that Humanitarian Advisory Group has led or participated in with DFAT have included national consultants.¹¹ This supports Australia's focus on strengthening national leadership, as well as socialising and enhancing knowledge of Australia's humanitarian aid in-country.

CONSIDERATION 5

The Australian Government should commit to engaging national consultants in monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian aid.

Endnotes

- 1 Evaluations and reviews include: the Syria crisis (2014 and 2019) <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/syria-crisis-humanitarian-resilience-package-evaluation-report.pdf>; Myanmar (2017) <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/evaluation-of-australias-humanitarian-assistance-to-myanmar.pdf>; Cyclone Pam, Vanuatu (2016) <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/cyclone-pam-evaluation.pdf>; Mid-term review of Cyclone Gita, Tonga (forthcoming); Contribution to: Disability Inclusion <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/strategic-evaluations/Documents/development-for-all-evaluation.pdf>; Review of the Ambae Island evacuation in Vanuatu (2018). HAG has produced program designs for humanitarian packages for Iraq, Syria, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- 2 Objective Three, Humanitarian Strategy, DFAT, 2016.
- 3 HAG and Pujiono Centre, Charting the New Norm? Local leadership in the first 100 days of the Sulawesi earthquake response, 2019 https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HH_Sulawesi-Practice-Paper-4_FINAL_electronic_200319_v1.pdf; HAG and NIRAPAD, When the Rubber Hits the Road: Local leadership in the first 100 days of the Rohingya crisis response, 2017 https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HH_Practice-Paper-1_Rohingya_FINAL_Electronic_180618.pdf
- 4 Localisation in Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and Solomon Islands baseline reports <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/our-publications/> and Tracking Progress on Localisation: A Pacific perspective <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Tracking-progress-on-localisation-A-Pacific-Perspective-Final.pdf>
- 5 Independent evaluation of the Syria crisis humanitarian and resilience package evaluation report, 2019, p. 11 <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/syria-crisis-humanitarian-resilience-package-evaluation-report.pdf>
- 6 2018 Grand Bargain Annual Self-Reporting – Australia, https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Australia%20Grand%20Bargain%20Report%20Final_4.pdf
- 7 Australian Red Cross, 'Going Local: Achieving a more fit-for-purpose humanitarian eco-system in the Pacific,' 2017; Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships: Recommendations for operational practices that strengthen the leadership of national and local actors in partnership-based humanitarian action globally, 2018
- 8 Localisation in Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and Solomon Islands baseline reports <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/our-publications/>
- 9 HAG, Data on Diversity: Humanitarian leadership under the spotlight, 2019, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAG_Data-on-diversity_Final-electronic.pdf IFRC, World disasters report 2018: Leaving no one behind, 2018; Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week Event, Moving forward on gender equality and women's participation: Recommendations, 201
- 10 DFAT, Australia's thematic priorities, Humanitarian Strategy, 2016
- 11 This includes in the Mid-Term Review of Cyclone Gita, the Syria package evaluation and the Bangladesh-Myanmar package design process.