



Australian Government

AusAID

AusAID / NGO Committee for Development Cooperation

A Joint Committee of the Australian Agency for International Development and Australian Non Government Organisations

Notes from the CDC

Highlights of the 107th CDC meeting held on 7th October 2004

Attendance:

NGO Representatives

Ms Wendy Rose
Rev John Deane
Mr Sheldon Rankin
Ms Jo Thomson
Ms Margaret Winn

AusAID Representatives

Mr Dereck Rooker-Smith
Ms Judith Robinson
Mr Paul Lehman
Mr Keith Joyce

Chair

Mr Charles Tapp
Ms Ellen Shipley

CPS Representatives

Mr Frank Thompson
Ms Dianne Matters, Secretary
Mr David Gower
Ms Maree Meredith
Mr Chris Yorke
Ms Rhonda Bobbin
Ms Rosemary Cassidy

Observers

Ms Rhonda Chapman, ACFID
Ms Trish Mc Ewan, ACFID
Ms Karen Hill, new CDC NGO member
Mr Jamie Isbister, new CDC NGO member

Apologies

Mr David Syme
Ms Sue Connell, AusAID

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Mr Charles Tapp, Chair of the meeting for the discussion on Policy and Strategic issues welcomed members to CDC 107.

ITEM 1 CDC 106 Meeting

1.1 Minutes of 106 Meeting (Appendix A)

Information Item:

Minutes of the meeting held at AusAID on 10 June 2004 as circulated and approved were accepted without comment. CDC agreed that all issues arising from CDC 106 will be addressed in Item 2.5.

ITEM 2 POLICY AND STRATEGIC ISSUES

2.1 AusAID priorities

Information and discussion item: Mr Charles Tapp led the AusAID briefing to CDC on major policy and program challenges including:

- DAC Review - Mr Tapp summarised the process to date and identified areas where the Australian Government's aid program was likely to be subject to criticism by the DAC (e.g. volume of aid) and for commendation (e.g. the intervention in PNG, which is at the forefront of international development practice in whole-of-government approaches).
Draft reports on DAC visits to AusAID's PNG and Cambodia programs have been received and require factual response by AusAID.

DG Mr Bruce Davis and the review team will meet in Paris in December 2004 to discuss the peer review, after which the report will be published and a press release issued.

- Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines (CPGs) - Mr Dereck Rooker-Smith provided an overview of the impact of the FTA on CPGs, which are in the final stages of being rewritten.

Key points include:

- a move away from principles-based to process-based principle of 'non-discrimination', based on the assumption that 'open tender is value for money';
 - the eligibility criteria for foreign aid are exempt under the FTA and large parts of Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines (CPGs). AusAID will work on additional sections for CPGs;
 - AusAID is considering untying all its aid, which will need to be considered against the new CPGs; and
 - the 'non-discrimination' principle may lead to NGOs becoming subject to the open tendering process.
- Cooperation Agreements (CAs) - Ms Ellen Shipley provided an update on the CA process and schedule. CDC members were referred to the package of documents provided, containing the schedule of current and planned CAs .

In the short term:

- Cambodia capacity statements are due 22 October 2004;
- Laos - the draft tender documents are with ACFID for comment;
- Burma - a CA is under consideration; and
- East Timor - AusAID is looking at a mechanism and processes for an E.T. CA program.

AusAID is broadening its definition in relation to who can participate in consortia.

Mr Tapp added that in the Solomon Islands and PNG AusAID is looking at an increased role for NGOs as well as at further bilateral agreements.

- Volunteer Tender Process - Ms Ellen Shipley stated that due to the caretaker period (pending the Federal election) the process is on hold.

In response to a query, it was clarified that the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) is a totally separate process from the Volunteer tender. The Prime Minister's announcement of doubling the AYAD funding over 3 years does not affect other NGO or volunteer funds.

2.2 NGO priorities

Information and discussion item: Rev John Deane provided an update of NGO issues, including:

- CDC Election - the removal of accreditation reviews from CDC members' role increased interest by NGO representatives in nominating. Changing from a postal vote method to actual elections at the ACFID meeting, where discussion could occur, seem to be beneficial also.

New members are: Ms Karen Hill (Save the Children); Mr Jamie Isbister (Caritas); and Rev John Deane (re-elected).

- ACFID Executive Committee - 4 new members elected: Mr Robert Glasser (CARE); Rev Tim Costello (WVA); Mr Andrew Hewitt (Oxfam); and Mr Jack de Groot (Caritas).
- Changes to the NGO Code of Conduct - in a closer alignment with the NGO accreditation criteria, the Code of Conduct now explicitly requires policies and procedures related to security and for the separation of welfare, evangelical and partisan political activities.

A framework for effectiveness (including Sphere) is now also included in the Code, but difficult to ascertain NGO compliance.

- Advocacy: Has been identified by NGOs as very important, especially with regard to public visibility; NGOs would be speaking out and continuing current advocacy work.

Mr Charles Tapp welcomed new CDC members and thanked departing CDC members (Ms Thomson and Mr Rankin) for their input into the AusAID-NGO relationship. He also farewelled and thanked Ms Rhonda Chapman of ACFID for her participation in CDC.

Item 2.4 'Performance information discussion paper' was moved up the agenda for discussion whilst Mr Tapp was available to the meeting.

2.4 Performance information discussion paper

Discussion and decision item: Dr Patrick Kilby summarised his report on Performance Information and identified key issues related to performance measuring,

including the need for a consistent process across base and full agencies and a process for dealing with chronically poorly performing agencies.

Irene Davies and Sarah Lendon from AusAID Evaluation Section provided an overview of AusAID's Simplified Management Toolbox (SMT) which is a simple format to be used for all quarterly reporting to AusAID, including for Cooperation Agreements run through the country and regional programs (all new activities will use the SMT and existing activities will gradually shift over). Further work is required to assess the adaptability of the SMT for NGO annual reporting requirements.

Mr Tapp reaffirmed that performance assessment was a requirement for all AusAID-funded activities, and that parliamentary scrutiny required independent assessment; self-assessment was not enough for AusAID itself, nor would it be sufficient for NGOs. A combination of approaches would be appropriate

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that performance measurement will not be a part of the formal accreditation process, although it was noted that many accreditation criteria point to performance measurement capacity in the NGO. Nevertheless, performance would be linked to accreditation, through mechanisms to be developed with consultation between AusAID and CDC. Recommendations from Patrick Kilby's paper will be further investigated during AusAID's development of an overall framework for accreditation and performance.

It was noted that the new Criterion B5 in the revised accreditation criteria table addresses continuous improvement by NGOs (but deliberately not outcomes or impact).

Decisions:

- a mechanism, linked to accreditation, will be developed for accountability to the public/government
- a framework will be developed for AusAID-NGO engagement on a variety of issues, not linked to accreditation
- Jamie Isbister was nominated by CDC NGO members to provide NGO input

Actions:

- AusAID will develop a framework for accreditation and performance and how they fit together, to be presented to CDC out-of-session
- Ms Ellen Shipley and Ms Irene Davies will attend the next DPAC meeting on 5 November 2004, to further discussions
- Until a new framework is agreed, Cluster Evaluations would be conducted starting in 2005.

2.3A Issues related to removal of base-full distinction

Discussion and decision item: Discussion covered issues identified - and presented in issues-response papers - by NGOs and AusAID.

CDC agreed to CPS proceeding with the development of an alternative approach to ANCP funding which better reflects the diversity of the NGO sector, based on the principles that no-one will lose accreditation and RDE will limit IPF.

As RDE was discussed at length during this item, no further RDE update is to be provided at Item 4.1.

Action: AusAID will prepare a draft paper outlining an alternative approach to ANCP funding, to be presented for discussion to CDC out-of-session by February 2005. (before next base round in May 2005)

2.3 Review of Accreditation Documentation: Accreditation Criteria Table, Agency Profile Format and Report Format

Discussion and decision item: CDC discussed the draft revised accreditation criteria table, agency profile format and report format, prepared by Ms Jo Thomson and Ms Margaret Winn based on one level of accreditation (removal of base-full distinction).

Overall, CDC commended the changes made to accreditation criteria table and agency profile format, which make the documents more consistent and logical (user friendly). Additional indicators and verifiers have been incorporated to elicit information which would previously have been obtained by reviewers at ORO.

Decision: The documents will be amended in line with recommendations from CDC and reconsidered out-of-session by CDC.

Actions: The consultants will amend the documents in line with recommendations from CDC, including

- identifying mandatory and non-mandatory indicators/verifiers;
- adding the requirement for agencies and reviewers that a brief agency capacity statement prefaces both the agency profile and review report; and
- clarifying with FSAs required verifiers for financial criteria, in particular, those required from agency partners. (These will be linked to TORs for FSAs)

Item 4.2 ANCP Update was moved up the agenda for discussion whilst Ms Maree Meredith was available to the meeting. Item 4.1 was discussed under item 2.3A.

4.2 ANCP Update

Information item: Ms Maree Meredith, CPS provided an update on ANCP base. Mr Sheldon Rankin provided feedback on the September base round process in which he was a panel member.

Mr Frank Thompson, CPS provided an update on ADPlans.

2.5 Review of Accreditation Processes and Systems: Recommendations for further consideration

Discussion and decision item: Ms Ellen Shipley led discussion on recommendations (tabled) from the Review of Accreditation Processes and Systems which had been deferred for further discussion/decision by CDC 106.

Decision/Actions: AusAID will follow up on actions from Items 2.3A and 2.4 in which most outstanding recommendations from the Review of Accreditation Processes and Systems will be considered within the contexts of a framework for measuring NGO performance and removal of the base-full distinction.

- Recommendation XXIV re simplification of the NGOPI with links through to AusGuide and Recommendation XXVIII re allowing ADPlans to cover multiple years, have in-principle agreement and will be followed up internally within AusAID.

2.6 Counter-terrorism Guidelines

Information and discussion item: Ms Linda Valente from AusAID's Counter Terrorism Unit provided CDC a matrix of 'Responses to NGO Requests for Clarification on Counter Terrorism Guidelines for AusAID-funded Activities' and was available to respond to further queries.

ACFID emphasised that AusAID decision-making processes on whether activities proceed should be clear and robust.

ITEM 3 ACCREDITATION

3.1 Accreditation Review Reports

The final reports of Reledev, International Needs and Caritas Australia were considered by CDC and the following decisions made:

Decision: CDC supported the recommendation of the reviewers in **recommending International Needs be granted full accreditation (from base).**

Decision: Clarification is to be requested of the review team in relation to Criteria B2, C3, D1, D5 and E4 of the **Reledev** report.

Decision: Clarification is to be requested of the review team in relation to Criteria F of the **Caritas** report.

Upon receipt and consideration out-of-session of reviewer clarifications to the Reledev and Caritas reports, CDC recommendations on the 3 Agencies will be forwarded to the AusAID delegate for final decision.

It was reaffirmed that accreditation criteria apply to an agency's whole development program, as reflected in RDE, and not just to AusAID-funded activities.

3.2 Accreditation Issues

Discussion item: CDC discussed the following accreditation issues:

3.2.1 Training program for all accreditation consultants, including FSAs.

Decision: The development of the training program is subject to the acceptance of the revised accreditation criteria and Agency profile format. Training tentatively to take place in February 2005.(See Item 2.3)

3.2.2 Quality control of accreditation reviewers and reports.

CDC NGO members expressed concerns about quality control of reviewers and reports. CPS cited current mechanisms for quality control as being sufficiently rigorous.

Mechanisms currently in place within AusAID for quality control of reviewers include:

- NGOPI details purpose and process of accreditation
- Preface to Accreditation Criteria Table provides an overview of objective and process of accreditation, emphasising collaborative approach
- Competitive tender process for reviewers, TORs developed by CPS
- TAP for selection of reviewers included ACFID, CPS and an AusAID rural development adviser
- CDC involvement in shortlisting of reviewers to undertake accreditation reviews
- CPS maintains a table monitoring reviewers' performance
- Scope of services in Services Orders details role and tasks of reviewers
- New reviewers have worked in review teams led by CDC NGO reviewers (mentoring role)
- CPS provides new reviewers relevant documents including sample reports
- CPS maintains ongoing communication with reviewers as required
- Draft reports checked by CPS and comments/requests for clarification made
- CDC reviews final reports, requests clarification from reviewers as required and can reject reviewers' recommendations and/or recommend provisional accreditation subject to conditions to be met
- AusAID Delegate considers CDC recommendations and can accept/reject or request further information
- Agencies being reviewed have right to respond to reports and to appeal decisions
- Compulsory accreditation reviewer training (including FSA reviewers) and Procedures
- Manual to be developed and implemented prior to commencement of reviews in 2005. CDC will be key participants in training and manual development.

Decision: Further discussion regarding quality control will take place, as required, at reviewers workshop, tentatively scheduled for February 2005.

Action: CPS will convene a working group before end of 2004 to discuss/coordinate the development and implementation of the compulsory training program for reviewers.

Action: CPS/CDC develop TORs for FSAs to input into AusAID Audit Section tender process due to take place in December.

ITEM 4 ANCP Developments

Discussed earlier

ITEM 5 OUTCOMES FROM ACFID MIFs

Information item: Ms Trish Mc Ewan, ACFID, provided feedback on the last MIFs and thanked Ms Ellen Shipley and Mr Nick Kingdon from AusAID for participating and providing information on the Cambodia Cooperation Agreement Request for Tender.

MIFs now incorporate workshops on development approaches and risk management will be the topic at the next MIFs in November 2005.

Dates for upcoming MIFs are:

Melbourne	Mon 22 November
Sydney	Tues 23 November
Canberra	Thurs 25 November

ITEM 6 AUSAID NGO CONSULTATIONS

Discussion item: Feedback from NGOs and AusAID was generally positive in relation to the AusAID NGO Consultations held in Canberra 16 September 2004, prior to the ACFID Annual Council. There was a suggestion that the occasion could become the forum for dialogue rather than for consultation. Ms Rhonda Chapman, ACFID expressed disappointment at the lack of feedback forms returned by participants.

ITEM 7 OTHER BUSINESS

Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA) was not successful in September Base round.

ITEM 8 NEXT MEETINGS (2005)

CDC 108 Thursday 10 March

CDC 109 Thursday 9 June

CDC 110 Thursday 13 October