



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 108th CDC meeting held on 10th March 2005

Attendance:

NGO Representatives

Ms Wendy Rose
Rev John Deane
Ms Karen Hill
Ms Margaret Winn
Mr Jamie Isbister
Mr David Syme

Observers

Ms Trish McEwan, ACFID

AusAID Representatives

Mr Dereck Rooker-Smith
Ms Sue Connell
Mr Paul Lehmann
Mr Keith Joyce

Chair

Ms Ellen Shipley

Apologies

None

CPS Representatives

Mr Frank Thompson
Mr Chris Yorke, Secretary
Ms Dianne Matters
Ms Lisa Staruszkiewicz
Ms Rosemary Cassidy

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Ms Ellen Shipley, Chair of the meeting welcomed members to CDC 108.

ITEM 1 CDC 107 MEETING

1.1 & 1.2 Minutes of 107 Meeting and Outstanding Issues

Information Item:

Minutes of the meeting held at AusAID on 7 October 2004 as circulated and approved were accepted without comment. CDC agreed that there were no outstanding issues arising from CDC 107.

ITEM 2 POLICY AND STRATEGIC ISSUES

2.1 AusAID issues and priorities

Information and discussion item: Ms Shipley commenced the AusAID briefing to CDC on major policy and program challenges including:

- Cooperation Agreements – 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 future CAs.

In the short term:

- Cambodia - in-country workshops are scheduled for 11-12 May 2005;
- Laos - the tender documents are currently being drafted. It is expected that the guidelines will be sent to ACFID for comment by April;
- Palestinian Territories – is currently calling for submissions (due by mid-April);
- PNG – is currently underway;
- Burma - CA is currently under consideration; and
- East Timor – is continuing to consider CA options.

Ms Shipley highlighted the role and significance of Cooperation Agreements (CAs) within the context of a broader country strategy. Ms Shipley added that CAs are purposely designed to not duplicate country windows.

Ms Shipley informed CDC that a CA template will shortly be placed on the AusAID website for all interested parties to view.

Ms Trish McEwan (ACFID) stated that the establishment of the generic guidelines has been welcomed by the NGO community. Ms McEwan informed CDC that the feedback she had received from Mr Alek Werchanowski (AusAID) regarding the Cambodia TAP process had been extremely useful from an NGO perspective. Mr Werchanowski will provide a presentation to NGOs on how best to address selection criteria at the next MIFs (Sydney & Melbourne).

- Volunteer Tender process - Ms Shipley informed the CDC that three tenders had been shortlisted: - AVI, ABV and Austraining International/CARE Australia. Ms Shipley added that AusAID has employed a probity officer to ensure a full, fair and equitable tender process had been achieved.
- Tsunami Response – Mr Frank Thompson informed CDC of the latest AusAID -Tsunami response related activities. AusAID's initial response was coordinated through the Humanitarian and Emergencies Section (HES) by way of the HES Cooperation Agreement. Mr Thompson added that AusAID has maintained regular contact with Australian NGOs since the disaster via a weekly tsunami teleconference.

Mr Thompson stated that \$1million had been provided to Base agencies to assist in Tsunami response related activities. This fund is known as the Special Indian Ocean Rim Disaster Fund (SIORDF). Mr Thompson added that a whole of government Tsunami taskforce had been established to coordinate the Australian Government's response to the disaster.

Ms Shipley reiterated Mr Alan March's (ADG – HES) view that NGOs would be asked to provide audited financial statements of AusAID - Tsunami related funds. AusAID would hire an external

auditor to review expenditure of the five full NGOs contracted under the HES Agreement, the three full NGOs who received additional Tsunami funding and two randomly picked base NGOs who received funding under SIORDF.

Mr Rooker-Smith reiterated to CDC that the public is extremely interested in what has been achieved in Tsunami-affected countries, how the money is being spent and what is currently being done with publicly donated money. Any adverse publicity resulting from misspent public funds may result in criticism of the Australian Government aid program.

Mr Rooker-Smith stated to CDC that an AusAID roadshow will be commencing on April 4 in all state capitals. The roadshow will include presentations from AusTrade, World Bank, Asia Development Bank and AIRPD. Mr David Syme added that the Roadshow may be the ideal learning opportunity to dispel any misconceptions the public may have regarding aid and development particularly issues surrounding the length of time it takes to address development and reconstruction issues in a given country or region.

Mr Jamie Isbister commented to the CDC that the Tsunami had presented NGOs with several challenges, one of which is meeting donor and public expectations.

- Future AusAID-NGO engagement processes and mechanisms

Mr Rooker-Smith opened the discussion of this item by highlighting the recent AusAID-NGO activities such as the Cooperation Agreements and the AusAID initiated information meetings (held in Sydney and Melbourne). Mr Rooker-Smith added that AusAID is always looking at exploring other avenues to consult with NGOs in a more constructive and strategic forum instead of waiting for the next CDC to occur. Mr Rooker-Smith acknowledged the administrative load that the organisation and preparation of CDC places on AusAID, in particular CPS.

Ms Shipley acknowledged the administrative burden that the CDC places on CPS. Ms Shipley stated that she was aware of possible alternatives for the CDC that had been discussed before she had resumed her role as Director of CPS. It was made clear to the CDC that AusAID would like to see a more strategic outcomes-focused engagement with NGOs, which would avoid any duplication of existing processes. Ms Shipley identified the NGO Cooperation Agreements and ANCP as the two flagships of the AusAID/NGO relationship. It was announced to the CDC that there would be an ANCP review midway through the year.

Mr Isbister agreed with Ms Shipley that the CDC was also a significant administrative burden for NGO members and went on to comment that CDC should be a more strategic forum than it currently is. Mr Isbister added that while CDC is an important opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to accreditation and country program areas, it would be advantageous to separate strategic policy matters from accreditation forums. Rev John Deane added that ANCP/Accreditation and CDC are intricately linked, as a result, any new design for the CDC must address these issues.

Mr Rooker-Smith conveyed to the meeting his awareness of the importance of ANCP and the AusAID/NGO relationship, however, the unseen DAC submission was an example of how the CDC is not performing its specified role as a consultative forum for NGOs and AusAID. The focus must be on outcomes not processes and strategies to yield greater engagement with the NGO community. Mr Rooker-Smith suggested that perhaps the structure of CDC was inhibiting higher level policy dialogue.

Action: Ms Shipley informed the meeting that AusAID would draft an options paper based on the points raised at the meeting on alternative options for the CDC which would be tabled out of session to the CDC.

2.2 NGO priorities

Information and discussion item: Mr David Syme provided an update of NGO issues, including:

- Streamlining of internal processes - NGOs are seeking to improve internal processes which will assist in the provision of important information to AusAID.
- Tsunami – has had an incredible impact on NGOs, particularly potential blowouts to RDE, distribution of ANCP funds and the overall increased public scrutiny on NGO accountability and transparency. Mr Syme suggested the possibility of a modelling consultant being employed to explore the financial implications of the Tsunami on AusAID funding to NGO.
- ANCP Review – AusAID has not yet distributed the TORs for comment. NGO – CDC members are also unsure of their role in the review.
- New CDC members – will the new NGO-CDC members be given training on accreditation processes. Mr Syme asked AusAID if there was an updated Accreditation timetable available for distribution to CDC members.

Ms Shipley commented to CDC that she did not want to pre-empt issues such as the removal of Base/Full distinction before the ANCP review commences.

2.3 Performance information – Cluster Evaluations

Information and Discussion item: Mr Frank Thompson gave a brief summary on Cluster Evaluations and how they relate to the overall ANCP-NGO performance framework. The Cluster Evaluations were designed in consultation with the AusAID Office of Review and Evaluation Section, ACFID and DPAC. Mr Thompson explained to the CDC that there will be two sets of cluster evaluations per year, with a representative from CPS in the role of team leader. There will be a three week desk assessment and three weeks in-country. Mr Thompson distributed copies of the TORs to members of the CDC for their information. Ms Shipley stated that the TORs will not need to be endorsed by the Executive Committee of ACFID.

Ms Shipley led the discussion by linking the two key issues of performance measurement and performance information back to Cluster Evaluations. Ms Shipley explained that AusAID viewed Cluster Evaluations as a method for measuring results and impacts of activities in the field. ANCP will need to incorporate these evaluations as a means of measuring performance.

Ms Shipley concluded the discussion by saying that AusAID will try to minimise any overlap or problems encountered from previous Cluster Evaluations and that NGOs are contractually required to co-operate with Cluster Evaluations.

Decisions:

- a mechanism known as Cluster Evaluation, linked to accreditation, will be developed for accountability to the public/government.

2.3A Strategy on development of performance framework

Information and Discussion item: Ms Shipley stated that she will meet with members of Evaluation and Quality Section to look at a variety of data in relation to performance information. The performance framework will need to be articulated and enforced by AusAID and DPAC and the Cluster Evaluations are an initial step in this direction. Ms Shipley reiterated that there are no verification or performance/ evaluation systems in place to assess NGO activities in the field. The TORs for cluster evaluations will be fine tuned for each evaluation.

Mr Isbister commented that NGOs are also motivated to prove that their project structures and processes are in place. Mr Isbister stated that NGOs would also like to obtain any information, in the form of lessons learnt.

Action

- A broad framework will be developed for AusAID-NGO engagement on performance and quality issues, which will more clearly articulate the linkages of its various elements with accreditation;
- Cluster evaluations will commence in mid-2005.

ITEM 3 ACCREDITATION

3.1 Review of Accreditation Processes and Systems

Ms Shipley provided updated information and led discussion related to accreditation.

3.1.1 Final revised Accreditation Criteria Table, Agency Profile Format and Report Format, and

3.1.2 Criteria and profile format for base agencies

Information item: The revised Accreditation Criteria Table, Agency Profile Format and Report Format were approved out-of-session (in March) by CDC for use by full agencies. The revised documents were sent to full agencies with upcoming reviews.

A base version of the revised documents is in the process of being developed based on current base requirements. These should be available by end of March 2005.

Decision:

- New CDC members will attend the training program for accreditation reviewers and observe on an agency review

Action:

- The schedule of upcoming accreditation reviews will be circulated to CDC

3.1.3 Updated recommendation table

Items identified 'for further discussion' will be discussed within CPS/AusAID, mostly in conjunction with the ANCP review. Consultation with other entities such as e.g. DPAC, will occur as appropriate.

3.2 Accreditation Review Reports: IWDA, ABM, FTWHL-AAA & NTA

Decision item: CDC discussed the above reports and made the following recommendations and/or comments:

IWDA: CDC supported report recommendation for Full accreditation.

ABM: CDC supported report recommendation for Full accreditation.

FTWHL-AAA: CDC supported report recommendation that agency not be reaccredited.

NTA: CDC requested that NTA's response to the review report be returned to reviewers for comment and/or clarification, to be circulated to CDC out-of-session.

3.3 Accreditation Issues

Information and discussion items:

3.3.1 A training program for all accreditation consultants, including FSAs was tentatively scheduled for April/May 2005. It would involve CPS and ACFID or CDC personnel.

A new auditing firm is to be selected from the AusAID audit tender currently being finalised, for undertaking Financial Systems Assessments (FSAs) of NGOs as part of accreditation process.

3.3.2 Accreditation Procedures Manual for reviewers: Consultants have been contracted to develop the Procedures Manual for accreditation reviewers and the first draft should be available by end March/early April.

Decisions:

The following issues were identified as requiring clarification during the reviewers' training program and in the Accreditation Procedures Manual:

- 'Child sex tourism' and 'child protection'. AusAID requires agencies to have risk management strategies for prevention of former. ACFID Code requires Child Protection policies and procedures.
- Board governance. Role of agencies' Boards to know what agency is doing.
- Where 'subject to' recommendations are indicated, e.g. based on track record

Actions:

- Consultants preparing Accreditation Procedures Manual will be advised of above issues for clarification.
- CPS Director will discuss with ADG AUSP whether breaches of ACFID Code of Conduct identified during accreditation will be reported to ACFID. (have not been previously)
- CPS to discuss and decide if reviewers' names should appear on reports for CDC quality control purposes.

3.3.3 Ms Shipley advised CDC that Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) has withdrawn from ANCP.

ITEM 4. OUTCOMES FROM ACFID MIFS

Information item: Ms Trish McEwan provided an update on the recent MIFs on behalf of ACFID and its members. Ms McEwan conveyed to the CDC that its members would like to have a more strategic approach from AusAID's key presenters at the next AusAID/NGO consultation day.

Ms McEwan also mentioned that she had distributed the Counter Terrorism guidelines to all ACFID members.

ITEM 5 OTHER BUSINESS

Ms Shipley informed the meeting that she would distribute the Accreditation Timetable to all CDC members as requested.

ITEM 6 NEXT MEETING

CDC 109 Thursday 9 June