

# AUSTRALIAN AID TO THE PHILIPPINES

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Mid-term evaluation of the Australia-  
Philippines Development Assistance Strategy  
2007-2011

Office of Development Effectiveness

# Objectives of the evaluation

Evaluation assesses the results of the Australian aid program to the Philippines over 2007-2009. It seeks to explore:

- How results were affected by the strategy development methodology
- The usefulness of the strategy document as a guide to implementation
- How effectively AusAID managed program delivery
- The strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improving strategy development and implementation processes.

# Methodology

There were four components

1. Workshop to elicit the theory of change for the program and identify relevant strategic evaluation questions.
2. A program evaluation in country, drawing on existing performance information (Annual Program Performance Reviews and data from AusAID's performance management system) and independent evaluation reports.
3. A separate report on implementation and performance of the gender action plan.
4. A strategic review of the program.

# Timing and limitations

- Four months over the period August to November 2009
- Effectively the evaluation was split into several teams
  - Theory of change team, led by Sue Funnell, with Cate Rogers and Emily Rudland from ODE and Jeanne Ilo providing advice on integrating gender objectives.
  - Program evaluation – Graham Walters (Manila based)
  - Gender Action Plan evaluator – Jeanne Frances Ilo
  - Strategic review team, led by Michael Carter, with Sue Funnell, Cate Rogers and Professor Arsenio Balisacan.
- Major limitation was the lack of worked through program theory and relevant performance measurement.

# Country strategy context

- Australia one of the three largest bilateral donors to the Philippines, with aid of US\$74million in 2008.
- The overarching goal of the 2007-11 strategy was to ‘Contribute to improving the prospects for economic growth, poverty reduction and national stability in the Philippines’
- There were 11 objectives of the strategy which were organised under three pillars for action:
  1. Economic growth
  2. Basic education
  3. National stability and human security

# Pillar 1: Economic Growth

- Government agencies are better able to implement transparent and efficient budgets
- Improved accountability, transparency and management of investments in transport infrastructure
- Improved economic opportunity for rural people through increases in productivity, access to markets, better infrastructure and growth of small to medium enterprises in targeted provinces

# Pillar 2: Education

- The Department of Education is better able to manage its resources to support schools and teachers
- Improved educational opportunities for boys and girls in targeted areas

## Pillar 3: National stability and human security

- Mindanao peace processes are reinforced through more effective participation by communities and institutions
- Enhanced basic services and livelihoods in conflict affected communities
- Improved capability of law and justice institutions, particularly to counter threats from transnational crime, including terrorism.
- Women and children's health services more widely available in targeted regions.
- Men and women better protected from HIV/AIDS infection; and
- The population is better prepared for, and protected from, natural disasters and an avian influenza pandemic

# Major findings

- How results were affected by the strategy development methodology
  - Excellent analytical foundation for identifying the development challenges. Less effective in determining which of these the aid program was best placed to help address and why.
  - This gap in analysis led to overambitious objectives.
  - This was one of the first whole of government strategies, and there was a commendable level of consultation in the lead up to strategy development.
    - There was feedback that other Australian government departments did not believe the strategy represented a whole of government perspective.
    - Feedback from Government of Philippines that consultations had not been early enough for real input into the strategy development.

- The usefulness of the strategy document as a guide to implementation
  - On geographic focus (around half of the aid program was focused on Mindanao) it had been useful, although practical constraints and donor crowding suggested this needed updating.
  - On helping rule in or rule out projects the strategy was unhelpful and offered little support.
  - On performance management there were substantial and welcome improvements in AusAID's systems during strategy implementation. But, the over ambitious objectives and the lack of intermediate objectives made it very difficult to measure performance.
  - Basic education stood out as the best performing sector with the best performance system. It differed from the others in that it had a clear objective underpinned by a developed plan for engagement.

- How effectively AusAID managed program delivery
  - AusAID had an excellent reputation with the Government of the Philippines and other donors.
  - There was some great work done with the Gender Action Plan, on developing anti-corruption approaches and on enhancing the livelihoods of people with a disability.
  - In the context of the Philippines supporting reform at a national level through aid is ambitious. Nevertheless, in very targeted areas there had been some success, in particular in relation to disaster risk management.
  - AusAID was moving towards working more with sub-national levels of government. Some efforts at this level looked promising.
  - The program scope and breadth of engagement was too large. The team were concerned that management time and staff expertise were spread too thin and that engagement was not deep enough.
  - Insufficient thought had been given in the past to the mechanism for aid delivery. However the team were very open to exploring the costs and benefits of different approaches.

# Recommendations

1. Consultations within AusAID with whole of government partners and partners in the Philippines need to start early in new strategy preparation.
2. Poverty reduction should be the overall goal.
3. The program should engage in fewer aid objectives with longer term commitment in each and an emphasis on careful scaling up of innovative approaches.
4. Delivery strategies should be developed for each major objective.
5. Performance information should be gathered on intermediate outcomes.
6. More strategic, sectoral and aid delivery skills need to be put in place, mainly at Post, to achieve deeper engagement in a limited number of objectives.