Introduction

RedR Australia provides humanitarian training and technical experts to work with communities around the world: **to plan, prepare, rebuild and recover – before, during, and after disasters** and conflict. RedR Australia has multiple international points of presence, including regional offices in Jordan and Suva, and liaison staff in Rome, Geneva, London, and Copenhagen – all managed from a headquarters in Carlton, Melbourne.

Through Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia Assists Program (Program) RedR Australia trains, recruits and deploys technical expertise as part of Australia's 'whole of government' single crisis response framework. The agility, flexibility and impact of the Program reflects more than 25 years of donor partnership with the Australian Government, and draws on RedR Australia's systems, processes, capabilities and partnerships, as well as the deep civilian expertise and diversity in Australia and our region.

RedR Australia puts Australian people and skills at the forefront of disaster preparedness and response. Export of these technical services strengthens national and local response mechanisms. Our experts coordinate across the humanitarian-development-peace divides, while ensuring humanitarian principles are embedded throughout the disaster management cycle.

1. **Describe RedR Australia's role in relation to Australia Assists. In your response, provide details of:**
   a. **the approach taken to <u>coordinate the rapid mobilisation</u> and deployment of volunteers and specialists;**

RedR Australia's capability to rapidly mobilise civilian humanitarian experts around the world is based on an integrated approach detailed below.

- **Mutual commitments**: RedR Australia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade co-designed the Australia Assists program to align our mutual commitments to deliver on the World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain and Sendai Framework. The Program brings a common approach to delivering more efficient, coordinated, localised and accountable humanitarian responses.

- **'Whole of Government' framework:** The Program can be called upon under Australia's 'whole of government' single response framework. Bilateral requests for assistance can mean RedR Australia deployees work alongside Australian Government employees, or as part of an Australian Defence Humanitarian Assistance for Disaster Relief (HADR) response. The Program can also rapidly deploy as part of the Emergency Management Australia capability, as it did recently through the AUSASSISTS PLAN to the global COVID-19 humanitarian response.

- **Scalable and flexible:** The Program has a seven-year term, commencing on 1 October 2017. There is a prescribed annual budget for deployments across the disaster lifecycle of prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and stabilisation. Whilst the Program's budget is underpinned by a live annual plan, the budget is scalable and flexible enough to respond to a crisis in any financial year. The program can provide additional services should the need arise.

- **Global partnerships:** RedR Australia is a **United Nations Standby Partner (SBP)** to 14 United Nations (UN) agencies. Through these networks and partnerships, RedR Australia ensures the Program is working effectively and efficiently within the multilateral system during a humanitarian response.

Operational Agility

The most conservative UN and insurance industry research suggests every dollar invested in disaster preparedness saves six dollars in disaster response and recovery. RedR Australia's origins was in the engineering sector. Originally the *Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief*, the name was soon shortened to RedR Australia. Now we have a 40-year history of responding to crises and learning what works best. As such, we prioritise investment in preparedness so that we may respond with greater agility and effectiveness.

- **Accreditation:** Our organisation is accredited, evaluated and tested against a range of sectoral and international standards. We are an Australian Council for International Development member, the only UN SBP in the Asia Pacific and Southern Hemisphere, and the Humanitarian Sphere Standard focal point for the Asia Pacific. Over many years we have built trust with our partners in our ability to consistently deliver.

- **Collaboration:** Our agreements are both strategic and operational, to enable field-based collaboration. We are part of a RedR International Federation, working closely with RedR India and RedR Indonesia. We leverage our 14 UN operational agreements and have partnerships with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European External Action Service, and the Pacific Community to ensure integrated regional responses and build regional disaster risk management capabilities. We are spearheading an engineering alliance with partners including Laing O'Rourke, GHD and Arup to support their ability to 'build for humanity'. This allows us to connect, collaborate and innovate with the private sector for impact.

- **Trust:** Our executive team is connected to executive decision makers in many of our partner agencies, ministers' offices' and agencies. If a barrier to delivering critical assistance arises, we have the respect, trust and authority to navigate these collectively.

- **Vetting:** We deploy diverse specialists that share a common understanding and language about humanitarian response. Our roster of 800 technical specialists has been tested through a multi-stage vetting process. Before they deploy their credentials are reviewed, references checked and they are subject to criminal history checks. All deployees have conducted the one-week, in-person *Essentials of Humanitarian Practice* and *Hostile Environment Awareness Training* courses designed and managed by RedR Australia. This training is recognised by Australian NGOs and UN partner agencies as meeting a minimum standard of international humanitarian response operations.

- **Preparation:** Before we mobilise experts, we ensure legal mandates and provisions, employment accreditations for the host nation, and passports and visas are all in place. We confirm that deployees have had current medical checks and psycho-social support, that they are insured, and that they have received their pre-departure briefings and have arrival briefings scheduled.

- **Diversity of skills**: Our growing roster allows us to rapidly respond to various crises that draw from 15 broad skill areas including: Information management; protection; humanitarian coordination; public health including pandemic response; logistics; water, sanitation and hygiene; disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management; and communications.

- **Training:** Our training attracts cross-sectoral community service professionals. While the course embeds International Sphere Standards, 19 per cent of attendees are Australian service personnel drawn from every city and many rural and remote locations. Australian NGOs form approximately 37 per cent of our attendees, and 20 per cent come from the government sector. Past participants include CEOs, remote educators, nurses, posted diplomatic or security staff, police, state emergency services, and fire services to name a few. When people deploy, they are known to connect in the field through our courses or memberships.

- **Digital connection:** We mobilise our roster through our online portal. New positions from partners are posted and our members can review and apply for them based on their expertise and availability. The partner needing assistance provides the terms of reference and we match it to the best candidates who submit an expression of interest. We nominate the best candidates, but the local host nation or agency always makes the final decision. This process can occur within 24 hours, or in a 2-3 week time frame, depending on the urgency of the situation and the readiness of our partner and expert.

- **Effective Civil-Military Coordination** is a pivotal component of an overarching emergency response strategy. To operationalise a response plan, our Civil-Military Coordinators act as focal points for logistics, security and access, protection of civilians, de-confliction and government liaison functions. This is a skill profile RedR Australia places at a high premium and actively recruits talented professionals who can navigate across the humanitarian-development-peace divides.

b. **the approach taken to <u>match</u> technical specialists to local needs and priorities; and**

In the past year, RedR Australia has received 135 requests for support and mobilised 81 personnel to fill most of these requests. Of the 81 deployments filled, eight deployed to Africa, 15 to Asia, three to Europe and the Americas, 13 to the Middle East and 41 to the Pacific region. This reflects the prioritisation by DFAT to address the humanitarian need in the Indo-Pacific.

Mobilising for local needs and priorities

- **Localisation strategy:** RedR Australia is developing a Localisation Strategy and Action Plan. Reforming historical systems to enable local leadership needs a progressive pathway to ensure fit-for-purpose results. We are committed to being accountable in our learning and improve our impact.

- **Local need:** The Program seeks to embed localised decision-making. While DFAT sets the policy priorities for the Program through an annual planning process, these priorities often reflect Australian bilateral partnership discussions. Through our Regional Managers and local partners, RedR Australia connects and tests these priorities with locally-expressed need to find the best place, partner and person to deliver impact. For example:

Ginny deployed as a Communications Advisor to the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to help raise awareness of issues facing women in the Pacific. Her role has since adapted to helping to keep the public informed of the Vanuatu COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. The Program prioritised giving 'voice' to women in the Pacific, but PIF was supportive and wrote the original terms of reference. They were then responsible for pivoting Ginny to a new terms of references to mitigate the COVID-19 risk, which was in line with DFAT priorities. RedR Australia served as the trusted broker and facilitator of the right talent.

- **Surge capability:** RedR Australia provides support to regional multilateral and non-governmental organisations, as well as national governments, including National Disaster Management Offices within the Pacific. The SBP also make requests on behalf of field offices that draw on UN Rapid Needs Assessments to which RedR Australia also responds to.

- **Embedded capability:** While deployed, our people work directly with their host agency as an embedded member of staff. They provide progress reporting against their terms of reference and report on barriers to success so that improvement might occur. Logistical or political contexts might limit humanitarian effectiveness. However, RedR Australia remains a deployee's prime employer, carrying the employer duty of care, and responds immediately when issues are raised around living conditions, security or wellbeing.

- **Learning:** Providing a local response also draws on evidence and learning of past responses. We know that women, children and vulnerable people are worst affected in times of natural disaster and conflict. Our skills profiles, partners and program outcomes ensure a priority focus on assessing, identifying and meeting the humanitarian needs of these groups and integrating gender programming. This is tracked by our Gender and Disability strategies and action plans (Ref: https://www.redr.org.au/partners-in-the-field/australia-assists/)

- **Training:** Our approach has shifted to include cultural and linguistic diversification of our Associate Trainer pool, delivery of courses to regional humanitarian hubs (including Jordan, Pacific, Indonesia, Bangkok and New Zealand) and bespoke courses to Australian Embassy, ASEAN and a number of UN agencies' staff. We are progressing the accessibility of our training to reach new languages and persons with disabilities.

c. **the types of support provided by deployed volunteers and specialists.**

Our recruitment process aims to find technical expertise with cross-cultural efficacy and the soft skills to bring it all together. The following examples provide some insights into what our deployees do.

- **Education:** Malgorzata and Maxwell deployed to UNICEF in Fiji to assist Pacific Island countries, communities and school systems to undertake risk management and contingency planning to prepare to re-open schools. This included generating COVID-19 information and awareness products for all schools in Fiji and Solomon Islands. They have also supported the Fiji, Solomon Islands' and Samoan Ministries of Education on return-to-school planning to ensure schools are safe, inclusive, and a place of learning while also being disaster prepared.

- **Infrastructure:** Neil deployed as a water, sanitation and health engineer to Bangladesh to mitigate monsoonal flood impact in one of the world's largest refugee camps, Cox's Bazar. He has had to rapidly adapt, repurposing camp facilities for COVID-19 isolation and quarantine facilities. (For Neil's story, see https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/helping-the-worlds-biggest-refugee-camp-prepare/12418248.

- **Governance:** Michelle deployed to the Office of the President of Kiribati to support the drafting of an inclusive National Disaster Act. The Act passed in 2019, and as a gender and protection expert, Michelle ensured gender and protection is a central component of Kiribati's 'whole of government' national disaster management response.

- **DRM:** Brian, a Disaster Risk Management Specialist deployed with the World Food Programme into the national disaster management office of Vanuatu to support operational planning for the Ambae volcano resettlement program.

- **Water:** Kieren, a Water, Sanitation and Health Project Manager deployed with the Vanuatu Department of Water Resources to build gravity-fed water supply and rainwater harvesting systems. This has allowed households and communities to have access to safe drinking water. He also helped develop Drinking Water Safety and Security Plans to assist communities to identify risks and hazards and better manage their own water supply. This work has built resilience after 2015's Tropical Cyclone Pam, better preparing Vanuatu for 2020's Tropical Cyclone Harold.

- **Gender:** Anggia deployed to Papua New Guinea as a Gender and Protection Specialist to lead and coordinate UN Women's relief response for Highlands' communities. In these communities, women maintain micro-economic production and management of community resources. Anggia worked to ensure greater gender equality and protection in a community where women have few opportunities to influence the decisions of community leaders and peace building processes.

2. Describe the processes that RedR Australia has in place (if any) to identify, capture and incorporate lessons learned in relation to international disaster preparedness, response and recovery, including in relation to the coordination of volunteers and specialists and collaboration with other organisations. Provide copies any relevant documents with your response.

The Program embeds the Grand Bargain and Sendai Framework commitments of disaster risk reduction and resilience, localisation, collaboration and bridging the humanitarian-development-peace divides. The Program does this through an overarching Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework that demands ongoing monitoring and evaluation against five key outcomes:
1. Before
2. During
3. After
4. Partnership, reform and learning
5. Operational Management

Not only is it important to monitor, evaluate and learn from each humanitarian response, but the broader independent, systems-based review is essential. Humanitarian and development responses demand independent evaluation as an accountability measure to foster a culture of learning that improves future

responses. The Program was recently subject to an independent evaluation with the findings publicly available here: https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/aid/australia-assists-mid-term-review.

RedR Australia chairs the **UN SBP MEAL Working Group** that brings together more than 16 agency representatives to generate evidence and learning on SBP effectiveness globally and the SBP's contribution to the UN reform agenda. This not only allows us to monitor and test our own performance, but to also lead the enhanced accountability of the UN surge deployment capability.

One example of how RedR and the SBP Network is building accountability and learning into humanitarian responses can be seen in the *Joint Tropical Cyclone Idai After Action Review* https://www.redr.org.au/news-and-publications/latest-news/redr-australia-leads-joint-tropical-cyclone-idai-after-action-review/.

Our training courses are subject to active solicitation of feedback from our participants. Our courses are also subject to a review every two years to ensure the training material reflects current and emerging global humanitarian practice and learning.