

RESEARCH OVERVIEW: Australia Assists' Contribution to Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action; 2017-2019

Introduction:

The Australia Assists program, funded by the Australian Government and managed by RedR Australia (RedR), is the Australian Government's deployable humanitarian capability, designed to support overseas partners, particularly national governments, UN agencies and regional NGOs before, during and after humanitarian crises.

A key policy priority for the program is to **ensure gender, disability and protection are effectively addressed in humanitarian action**. RedR is committed to the empowerment of women and girls and Australia Assists aims to complement Australia's global leadership in strengthening gender equality and protection across the full cycle of a disaster.

This program focus is underpinned by a formal Gender Equality Strategy and a Disability Inclusion Strategy, both in effect from 2017-2024. As part of this commitment, RedR developed a Gender Action Plan (GAP) for the first three years of the Australia Assists program, the progress against which will be reviewed after 30 June 2020.

Research Purpose and Scope:

The purpose of this review was to generate evidence of **gender and protection-related outcomes that emerged** from a sample of Australia Assists deployments during an 18-month period (October 2017 to March 2019). The review also identifies some of the **enablers and barriers** to deployment effectiveness.

Outcomes include those that arose via **targeted activities** (eg. deployment of a Gender Specialist), as well as those that relate to **gender and protection mainstreaming** across the disaster cycle, whereby deployees are successfully building the capacity of program partners and strengthening inclusion in a range of humanitarian contexts.

Key Findings:

1. Australia Assists deployees working **across different agencies on the same response at the same time** add real value in relation to improving coordination and mainstreaming gender and protection. This was found, for example, to have a positive influence on response-wide joint humanitarian plans.

An Australia Assists deployee to the Papua New Guinea Highlands earthquake response managed a joint '**Gender, Protection and Empowerment**' program that reached more than **71,000 earthquake survivors**.



Syrian women learning about grain production in Mardin, Turkey, for a UNFAO sustainable livelihoods project. Photo: Carly Learson/RedR Australia.



20
deployments



11
host countries



6
host agencies



6 MONTHS
average deployment
length

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2. More than 50% of performance evaluation reports reveal that deployees are **not only contributing to institutional strengthening of their host agency but also strengthening the sector** through sharing technical insights and addressing gaps within clusters.
3. **Enabling factors** that contribute to deployee success include having a supportive 'gender and protection champion' within the partner organisation and having close support from RedR.
4. **Sustainability** of gender and protection outcomes are related to length of deployment and the identification of counterpart/s to mentor and continue activities beyond the duration of the role. Over 50% of deployees reported doing a significant amount (reported between 75 and 90%) of **capacity building** as part of their role.
5. Most deployees reported that the level of **buy-in from the partner organisation** to work on gender and protection was high. However, capacity to deliver was low across all regions and sectors due to resourcing limitations, lack of dedicated gender and/or protection specialist staff, and little understanding of roles and responsibilities within the cluster system.
6. Partners value the contributions that Australia Assists has made to **building alliances and networks**.
7. Program partners recognise that having gender and protection skills on the ground are essential to saving lives in a response. They perceived the humanitarian system to be slow in recognising this but acknowledged that Australia Assists understands the need for dedicated gender and protection roles.
8. Australia Assists continues to successfully **train and brief** its deployees prior to departure but could

include more **specific tools and guidance on how to mainstream** gender and protection for non-experts.

9. Australia Assists deployees generally **produce detailed reports of their deployment outcomes**, including documenting barriers to effectiveness and opportunities to address these.

"The clinics now understand that it is a requirement to provide SGBV screening and referral... I can confidently say that Petra has increased access for GBV survivors."

- Aggi Dawainavesi, International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF), on Australia Assists Gender Based Violence Specialist, Petra Letter

Recommendations

1. Equip deployees with a tip sheet on gender and protection mainstreaming in pre-deployment packs.
2. Utilise gender and protection specialists on the roster as trainers, mentors or for discrete pieces of policy work.
3. Upskill roster members with specific gender-based violence (GBV) and protection training.
4. Advocate for meaningful gender or protection objectives in every deployment terms of reference (TOR).
5. Report progress against the program's Gender Action Plan to roster members and program partners.
6. Socialise RedR's GBV policy among program stakeholders to encourage engagement and understanding of organisational and deployee obligations.



Australia Assists Gender and Protection Advisor with the Vanuatu Department of Women's Affairs, Nimarta Khuman, speaks with her team about planning for the Ambae Resettlement Response.