

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate

**The Administration, Management and
Objective of Australia's Overseas
Development Programs in Afghanistan in
the Context of the 'Transition Decade'**

Submission by Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision

September 2012



Contents

1	Overview	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	About us	4
1.3	Scope of our response	5
1.4	Summary of Recommendations	6
2	An Evaluation of Australia’s Bilateral Aid Program to Date in Afghanistan	12
2.1	The Delivery of Aid through the Australian Defence Force	12
2.2	Geographic Distribution of Australia’s Aid to Afghanistan	13
2.3	Modalities for the Delivery of Australian Development Assistance	14
2.3.1	The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and National Priority Programs	14
2.3.2	Civil society	15
2.3.3	Aid channelled through multilateral organisations	16
3	The Means to Most Effectively Address the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan	17
3.1	Agricultural Development: A Key to Achieving Millennium Development Goal 1 (Eradicating Poverty)	17
3.1.1	Rethinking agricultural approaches and natural resource management in a changing climate	17
3.1.2	Focusing on nutrition – not just productivity	19
3.1.3	Improving irrigation infrastructure	20
3.2	Millennium Development Goal 2 (Universal Primary Education)	21
3.2.1	Access and enrolment: ensuring equity	21
3.2.2	Teaching quality and learning outcomes	22
3.2.3	Community ownership	23
3.2.4	Education in emergencies	24
3.2.5	School safety	25
3.3	Millennium Development Goal 3: (Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment)	26
3.3.1	Eliminating gender disparity in education	26
3.3.2	Gender justice and women’s rights	28
3.4	Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 (Child Mortality and Reproductive Health)	31
3.5	Protecting Progress towards all Millennium Development Goals: Responding to Humanitarian Needs and Building Resilience	33

1 Overview

1.1 Background

On 29 June 2012 the Senate referred ‘the administration, management and objectives of Australia’s overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the “Transition Decade”’ to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee for inquiry and report. The terms of reference are as follows:

- a) an evaluation of Australia’s bilateral aid program to date in Afghanistan;
- b) an evaluation of the interaction and effectiveness of Australia’s bilateral aid, multilateral aid, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and other Australian government departments delivering aid;
- c) the means to most effectively address the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan;
- d) how to guarantee the safety of all workers involved in the delivery of Australian aid programs in Afghanistan; and
- e) any other related matters.

Australia has provided more than \$944 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan over the past decade, and ODA is expected to increase to \$250m per annum by 2015-2016. Australia’s development assistance aims to strengthen the ability and capacity of Afghan institutions to govern effectively, as well as to provide basic services, support economic development and assist with capacity building of the Uruzgan administration. AusAID has provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan for many years and has had a country program since 2006.

In July 2012 Australia and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Development Cooperation. The MoU sits under Australia’s Comprehensive Long-term Partnership between Australia and Afghanistan, and establishes a bilateral framework of mutual commitments and principles and a shared vision to work together to meet common development objectives. The MoU partnership priorities aim to support Afghanistan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the New Deal Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals, reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development through a private-sector-led market economy, promote gender equality and empower women, and build human capacity through improved education and health services. Australia has committed to delivering assistance in sectors where Australia has particular expertise, comparative advantage and can have the most impact.

This inquiry is the first independent review of Australia’s ‘whole of Government’ aid program in Afghanistan. We recommend that the Committee consider Australia’s aid program in the context of relevant policies and commitments of the Australian Government including *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*, *Australia’s Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework*, the *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*, the *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* and the *Humanitarian Action Policy*, as well as recent evaluations of Australian aid including the *Australian Multilateral Assessment* and the *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*.

A decade of development assistance in Afghanistan has seen enormous gains. To cite just a few examples: the number of children attending primary school has increased from one million to seven million, the number of women dying from pregnancy-related causes has fallen from one in eleven to one in 50, the number of children dying before their fifth birthday has fallen from one in four to one in 14, and life expectancy has increased by 15 years.¹ As donors prepare for the drawdown of international troops, our greatest concern is that we will see a reduction in international development assistance, and a reversal in the improvements made in the lives of the Afghan people.

This submission aims to inform the provision of Australian aid to Afghanistan with a view to ensuring that it achieves the best possible outcomes for the Afghan people, and that the significant investment made thus far does not go to waste.

1.2 About us

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have been providing humanitarian relief and development assistance in Afghanistan for decades, and prior to 2001 accounted for almost all essential services delivered throughout the country. Today NGOs in Afghanistan continue to provide a broad array of services, spanning the continuum between relief and development with programs focusing on health, education, food security and livelihoods, women's rights, governance and peacebuilding, to name a few. A report by the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute in 2006 noted that 'given the acknowledged lack of implementing capacity in the Afghan government, NGOs are deemed to be indispensable to the implementing of aid efforts by both donors and the Afghan government alike.'² This statement holds true today. NGOs continue to be acknowledged as having the particular skills and expertise – derived from long-term operational presence and strong community links – essential for the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in the highly complex and politicised environment that is Afghanistan.³



Save the Children has worked in Afghanistan since 1976, and is currently working with the Afghan Government, local partners and communities to deliver life-changing programs to 700,000 children in the areas of child protection, health, nutrition, education, child rights and emergency response. Save the Children is currently receiving substantial support from AusAID to implement a four-year program in Uruzgan Province aimed at enhancing access to, quality and use of basic health and education services for 300,000 beneficiaries, with a focus on women and girls, ethnic minorities and those in remote and underserved communities.

¹ Steve Packer et al, 'Education Sector Analysis Afghanistan' (Adam Smith International, June 2010) 4 (primary school enrolment); and Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010' (November 2011) at 128 (number of women dying from pregnancy-related complications), 91 (under-five mortality) and 113 (life expectancy).

² Lara Olson, 'Fighting for Humanitarian Space: NGOs in Afghanistan' (2006) 9(1) *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 7.

³ Phil Sparrow, 'In it for the Long Haul: Delivering Australian Aid to Afghanistan' (ACFID Research in Development Series Report No 1, Australian Council for International Development, March 2011) 20.



Oxfam is a confederation of 15 organisations working in 92 countries around the world to fight poverty and injustice. Oxfam has been operating in Afghanistan for three decades and currently works in 18 of the country's 34 provinces. Oxfam works directly with poor communities, as well as with local partners, supporting Afghans to improve their lives and overcome poverty. To create lasting change, Oxfam also speaks out on their behalf at the highest levels in both Afghanistan and the international community. Oxfam's work in Afghanistan focuses on three main areas: humanitarian, development and policy and advocacy to help people address the challenges of everyday life: finding enough to eat, sending their children to school and coping with conflict and disasters. Oxfam's work also supports Afghan people in achieving sustainable livelihoods, accessing essential services and upholding their basic and most fundamental human rights, especially those of women.



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision has been operating in Afghanistan for over ten years and its national office is located in Herat city. It works with all levels of the Afghan government, local partners and communities to implement life-transforming programs in three provinces: Herat, Badghis and Ghor. World Vision supports the most vulnerable Afghans with programs focusing on the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, agricultural development, water and natural resource management, education, women's health and empowerment, maternal newborn child health, and child protection. World Vision also provides humanitarian assistance.

1.3 Scope of our response

The first part of this submission responds in brief to the second question addressed by this Inquiry, *an evaluation of the interaction and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid, multilateral aid, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and other Australian government departments delivering aid.* As detailed above, Save the Children, Oxfam and WV have been working in Afghanistan for a collective total of over 70 years, and over this time have partnered with a range of government and non-government organisations including various ministries and departments of the Afghan Government and all of the multilateral organisations that receive Australia aid. We are therefore well placed to suggest issues to be taken into account in evaluating the interaction and

effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid, multilateral aid, the ARTF and other Australian government departments delivering aid.

Part two comprises the bulk of our submission and responds to the third question addressed by this Inquiry: the means to most effectively address the MDGs. Our collective experience in Afghanistan and around the world underpins our capacity to provide analysis and recommendations to the Committee. Moreover, being forward-looking, we believe this to be the most important area of the Committee's Inquiry. We focus in particular on our own areas of expertise, that is: how to ensure MDGs 1 (ending poverty and hunger), 2 (achieving universal education), 3 (promoting gender equality), 4 (improving child mortality) and 5 (improving maternal health) are met by 2020; and on how the Australian Government can best ensure that progress towards these MDGs is resourced, accelerated and sustained.

1.4 Summary of Recommendations

- Recommendation 1. The scope of this Inquiry should include an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of ADF-supported development projects, in line with existing commitments in the Australian Government's *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* and *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*.⁴ This is essential to ensure that lessons from Afghanistan are learned and documented for reference in future contexts in which the ADF is called upon to manage ODA-eligible aid, and secondly so that lessons from Afghanistan can feed into the development of uniform standards across Australian government departments for planning, delivery, monitoring and reporting of ODA.
- Recommendation 2. The Australian Government should continue to ensure that the geographic distribution of its aid to Afghanistan, including its bilateral aid, is based on need, with a view to redressing the historical inequities in the allocation of aid across the country.
- Recommendation 3. The Australian Government should continue to use and expand upon models for service delivery that have had proven success, including the BPHS and the EQUIP. The Australian Government should however be mindful of absorption capacity, and as part of a shift towards 50 per cent on-budget funding, should ensure adequate investment in capacity building for key government ministries, and should conduct capacity assessments of key ministries prior to awarding funds.
- Recommendation 4. The Australian Government should ensure that throughout the post-transition period, sufficient off-budget funds continue to be made available

⁴ The Australian government's *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* is committed to 'well-targeted development assistance based on rigorous analysis and understanding of the specific challenges...' (at 6) and states that 'effective responses must be long-term and underpinned by a deeper understanding of the needs and opportunities...' (at 9). The objectives of military-led aid should therefore be assessed on the basis of their convergence with the objectives of the overall Framework and Australia's aid program: Australian Agency for International Development, 'Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict, Affected States' (2011).

to international NGOs, and through them, their national partners. Sustainable and predictable (long-term) support for civil society will further enhance its ability to ensure that Afghan needs are met, as well as to monitor aid and major public contracts, thereby promoting accountability, good governance and value for money.

Recommendation 5. In those instances where the Australian Government contributes funds to multilateral organisations for targeted interventions and humanitarian responses, it should seek to measure performance against its own objectives and be transparent about the outcomes. Specifically, the Australian Government should strive to monitor the amount of aid which actually gets to implementing partners, the speed at which such funds are disbursed and the quality of aid ultimately provided. Such an approach would help to ensure the accountability of Australia's humanitarian action and the delivery of efficient, effective responses in line with the Government's policies and commitments.⁵

Recommendation 6. The Australian Government should provide support for:

- further research into improved seed varieties (including drought resistant crops) and farming techniques to ensure investments in agricultural production lead to sustainable economic growth and reduce the vulnerability of poor households to the effects of climate change;
- programs that support the equitable distribution of improved seeds and associated inputs (including fertiliser and tools) so they are accessible to the rural poor of Afghanistan – not just medium to large sized farmers who have the means to purchase seed at near-market rates; and
- programs that provide training on improved farming techniques to increase crop yields in a sustainable manner (including 'dry-farming'), improved natural resource management (including low-cost farmer-managed natural regeneration and water conservation methods) and marketing strategies (including linking growers to markets and processing plants).

Recommendation 7. The Australian Government should provide support for agricultural development programs that:

- are designed to address the major determinants of malnutrition in the relevant agricultural and cultural contexts within Afghanistan; and

⁵ See Commonwealth of Australia, *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results* (2011) (sec 4.5, 'A Transparent Aid Program Focused on Results'); Australian Agency for International Development, 'Humanitarian Action Policy' (December 2011) ('Performance Assessment Framework').

- involve greater participation of women, so as to increase their control over resources and improve nutritional outcomes of increased agricultural production.

Recommendation 8. The Australian Government should provide increased bilateral support for investments in developing and rehabilitating irrigation infrastructure, as well as supporting increased community participation in its management, to increase agricultural productivity, improve food security, reduce vulnerability to drought and minimise water-related disputes.

Recommendation 9. The Australian Government should support the Ministry of Education (MoE) to disaggregate enrolment figures, not just by gender but taking into account other vulnerabilities, so as to be able to better understand and respond to the problem of marginalised and vulnerable children out of school. The Australian Government should also support programs aimed at improving access to education for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 10. Now that significant progress has been made towards increasing the number of children in school, the Australian Government should ensure that its support for the education sector includes an adequate focus on education quality, and specifically on learning outcomes, and that this is strongly reflected in program objectives as well as in monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The Australian Government's current focus on training for teachers at various levels is a positive one, and should be continued.

Recommendation 11. The Australian Government should increase its support for programs that aim to increase community participation in the management of schools, including by supporting local governance structures; and should explore opportunities for promoting community involvement in the roll out of the national Education Management Information System across all central and provincial departments of the MoE.

Recommendation 12. In order to ensure that gains made through development funding are not lost, the Australian Government must ensure that its development funding for education is complemented by sufficient humanitarian funding directed towards education, for example through the education cluster and the Common Appeals Process (CAP).

Recommendation 13. The Australian Government should support the MoE to develop and implement guidelines and policies that ensure that all newly constructed (or remodelled) schools are constructed on sites that are safe and utilise earthquake/flood-resilient designs. Policies should also ensure appropriate oversight of the selection of materials and of the construction process, and an appropriate maintenance schedule.

- Recommendation 14. The Australian Government should support the MoE to: ensure that data collected for the Annual Education Summary Report includes information on school safety; work with the national disaster management organisation, provincial authorities and local communities to conduct education continuity planning (taking into account expected hazards, seasonal restrictions in access to schools and potential use of schools as shelters) as well as disaster management training for school staff; and to develop a system for regular maintenance of all schools.
- Recommendation 15. The Australian Government should continue and expand its support for girls' education in Afghanistan, ensuring a holistic approach that recognises and responds to multiple barriers including poverty, early marriage, lack of qualified female teachers, insecurity and distance. The Australian Government should continue to support teacher training programs such as the Malaysia Australia Education Program for Afghanistan, ensuring a strong focus on women and on teachers from rural areas. Additional suggested interventions include: incentive and mentoring programs aimed at increasing the number of female teachers particularly in rural areas; complimentary livelihoods programs so that parents can afford to send children to school; support for preventative measures aimed at improving school security; additional support for community-based education; and further increasing the number of female-friendly schools, particularly in rural areas.
- Recommendation 16. Women's rights should be a key focus of the Australian aid program in Afghanistan, as an effective means to reduce poverty and achieve progress not only against MDG 3, but against all the MDGs.
- Recommendation 17. The Australian Government should include Afghanistan as a key country focus for implementing Australia's *National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security* in order to address the related issues of violence against women and women's political participation. This should include diplomatic, defence and development efforts to support the Afghan government to meet its national and international commitments on women's rights (including legal frameworks on violence against women); supporting an Afghan-led and internationally supported process to develop Afghanistan's own National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; working with women and women's organisations to ensure that efforts to enhance women's political participation and to reduce violence against women take account of both the Afghan and Islamic context; and ensuring men and boys are engaged in activities to encourage attitudinal change towards women and girls.
- Recommendation 18. The Australian Government should ensure that targeted, short term projects to address women's rights are complemented by long-term and predictable programmatic support to women's and civil society organisations. Long-

term programmatic support will also build the capacity of women and civil society organisations to address long term changes in social attitudes towards women; and to hold Afghan authorities to account.

- Recommendation 19. The Australian Government should support the Afghan Government and civil society (including both national and international NGOs) to further expand the reach of community-based health workers, particularly women, and with a particular focus on rural areas. In particular, the Australian Government should provide bilateral support to international and national NGOs who have existing operations in remote and insecure areas to implement and scale-up maternal and child health programs where there is limited or no Afghan Government health care services.
- Recommendation 20. The Australian Government should also prioritise support for components of the BPHS that have not as yet been implemented, with a particular focus on tackling malnutrition. The Australian Government should ensure that its support for the health sector includes: a scaling up of direct nutrition interventions; support for the Afghan Government to develop and implement a national cross-cutting nutrition strategy; and support for capacity development in key ministries (particularly health, agriculture and education) with a view to enabling government staff to design and execute effective nutrition policies and programs.
- Recommendation 21. The Australian Government should ensure that its Afghanistan country strategy aligns with its *Humanitarian Action Policy*, and reflects a long-term commitment to humanitarian funding so as to ensure timely responses rather than a reactive approach.
- Recommendation 22. The Australian Government should increase its contribution to humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, either through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) or at least in line with the strategic objectives outlined in the CAP which have been agreed to by the humanitarian community in Afghanistan.
- Recommendation 23. The Australian Government should ensure that its aid funding is able to respond to uncertainty. Funding could be more agile and flexible, for example by including crisis modifiers in multi-year development grants to build recurring-crisis response into development programming, and by ensuring that humanitarian funding can support pre-emptive or early response.
- Recommendation 24. The Australian Government should, in line with its disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy, *Investing in a Safer Future: A Disaster Risk Reduction Policy for the Australian Aid Program*, ensure measures are taken to reduce disaster risk through all development and humanitarian programs. This will also ensure that development is safeguarded from disasters, and development and humanitarian programs do not create new forms of vulnerability.

Strong DRR and preparedness will allow the reduction of dependency on emergency responses. The Australian Government should prioritise and fund principled humanitarian response programs, including providing support to Afghan institutions, NGOs and local communities to help build DRR, disaster management and response capacity, in accordance with Afghans' needs rather than reducing transaction costs.

2 An Evaluation of Australia's Bilateral Aid Program to Date in Afghanistan

2.1 The Delivery of Aid through the Australian Defence Force

A substantial proportion of Australia's aid to Afghanistan has been allocated to the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The proportion of Australia's ODA to Afghanistan spent by the ADF in 2009-2010 was 44.7 per cent, down from 54.1 per cent in 2008-2009, and 51.2 per cent in 2007-2008.⁶ Altogether the ADF spent \$252 million in ODA eligible expenditure in the period 2006 and 2010, of which \$37 million was directly spent on projects.⁷

A growing body of research is questioning the effectiveness of development assistance implemented by military actors. A report released in 2010 by a number of aid agencies working in Afghanistan noted that military institutions often lack the capacity to effectively manage development initiatives, and are unable to achieve the level of local trust, engagement and community ownership required to achieve positive and lasting improvements.⁸ The report noted that 'militarised aid' tends to focus on winning hearts and minds rather than on poverty alleviation, and that military involvement in development projects can put beneficiaries at risk of attack.⁹ A more recent report published by Oxfam found similarly that 'poorly conceived aid projects aimed at winning hearts and minds have proved ineffective, costly, and have sometimes turned beneficiary communities and aid workers into targets of attack.'¹⁰

Development and reconstruction projects implemented by the ADF in Afghanistan have not been independently evaluated for cost-effectiveness, impact or sustainability. Nor has the ADF, in its financial reporting, disaggregated its aid operations in Afghanistan from its military operations.

The Australian government's *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* notes that 'fragility and conflict are priority issues for Australia's aid program'. *An Effective Aid Program for Australia* commits to 'creating uniform standards across government department to planning, delivery, monitoring and reporting' of the 'whole-of-ODA'.¹¹ With a substantial portion of Australian aid being directed towards fragile and conflict-affected states, and a possibility that the ADF will again be called upon to manage ODA in these contexts, it is imperative that lessons be learned from Afghanistan and that, moving forward, the Australian Government adhere to its commitment to developing and

⁶ Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Answers to Questions on Notice, Additional Estimates 2009–10, February 2010, Question 16, <http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/FADT_CTTE/estimates/add_0910/dfat/Ans-AusAID-Feb10.pdf>.

⁷ Ravi Tomar, 'Australian Aid to Afghanistan' (Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Australia, 18 July 2011) 7.

⁸ Ashley Jackson, 'Quick Impact, Quick Collapse: The Dangers of Militarized Aid in Afghanistan' (Oxfam International et al, 2010) 1.

⁹ Ibid Ibid 3.

¹⁰ Shinmyoung Choi, 'Whose Aid is it Anyway? Politicising Aid in Conflicts and Crises' (145 Oxfam Briefing Paper, Oxfam International, 10 February 2011) 2.

¹¹ *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*, above n 5, 64.

implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework that captures the entirety of whole-of-government aid.

Recommendation 1:

The scope of this Inquiry should include an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of ADF-supported development projects, in line with existing commitments in the Australian Government's *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* and *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*.¹² This is essential to ensure that lessons from Afghanistan are learned and documented for reference in future contexts in which the ADF is called upon to manage ODA-eligible aid, and secondly so that lessons from Afghanistan can feed into the development of uniform standards across Australian government departments for planning, delivery, monitoring and reporting of ODA.

2.2 Geographic Distribution of Australia's Aid to Afghanistan

The geographic distribution of aid to Afghanistan has been uneven, with many donors having preferred provinces where they have a military presence, leading to disparities in provincial allocations that have not always reflected local needs. This disparity has skewed provincial economies and effectively penalised areas that are more secure.¹³

The geographic distribution of Australian aid compares favourably to that of other donors, with just 10 per cent of Australian aid having been allocated to Uruzgan province since 2008-2009.¹⁴ The Australian Government is also to be commended for not having earmarked its on-budget financing for specific provinces.

Recommendation 2:

The Australian Government should continue to ensure that the geographic distribution of its aid to Afghanistan, including its bilateral aid, is based on need, with a view to redressing the historical inequities in the allocation of aid across the country.

¹² The Australian government's *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* is committed to 'well-targeted development assistance based on rigorous analysis and understanding of the specific challenges...' (at 6) and states that 'effective responses must be long-term and underpinned by a deeper understanding of the needs and opportunities...' (at 9). The objectives of military-led aid should therefore be assessed on the basis of their convergence with the objectives of the overall Framework and Australia's aid program: *Framework for Working in Fragile and Conflict Affected States*, above n 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sparrow, above n 3, 1.

2.3 Modalities for the Delivery of Australian Development Assistance

2.3.1 The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and National Priority Programs

The bulk of Australia's development assistance to Afghanistan is delivered through the World Bank-managed ARTF. Between 2001 and 2010, Australia directed 38 per cent of its ODA to Afghanistan to the ARTF, funding National Priority Programs including the National Solidarity Program (NSP), the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP), the National Rural Access Program and the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS).¹⁵

The implementation models adopted by the NSP and the BPHS are generally regarded as having been effective in bring about significant advances in service delivery, and the model adopted by the EQUIP is also beginning to see results. Positive attributes of these models include:

- The majority of funding is on-budget and managed by the concerned ministries, thus ensuring that programs fit with government priorities, policies and strategies. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation are standardised and regulated by the ministry;
- Ministries contract out program implementation to NGOs, who are able to draw upon their expertise in the communities in which they work, thus enhancing the quality of program design. Moreover, programs delivered by NGOs are often in areas that are out of reach of the government line ministries, and yet the programs are recognised by communities as government programs, thus enhancing government legitimacy. The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) notes that 'contracting with NGOs has worked well in Afghanistan and has proven to be a way for the government to rapidly regain and maintain policy leadership', and that 'contracting has proven to be enormously successful in expanding service coverage and improving on quality of care.'¹⁶
- Donors, government and implementing NGOs work in partnership, leading to mutual learning and capacity building, support and supervision;
- They involve substantial measures to include women, such as the NSP's minimum quota of two women in each community development council executive; and
- The programs are designed to ensure substantial community involvement in design, implementation and monitoring, resulting in ownership and sustainability.¹⁷

There are still improvements to be made; but if such programs are expanded and replicated, backed by long-term, sustainable funding, and the lessons from past evaluations addressed, the impact of a reduction in international development assistance could be substantially mitigated. Oxfam examined strengths and weaknesses of World Bank led trust funds as part

¹⁵ Ibid 9; ibid Australian Agency for International Development, *Afghanistan Country Page*, <<http://www.usaid.gov/countries/southasia/afghanistan/Pages/home.aspx>>.

¹⁶ Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Strategic Plan 2011-2015' (May 2011) 19.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the above elements of success see Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, 'Tokyo Briefing Paper: Service Delivery' (2012).

of its analysis of post tsunami aid delivery and recovery funding.¹⁸ This indicated the importance of independent monitoring by civil society and NGOs in the set up and delivery of projects under World Bank led MDTFs.

Recommendation 3:

The Australian Government should continue to use and expand upon models for service delivery that have had proven success, including the BPHS and the EQUIP. The Australian Government should however be mindful of absorption capacity, and as part of a shift towards 50 per cent on-budget funding, should ensure adequate investment in capacity building for key government ministries, and should conduct capacity assessments of key ministries prior to awarding funds.

2.3.2 Civil society

While support for the Afghan Government to deliver National Priority Programs is essential, the importance of civil society (including both Afghan and international NGOs) must also be recognised. Civil society plays a critical role in holding authorities to account and in minimising corruption; and in ensuring that development projects meet the needs of Afghans and that donors and tax payers get value for money. Civil society organisations that are perceived as being independent also play a critical role in providing humanitarian and development assistance in insecure areas with limited government presence or control. Civil society also plays an important role by investing in innovation and independent research, and in piloting new ideas. And finally, the role played by civil society, and in particular women's organisations, is essential in ensuring that programs are gender-sensitive, and in promoting women's rights in a manner that is culturally appropriate. The Australian Government has worked closely with NGO partners in Afghanistan, and continues to do so through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program. The Australian Government's *Strategic Approach to Aid in Afghanistan 2010-2012* also commits the Government to engage with and build the capacity of Afghan NGOs.¹⁹ It is important that this commitment continues.

Recommendation 4:

The Australian Government should ensure that throughout the post-transition period, sufficient off-budget funds continue to be made available to international NGOs, and through them, their national partners. Sustainable and predictable (long-term) support for civil society will further enhance its ability to ensure that Afghan needs are met, as well as to monitor aid and major public contracts, thereby promoting accountability, good governance and value for money.

¹⁸ Dr Thomas Davis, *World Bank "Post Crisis' Multi – donor trust funds*, Oxfam Australia 2008, sourced September 10 2012, http://resources.oxfam.org.au/pages/view.php?ref=250&search=research&offset=0&order_by=popularity&sort=DESC&archive=0

¹⁹ Australian Agency for International Development, 'Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Afghanistan 2010-2012' (December 2010) 15.

2.3.3 Aid channelled through multilateral organisations

In recent years, the Australian Government has substantially increased the proportion of ODA it channels through multilateral organisations. Between 2005-2006 and 2008-2009 the Australian Government allocated over \$150 million to multilaterals;²⁰ in 2010-11 the contribution was \$1.6 billion, amounting to 37 per cent of all ODA.²¹ The *Australian Multilateral Assessment*, completed in 2011, found the channelling of funds through multilateral organisations to be an effective and efficient use of Australian funds. However, it is unclear whether Australian aid channelled through multilateral organisations for targeted humanitarian responses has been evaluated for impact or effectiveness. As recommended by the *Multilateral Assessment*, it is important that the Australian Government maintains responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the impact of Australian aid channelled through multilateral organisations in a transparent manner. The Australian Government should also evaluate the cost-effectiveness of channelling aid through multilateral organisations given that they charge significant overheads and then usually subcontract projects to international or national NGOs who also need to cover their operating expenditure.

Recommendation 5:

In those instances where the Australian Government contributes funds to multilateral organisations for targeted interventions and humanitarian responses, it should seek to measure performance against its own objectives, safeguards and be transparent about the outcomes. Specifically, the Australian Government should strive to monitor the amount of aid which actually gets to implementing partners, the speed at which such funds are disbursed and the quality of aid ultimately provided. Such an approach would help to ensure the accountability of Australia's humanitarian action and the delivery of efficient, effective responses in line with the Government's policies and commitments.²²

²⁰ Tomar, above n 7, 3. See also Jonathan Cornford, *Banking on Aid. An Examination of the Delivery of Australian Aid through the World Bank and Asian Development Bank*, October 2011 Manna Gum & Oxfam Australia; http://resources.oxfam.org.au/pages/view.php?ref=653&search=&offset=0&order_by=relevance&sort=DESC&archive=0&k=

²¹ Australian Agency for International Development, 'Australian Multilateral Assessment' (March 2011) ix.

²² See *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*, above n 5 (sec 4.5, 'A Transparent Aid Program Focused on Results') and the *Humanitarian Action Policy*, above n 5 ('Performance Assessment Framework').

3 The Means to Most Effectively Address the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan

3.1 Agricultural Development: A Key to Achieving Millennium Development Goal 1 (Eradicating Poverty)

In 2004, the Afghan Government signed up to the goal of reducing the number of people living on less than US\$1 per day by 3 per cent per annum until 2020.²³ It also agreed to reduce the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 5 per cent per annum until 2010.

While significant progress has been made in terms of health and education, approximately 36 per cent of the Afghan population are still living below the poverty line and cannot meet their basic consumption needs (being 3% higher than the 2005 baseline).²⁴ Approximately 37 per cent of Afghans are on the borderline of food insecurity.²⁵

The above indicators suggest that Afghanistan's progress falls far below what is required to achieve MDG 1 by 2020. This begs the question: what can be done to accelerate progress towards achieving this goal? The answer to this lies in part in fostering agricultural and rural development.

Afghanistan is a highly agrarian society with approximately 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas.²⁶ Agriculture is the main livelihood source for 42 per cent of the population²⁷ and accounts for 60 per cent of employment.²⁸ The dominance of agriculture in the Afghan economy is likely to continue in the medium term. It is therefore critical to accelerate agricultural and rural development to help achieve MDG 1. The following section sets out recommendations on how to harness the power of agriculture to help the majority of Afghans escape the poverty and hunger cycle.

3.1.1 Rethinking agricultural approaches and natural resource management in a changing climate

Afghanistan's rural areas are producing only a fraction of their potential. Half of the population who depend on agriculture as their main livelihood source are subsistence

²³ Afghanistan formulated its own country-specific MDGs to reflect local realities. Rather than agreeing to halve the number of people living on less than US\$1 per day by 2015 against a baseline of 1990, it agreed to reduce this by 3% per annum by 2020 against a baseline of 33% of 2005.

²⁴ Afghan Ministry of Economy / The World Bank, 'Poverty Status in Afghanistan: A Profile Based on National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8' (July 2010) 10.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ 'Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Afghanistan', above n 18, 5.

²⁷ Afghan Ministry of Economy / The World Bank, above n 23.

²⁸ Ibid.

farmers.²⁹ They are greatly exposed to seasonality and are unable to maintain their livelihoods for up to half of the year. They are also highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as droughts and floods.

Agricultural trends now present strong evidence of a changing climate and land degradation, calling for renewed thinking on Afghan farming systems. Evolving environmental conditions are projected to lead to less rainfall and higher temperatures, affecting overall crop productivity. Livestock numbers will also be affected by drought, with declining access to fodder. The most vulnerable groups to climate change in Afghanistan are poor farmers and pastoralists that are least able to adapt to changing conditions. Meanwhile, as a result of both drought and increased poverty, coupled with poor natural resource management, the availability of wild food resources has also been strained, and supplies have been overharvested, further degrading land.

These projections call for a reconsideration of existing agricultural approaches in Afghanistan to foster economic growth and also build the resilience of communities to adapt to the effects of climate change. At present, 40 per cent of arable land is currently used for the production of cereals, predominantly wheat. Although wheat is a high-value crop, it is important to reconsider the dominance of this crop given that it is highly water-intensive. The International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas has identified new/improved varieties of crops, which provide higher yields than local varieties (including wheat, chickpea, lentil, barley and mungbean). It is important for further research to be conducted into such crops, particularly pulses and beans which require less water, are nitrogen-fixing, provide feed for animals and are edible by humans. This will also help address the nutrition deficiencies, as described in more detail in the next section.

Donors, such as the Australian Government, could provide support to help accelerate the identification, testing and distribution of improved seed varieties and fertilisers in collaboration with civil society (including international and national NGOs). However, it is important to ensure that seeds and fertilisers are made accessible to the rural poor of Afghanistan in an equitable manner. One of the significant criticisms of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)'s current seed distribution program is that it is only accessible to medium-large sized farmers who have the means to purchase subsidised packages, thereby failing to support poor farmers. One way to address this is for the Afghan Government to work with NGOs in identifying appropriate ways to reach the poorest households in remote and insecure areas.

For example, World Vision has worked in Badghis and Ghor provinces to establish nurseries for generating improved seeds and saplings in collaboration with the MAIL. The establishment of seed and sapling nurseries at the local level has helped to foster sustainable livelihoods and reduce dependence on unpredictable roads and security conditions.

In addition to providing support for improved seeds, it is important to train farmers in improved farming techniques to increase crop yields in a sustainable manner, as well as

²⁹ Ibid.

marketing techniques. For example, NGOs could work in collaboration with the MAIL to provide training on sustainable agricultural practices to both women and men on growing nutritious high-value cash crops, as well as providing support to help farmers market their products (such as linking soya bean farms with a soya flour processing plant in Kabul).

As part of providing agricultural training, it is important to provide support for improved natural resource management. Deforestation can be combated through improvements to existing agro-forestry systems and inexpensive reforestation methods, such as farmer-managed natural regeneration. Soil erosion can also be reduced and rainwater filtration increased through limiting farming to less sloping land, or where this is not possible, through the installation of conservation bunds and terraces.

Recommendation 6:

The Australian Government should provide support for:

- **further research into improved seed varieties (including drought resistant crops) and farming techniques to ensure investments in agricultural production lead to sustainable economic growth and reduce the vulnerability of poor households to the effects of climate change;**
- **programs that support the equitable distribution of improved seeds and associated inputs (including fertiliser and tools) so they are accessible to the rural poor of Afghanistan – not just medium to large sized farmers who have the means to purchase seed at near-market rates; and**
- **programs that provide training on improved farming techniques to increase crop yields in a sustainable manner (including ‘dry-farming’), improved natural resource management (including low-cost farmer-managed natural regeneration and water conservation methods) and marketing strategies (including linking growers to markets and processing plants).**

3.1.2 Focusing on nutrition – not just productivity

It is widely assumed that increasing agricultural production will tackle malnutrition through increasing the availability of food, lowering food prices and increasing household income. However, experience in other developing countries has shown that increased agricultural production is not sufficient to reduce malnutrition. Indeed, studies indicate that childhood malnutrition may persist even when household income and food availability increases. It is therefore important for agricultural programs to be designed to not only increase productivity, but also address the major determinants of malnutrition.

As noted above, around 37 per cent of Afghans are on the borderline of food insecurity,³⁰ with nearly 40 per cent of children under three years moderately or severely underweight.³¹ This is largely attributed to food price volatility, seasonality and cultural practices of the

³⁰ Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8: A Profile of Afghanistan' (2008)

³¹ UN Development Programme, 'Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan', <<http://www.undp.org.af>>.

majority of rural households in Afghanistan suffer from a lack of diet diversity, particularly a lack of protein.

In view of the above, it is important to adopt a nutrition-focussed approach to fostering agricultural development. There should be greater investment in mapping the major causes of malnutrition in different agricultural and cultural contexts within Afghanistan. This mapping should then inform the design of agricultural development programs, with a view to diversifying crops to address diet deficiencies.

It is also important for agricultural programs to be designed to encourage greater participation of women because studies show that they are more likely than men to invest in their children's health, nutrition and education. Agricultural interventions that increase women's income and their control over resources can dramatically increase the potential for positive child nutrition and health outcomes, and the results are most pronounced among the lowest income groups. One way to potentially harness greater participation of women in the design of agricultural programs is to replicate the governance model established under the NSP, which is managed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and implemented through local and international NGOs. Under the NSP, each village establishes a gender-balanced community development council through a democratic process. Each community development council must plan, manage and monitor its own development projects in consultation with the village community, with an emphasis on the participation of women in decision-making. An independent evaluation of the NSP has shown that it has led to greater participation of women in local governance, but it remains to be seen whether this will result in increased involvement of women in household decisions or greater control by women over earned income or assets.³²

Recommendation 7:

The Australian Government should provide support for agricultural development programs that:

- **are designed to address the major determinants of malnutrition in the relevant agricultural and cultural context within Afghanistan; and**
- **involve greater participation of women, so as to increase their control over resources and improve nutritional outcomes of increased agricultural production.**

3.1.3 Improving irrigation infrastructure

Afghanistan has a total land mass of 65 million hectares, with only 8 million hectares of arable land.³³ The Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that only 2.7 million hectares of arable land is under irrigation, with much of the country's existing irrigation infrastructure destroyed by conflict.³⁴

³² Beath A., Fotini, C., Enikolopov R., Kabuli S., *Randomized Impact Evaluation of Phase II of Afghanistan's National Solidary Programme*, Commissioned by the World Bank, July 2010, p. 82.

³³ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), *Afghanistan and FAO: Achievements and Success Stories*, FAO, May 2011.

³⁴ Ibid.

Irrigation can significantly increase crop yields and facilitate the production of higher-value crops. Therefore, in order to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural output, it is important to rehabilitate existing irrigation infrastructure and develop sustainable irrigation practices, especially in light of the effects of climate change cited above.

Accordingly, it is important to increase investment in programs aimed at developing and rehabilitating village irrigation infrastructure through low-cost, sustainable methods. For example, farmers can be trained to capture excess rainfall through the construction of low-cost water storage tanks and small dams. Stored water can be used during dry periods for irrigating land through low-cost pumps. Farmers can also be trained in drip irrigation and water diversion methods to enhance irrigation efficiency. Natural springs can also be protected and effectively utilised through reforestation of spring catchment areas and developing water reservoirs. These investments in irrigation will increase agricultural productivity, improve food security, increase on-farm employment and reduce vulnerability to drought. They also have the potential to reduce the incidence of water related disputes, thereby promoting social cohesion and solidarity among communities.

Recommendation 8:

The Australian Government should provide increased bilateral support for investments in developing and rehabilitating village level irrigation infrastructure to increase agricultural productivity, improve food security, reduce vulnerability to drought and minimise water-related disputes.

3.2 Millennium Development Goal 2 (Universal Primary Education)

Afghanistan's National Education Interim Plan (2011-2013) reaffirms Afghanistan's MDG for education, that by 2020, 'all children in Afghanistan, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary education.'³⁵ The Plan states that based on current demographic projections, the education system will need to provide primary school education to 8.8 million children by 2020, and that meeting this target will require an additional 99,000 teachers at an annual cost of US\$232 million.³⁶ With demand already significantly exceeding supply, this presents a daunting challenge.

3.2.1 Access and enrolment: ensuring equity

Ten years of donor investment in education in Afghanistan have seen significant results. The number of children enrolled in school has increased from 1 million to almost 7 million, and the number of girls enrolled has increased from almost nothing to 2.7 million.³⁷ But while these gains are impressive, progress towards achieving universal primary school enrolment remains behind target. An estimated five million primary school aged children, 42-46 per

³⁵ Ministry of Education Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'National Education Interim Plan 2011-2013' (January 2011)

³⁶ Ibid 2.

³⁷ Ministry of Education Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Response to EFA Global Monitoring Report - 2011' (2011) 3.

cent of the total, have either never been to school, have dropped out, or drop in and out on an irregular basis.³⁸

Moreover, behind the impressive enrolment figures lie significant disparities between provinces, between urban and rural areas, between girls and boys, and between mainstream and minority groups. The 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report for Afghanistan shows a Gender Parity Index of 0.63, which based on available data is the lowest in the world.³⁹ The 2010 Education Sector Analysis report describes this as ‘almost certainly the biggest challenge which Afghanistan faces, in both its efforts to achieve universal primary education and to enable girls to have the same opportunities to progress through the education system as boys.’⁴⁰ The specific challenges associated with improving girls’ access to education are discussed below (section 3.3.1) in the context of ensuring progress towards MDG 3.

Vulnerable and marginalised children in remote, under-served areas continue to be left out of school.⁴¹ Discrimination is endemic, particularly against ethnic and religious minorities, and prevents many children from accessing mainstream education. There is a high level of commitment at the ministerial level to inclusive education, but its meaning and scope is poorly understood.⁴² The 2010 Education Sector Analysis report notes that ‘the policy environment and the leadership and management of Inclusive Education in the Ministry of Education is weak,’ and that ‘a stronger conceptual framework is needed to adequately reflect the needs of girls, Kuchi children, children from religious minority groups, and children kept from school by security issues, child labour and children with learning difficulties.’⁴³

Recommendation 9:

The Australian Government should support the MoE to disaggregate enrolment figures, not just by gender but taking into account other vulnerabilities, so as to be able to better understand and respond to the problem of marginalised and vulnerable children out of school. The Australian Government should also support programs aimed at improving access to education for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

3.2.2 Teaching quality and learning outcomes

Enrolment figures reveal little about the quality of education provided. Learning outcome data is scarce, and where it exists, paints a concerning picture. Youth literacy across the country is estimated at around 34 per cent, and in some provinces is less than 6 per cent.⁴⁴ Research conducted by Save the Children in 2010 found that only 43 per cent of a sample of grade 3 children could read with comprehension.⁴⁵ Now that significant progress has been

³⁸ Packet et al, above n 1, 23.

³⁹ Ibid 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, above n 17.

⁴² Packet et al, above n 1, xv.

⁴³ Ibid xv.

⁴⁴ Ibid 25.

⁴⁵ Save the Children, 'Rewrite the Future Global Afghanistan: Afghanistan Country Report' (December 2010) 23.

made towards getting children into school, a shift towards a greater focus on quality is appropriate.

The 2010 Education Sector Analysis report notes that poor learning outcomes reflect poor quality inputs, including number and quality of teachers, quality of school buildings, school security, school health facilities, and learning materials. In 2008-2009, for example, less than a third of all teachers had the required grade 14 qualification and almost half of all schools had no buildings.⁴⁶ The Report describes a 'general education system that knows much of what is needed to improve quality but struggles to keep pace with need and to develop the capacity at all levels ... to make learning real for children';⁴⁷ and notes also the extent to which investment in the quality of education depends on external assistance.

Recommendation 10:

Now that significant progress has been made towards increasing the number of children in school, the Australian Government should ensure that its support for the education sector includes an adequate focus on education quality, and specifically on learning outcomes, and that this is strongly reflected in program objectives as well as in monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The Australian Government's current focus on training for teachers at various levels is a positive one, and should be continued.

3.2.3 Community ownership

One way to enhance the quality of teaching, student retention and thus learning outcomes is by promoting community participation in the management of schools. This can be done through establishing and supporting participatory structures such as Parent Teacher Associations, Parent Teacher Student Associations and/or Community Education Committees – collectively referred to by the MoE as 'school shuras'. Evaluations conducted by Save the Children show that these structures can play a critical role in monitoring and supporting children at risk of dropping out of school, thus enhancing student retention. They can also monitor and address access barriers, and can lobby for improvements to school infrastructure and staffing.⁴⁸ Research conducted by Save the Children suggests that such structures are significantly more likely to function where supported by an NGO.⁴⁹

Communities also have a key role to play in school monitoring. Significant progress has been made in recent years in schools monitoring, including compilation of the MoE's Annual Education Summary Report, which involves teachers, district education officials and survey teams.⁵⁰ But significant challenges remain with this annual audit process, including the fact that schools do not receive feedback on their performance relative to other schools, and insecurity and access constraints mean that significant numbers of schools cannot be visited

⁴⁶ Packet et al, above n 1, 27.

⁴⁷ Ibid 28.

⁴⁸ See Save the Children, above n 62, 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid 9.

⁵⁰ Packet et al, above n 1, 113.

and assessed.⁵¹ New or existing community structures could be more widely utilised to provide support in this regard. The introduction of school 'report cards', for example, with community involvement in data collection, could be an effective way to promote the accountability of the education system, thus not only improving learning outcomes but enhancing trust between the MoE and communities, reducing corruption, and cutting costs.⁵²

Research suggests that community engagement in school management can also enhance school security – a growing problem that is a key issue for parents in deciding whether to send their children to school. In the three year period from April 2006 to March 2009, 238 schools were burned down, over 650 schools were closed due to threats, and 290 students and teachers were killed.⁵³ Many of the attacks on education in Afghanistan since 2001 have been attributed to anti-government elements. Factors exacerbating the risk of attack include the use of schools as election facilities, and the association of schools with political and military actors. Research shows that involving communities in school-related decision-making has resulted in successful negotiation with armed groups so as to enable schools to remain open; and that community development councils can be trained to monitor threats against schools and respond through negotiation or reporting through state mechanisms.⁵⁴

Recommendation 11:

The Australian Government should increase its support for programs that aim to increase community participation in the management of schools, including by supporting local governance structures; and should explore opportunities for promoting community involvement in the roll out of the national Education Management Information System across all central and provincial departments of the MoE.

3.2.4 Education in emergencies

In addition to conflict, Afghanistan suffers from chronic vulnerability to droughts, floods and other natural disasters that affect children's daily lives and result in significant numbers of people displaced (see section 3.5, below). Education opportunities suffer enormously as a result, particularly where inadequate provision is made for education in emergencies, either within the government's planning or the overall humanitarian response.

In the 2011 Humanitarian Action Plan for Afghanistan, the only education projects that received funding were projects providing food aid for children attending school. In the 2012 CAP, not a single education project was funded other than projects funded internally by the agencies proposing them. Such consistent underfunding of education needs across Afghanistan's diverse humanitarian contexts reflects an under-appreciation of the importance of educational continuity in the context of emergency response, with the result

⁵¹ Ibid 113. Ibid

⁵² See Ashley Jackson, 'High Stakes: Girls' Education in Afghanistan' (Oxfam International, 24 February 2011) 25.

⁵³ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 'Study on Field-based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack' (December 2011) 34.

⁵⁴ Mark Bailey, 'Afghanistan in Transition: Putting Children at the Heart of Development' (Save the Children, 2011) 8.

that for many children, education is being frequently and in some cases permanently disrupted. Such underfunding also reflects a lack of appreciation of the role played by education in building children’s resilience to cope with shocks.

Recommendation 12:

In order to ensure that gains made through development funding are not lost, the Australian Government must ensure that its development funding for education is complemented by sufficient humanitarian funding directed towards education, for example through the education cluster and the CAP.

3.2.5 School safety

The first strategic goal of the Global Partnership for Education, of which Afghanistan is a member and to which AusAID provides significant funds, is to provide all children with access to a safe, adequately equipped space to receive an education, with a skilled teacher. Currently however, in Afghanistan as in other Global Partnership for Education countries, there is a lack of evidence that schools being constructed with international funds are in fact safe – and indeed there are a number of examples of schools having been assessed and found to be unsafe.⁵⁵ The Annual Education Summary Report produced by the MoE does not provide any comment on school safety. In a context such as Afghanistan that is acutely prone to recurring natural hazards, this places children at significant risk of harm. It also increases the likelihood of education being disrupted when schools are damaged or destroyed and in need of repair, and ultimately increases the cost of promoting universal access to education.

Recommendation 13:

The Australian Government should support the MoE to develop and implement guidelines and policies that ensure that all newly constructed (or remodeled) schools are constructed on sites that are safe and utilise earthquake/flood-resilient designs. Policies should also ensure appropriate oversight of the selection of materials and of the construction process, and an appropriate maintenance schedule.

Recommendation 14:

The Australian Government should support the MoE to: ensure that data collected for the Annual Education Summary Report includes information on school safety; work with the national disaster management organisation, provincial authorities and local communities

⁵⁵ See, for eg, Secretary Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), ‘Quarterly Report to US Congress’ (30 October 2009), which describes issues associated with PRT-constructed schools, including one school in Kapisa province which was found to have problems with its structural integrity and serious design flaws, and another in the same province which was found to have ‘design and safety issues’ and ‘presented an unsafe environment’ due to the absence of a retaining wall to prevent potential rock and mudslides.

to conduct education continuity planning (taking into account expected hazards, seasonal restrictions in access to schools and potential use of schools as shelters) as well as disaster management training for school staff; and to develop a system for regular maintenance of all schools.

3.3 Millennium Development Goal 3: (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment)

Afghanistan's revised targets for achieving MDG 3 are to:

- Eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education no later than 2020
- Reduce gender disparity in economic areas by 2020
- Increase female participation in elected bodies at all levels of governance to 30 per cent by 2020
- Reduce gender disparity in access to justice by 50 per cent by 2015 and completely (100 per cent) by 2020.⁵⁶

The UN Development Program considers only the last of these targets to be achievable (although even this assessment seems surprising based on current indicators), with all others assessed as 'difficult'.⁵⁷

Efforts to promote gender equality and empower women are critical not only for achieving MDG 3 itself, but as a prerequisite for achieving other MDGs, including the eradication of poverty. As recognised by the Australian Government in *Promoting Gender Equality through the Millennium Development Goals*: 'Gender equality is central to achieving [the MDGs]. Actively supporting women's full participation in economic, social and political life is a key factor in reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance, and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families.'⁵⁸

3.3.1 Eliminating gender disparity in education

While enormous strides have been made towards universal primary education, data disaggregated by sex reflects more nuanced progress. Girls account for just over a third of all children enrolled in primary school, and significantly less in rural areas, where the gender parity index for primary education is just 0.53.⁵⁹ The primary school completion rate for girls is just 13 per cent, compared to 32 per cent for boys.⁶⁰ Afghanistan is unlikely to meet MDGs 2 and 3 unless further action is taken to achieve parity in education. To achieve this, five girls will need to be newly enrolled in school for every three boys.⁶¹ This will require targeted, well-resourced action based on sound problem analysis. Key factors preventing

⁵⁶ UN Development Program, 'Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan', above n 39.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Australian Agency for International Development, 'Promoting Opportunities for All: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' (November 2011) 1.

⁵⁹ Packer et al, above n 1, 24.

⁶⁰ UN Girls' Education Initiative, *Information by Country: Afghanistan: Background*, <<http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/afghanistan.html>>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

girls from attending school include poverty and early marriage, lack of female teachers, insecurity, and physical accessibility. These issues are discussed in brief below.

In a study carried out by a consortium of NGOs (*High Stakes: Girls Education in Afghanistan*), poverty was cited by 41 per cent of interviewees as a key barrier to girls' accessing education.⁶² In most families, children make an important contribution to the household economy, either through supporting income generating activities or through formal employment, and many parents cannot afford to have their children in school. Girls are commonly married early so as to secure a bride price; and then once married, most often discontinue their education. Some 39 per cent of those interviewed for *High Stakes* cited early or forced marriage as an obstacle to education.⁶³

Lack of female teachers is another significant impediment, as many Afghan families are unwilling to send their girls to schools without female teachers. This presents a particular obstacle for girls in rural areas, where the number of female teachers is significantly lower than it is in Kabul.⁶⁴ In a survey of school drop-outs conducted by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in 2009, 15 per cent of girls cited the lack of a female teacher as the reason for having left school.⁶⁵ More than a quarter of those interviewed for *High Stakes* identified the lack of a female teacher as a major obstacle to girls' education.⁶⁶ It is worth noting that in community-based schools the ratio of female to male teachers is generally higher than it is in formal schools; and that even where such schools do have only male teachers, they are generally well known in the community and thus enjoy a greater level of trust amongst parents. Thus the ratio of female to male students is generally higher in community-based than in formal schools.⁶⁷ It should also be noted that the Australian Government has made an important contribution to increasing the number of qualified female teachers throughout Afghanistan, by training 'master teacher trainers' and teacher trainers through its Australia Malaysia Education Program for Afghanistan.

Insecurity is also an important barrier to girls' access to education – identified in *High Stakes* as the third most significant obstacle to girls' education following poverty and early marriage.⁶⁸ Girls' schools suffer 40 per cent of all attacks on schools, despite accounting for only 19 per cent of schools.⁶⁹

Finally, the distance that some children are required to travel to school presents particular challenges for girls. In a survey of school drop-outs conducted as part of the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment in 2008, 37 per cent of girls cited distance as the reason for having dropped out of school.⁷⁰ In a study of community-based primary schools in Ghor

⁶² Jackson, 'High Stakes', above n 69, 5.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The ratio of female teachers to female students in Khost for example is 1:146; in Paktika it is 1:784: *ibid* 21. *Ibid*

⁶⁵ *Ibid* 20.

⁶⁶ *Ibid* 5.

⁶⁷ See Save the Children, above n 62, iv.

⁶⁸ Jackson, 'High Stakes', above n 69, 14.

⁶⁹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, above n 70, *ibid* 34.

⁷⁰ 'National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8', above n 38, 8.

province, enrolment for girls was found to drop by 19 per cent per mile that the children had to travel to attend school.⁷¹

Recommendation 15:

The Australian Government should continue and expand its support for girls' education in Afghanistan, ensuring a holistic approach that recognises and responds to multiple barriers including poverty, early marriage, lack of qualified female teachers, insecurity and distance. The Australian Government should continue to support teacher training programs such as the Malaysia Australia Education Program for Afghanistan, ensuring a strong focus on women and on teachers from rural areas. Additional suggested interventions include: incentive and mentoring programs aimed at increasing the number of female teachers particularly in rural areas; complementary livelihoods programs so that parents can afford to send children to school; support for preventative measures aimed at improving school security; additional support for community-based education; and further increasing the number of female-friendly schools, particularly in rural areas.

3.3.2 Gender justice and women's rights

As recognised in AusAID's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Thematic Strategy*, empowering women not only contributes to achieving MDG3, but is critical to achieving all MDGs. The World Bank reports that 'countries that invest in promoting the social and economic status of women tend to have lower poverty rates'⁷² – an important reminder given Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

As AusAID and the Australian Government prepare their strategic approach to Afghanistan (current framework expiring in 2012), a 'gender-sensitive approach' in Afghanistan may not be sufficient to address the complexities of gender justice and women's rights issues that exist. As a means to reduce poverty and support the achievement of the MDGs in Afghanistan, the Government should consider including gender equality and women's empowerment as a key objective or stand-alone pillar in its strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan – requiring enhanced commitment, resources and monitoring.

Recommendation 16:

The Australian Government should make women's rights a key focus of the Australian aid program in Afghanistan, as an effective means to reduce poverty and achieve progress not only against MDG 3, but against all the MDGs.

Women's political participation

⁷¹ Dana Burde and Leigh Linden, 'The Effect of Proximity on School Enrollment: Evidence from a Randomised Controlled Trial in Afghanistan' (May 2009).

⁷² The World Bank, 'Millennium Development Goals', <<http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/gender.html>>.

Whilst there has been progress in women's political participation in Afghanistan, women are not effectively represented in the peace process. As an MDG 3 indicator, the proportion of women holding seats in the Afghan National Parliament shows some improvement. As of 2011 the World Bank reported the proportion of seats in national parliament held by women was 28 per cent. Whilst this is a positive trend, it is largely influenced by the quota system set up as part of the Afghan Constitution (68 seats to be reserved for women). A more qualitative analysis indicates very concerning trends – such as the increasing number of threats and intimidation against female officials and rights activists.⁷³ In July 2012, Hanifa Safi, a regional head of women's affairs was killed in a car bomb 150 kilometres outside of Kabul. She is not the first woman holding such a post to be killed. In 2006, Safia Ama Jan suffered a similar fate after being gunned down. Furthermore, Malalai Kakar, who became the most high profile policewoman in Afghanistan, was also killed while on her way to work in 2008. Their killers are commonly not brought to justice.

Violence against Women

Women in Afghanistan face violence both inside and outside the home, largely with impunity. Global Rights reported in 2008 that 87 per cent of women in Afghanistan suffer domestic violence.⁷⁴ In July 2012, the footage of a public execution of a woman accused of adultery caused widespread international condemnation as well as protests in Afghanistan. This situation is compounded by the limited capacity of the Afghan government to effectively implement laws which would protect women – including the *Elimination of Violence Against Women Law*.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

We note and welcome the Australian Government's *National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2012-18)*, which can provide guidance on how to support women's involvement in peace processes and address violence against women in the context of Afghanistan. The *National Action Plan* is a whole of government coordinated effort to ensure that in countries where Australia has a presence, a gender perspective is incorporated into peace and security efforts; women's and girls' human rights are protected (particularly violence against women); and women's participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution is promoted.⁷⁵

To ensure the *National Action Plan* is effective in improving the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan, particular emphasis will be required on the participation of women in all

⁷³ See for more information UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences*, Rashida Manjoo, 23 May 2012, A/HRC/20/16.

⁷⁴ D Nijhowne and L Oates, 'Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan' (Global Rights, March 2008).

⁷⁵ In 2004, The UN Secretary General requested that all UN Member States develop National Action Plans to implement the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) on Women, Peace and Security – of which there are now five (UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960): Commonwealth of Australia, 'Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018' (2012) 8.

aspects of Afghan life during the transition process, as well as long term investments aimed at educating communities and changing entrenched attitudes towards women.

Recommendation 17:

The Australian Government should include Afghanistan as a key country focus for implementing Australia's *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* in order to address the related issues of violence against women and women's political participation. This should include: diplomatic, political and development efforts to support the Afghan government to meet its national and international commitments on women's rights (including legal frameworks on violence against women); supporting an Afghan-led process to develop Afghanistan's own *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*; working with women and women's organisations to ensure that efforts to enhance women's political participation and to reduce violence against women take account of both the Afghan and Islamic context; and ensuring men and boys are engaged in activities to encourage attitudinal change towards women and girls.

Long term commitments for civil society organisations

We welcome the strong commitment that the Australian Government has demonstrated in making women's rights a central part of the aid program in Afghanistan – including the recent announcement of \$17.7 million to combat violence against women. However, such investments in women's rights must take account of the long term nature of change in social attitudes and behaviour. This requires long-term solutions with sustained, multi-year, predictable commitments to build the capacity of women and women's civil society groups.

In Afghanistan, women's organisations have played a vital role in delivering services to Afghan women and girls, campaigning to uphold their rights and in holding the Afghan Government to account on commitments to women's rights issues. If the Australian Government is committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women in line with MDG 3 and the *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, civil society groups require long-term, reliable funding to deliver gender-sensitive programs directed at men as well as at women to present the issue of their rights in culturally appropriate ways.

Recommendation 18:

The Australian Government should ensure that targeted, short term projects to address women's rights are complemented by long-term and predictable programmatic support to women's and civil society organisations. Long-term programmatic support will also build the capacity of women and civil society organisations to address long term changes in social attitudes towards women; and to hold Afghan authorities to account.

3.4 Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 (Child Mortality and Reproductive Health)

Afghanistan's targets for MDG 4 and 5 are to:

- Reduce by 50 per cent, between 2003 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate, and further reduce it to one third of the 2003 level by 2020; and
- Reduce the maternal mortality rate by 50 per cent between 2002 and 2015, and further reduce it to 25 per cent of the 2002 level by 2020.

The past decade has seen impressive progress made towards the achievement of these goals. The Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010 shows that the number of children dying before the age of five has fallen from one in four to one in 14;⁷⁶ the maternal mortality rate has fallen from one death in 62 live births to less than one in 300; and for women, the lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related complications has fallen from one in 11 to one in 50.⁷⁷ The percentage of the population with access to primary healthcare has increased from 9 per cent to 60 per cent, and the proportion of children vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough has increased from 31 to 82 per cent.⁷⁸

These significant achievements are attributable in large part to the BPHS and the Essential Package of Health Services. The bulk of Australia's support to healthcare in Afghanistan has been delivered to the BPHS, via the ARTF.

One of the main factors behind the success of the BPHS is its community based approach. Some 15,000 community health committees have been formed, and more than 23,000 voluntary community-based health workers recruited and trained. Roughly 50 per cent are women, making health services more accessible for women and girls. Also key to success is that the BPHS is free at the point of delivery, and is implemented in districts where 85 per cent of the population live. Due in large part to the BPHS' particular focus on mothers and children, anti-natal care more than tripled in the period 2003 – 2010, and the number of births being assisted by a skilled birth attendant more than doubled in the same period.⁷⁹

But as in the education sector, there is a serious risk that in light of the projected decline in international funds, this progress will not be sustained.⁸⁰ While progress has been rapid, maternal, child and infant mortality statistics remain among the poorest in the world. Newborn and infant mortality rates in particular have lagged behind, with almost one in 18

⁷⁶ Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010', above n 1, Afghan Public Health Institute, *previously cited: remove this citation and make cross-reference*91.

⁷⁷ Ibid 128.

⁷⁸ World Health Organisation, 'Immunisation Profile, Afghanistan', 14 July 2012, <http://apps.who.int/immunization_monitoring/en/globalsummary/countryprofileresult.cfm?C=afg>.

⁷⁹ Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, above n 17.

⁸⁰ Recent analysis by the World Bank shows that the health sector is particularly vulnerable to a decline in international funds due to its heavy reliance on donor funding and low levels of government spending on operations and maintenance: World Bank and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, 'Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014' (21 November 2011).

children dying before their first birthday and 45 per cent of these in their first month of life⁸¹ - highlighting the need for community-based newborn care interventions to be integrated into the BPHS and scaled up nationally. High levels of malnutrition also persist, with 60 per cent of all children stunted (the highest rate of stunting in the world), and a third underweight.⁸²

Lack of access to healthcare for women and girls is a particularly pervasive challenge, and seemingly impressive statistics describing national access to healthcare can be misleading. The oft-cited statistic that 85 per cent of the population has 'access to healthcare' in fact means that the districts where 85 per cent of the population lives have at least one basic health facility. But some districts cover vast tracts of impassable terrain, and less than 60 per cent of the rural population has access to a health facility within one hour's walk.⁸³ For women, access to healthcare is further constrained by the fact that nearly a third of all health facilities lack qualified female health workers. Despite significant progress made by the BPHS, still less than half of all Afghan women receive anti-natal care during their pregnancy, and just 39 per cent of all births are attended by skilled personnel.⁸⁴

Also as is the case with the education sector, there are enormous disparities in access between urban and rural areas. Immunizations coverage for example is much higher in urban than in rural areas, and infant and child mortality rates are around 20 per cent higher in rural than in urban areas.⁸⁵

Moreover, while there have been significant achievements in certain aspects of the BPHS (maternal and child mortality, and communicable diseases), certain other, critical program areas have barely been addressed. These include programs to address nutrition, mental health and disability. The nutrition elements of BPHS (such as Community Management of Acute Malnutrition) remain particularly underfunded, and the Public Nutrition Policy and Strategy 2009-2013 is yet to be put into action. Recent years have seen some increased recognition of the importance of nutrition, particularly with the development of the cross-ministerial Nutrition Action Framework, but significant capacity building for the MoPH and health service providers, together with increased domestic and external financial resources, is required if this and other strategies are to be implemented. There is also a need for investment in data collection and statistical analysis for nutrition: the last nationwide survey examining nutrition indicators was in 2004.

Finally but most importantly, there is a critical shortage of skilled health workers, particularly in rural areas. At least 7,000 more community health workers and 3,500 midwives are required to meet the MoPH's objective of providing community-based healthcare services to 90% of the population by 2013.⁸⁶ It costs an estimated \$350 to train a community health worker; thus, this objective could be met with an investment of just \$3.5 million.

⁸¹ Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010', above n 1, Afghan Public Health Institute, *previously cited: remove this citation and make cross-reference*91.

⁸² Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Afghanistan National Nutrition Survey' (2004) iv.

⁸³ World Bank, 'Afghanistan Country Overview 2012', <<http://www.worldbank.org.af>>.

⁸⁴ Central Statistics Organisation / UNICEF, 'Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010-2011: Final Report' (June 2012) 95, 100.

⁸⁵ UN Development Program, above n 39.

⁸⁶ Afghan Ministry of Public Health, 'Community Based Healthcare Policy and Strategy 2009-2013' (2009).

Recommendation 19:

The Australian Government should support the Afghan Government and civil society (including both national and international NGOs) to further expand the reach of community-based health workers, particularly women, and with a particular focus on rural areas. In particular, the Australian Government should provide bilateral support to international and national NGOs who have existing operations in remote and insecure areas to implement and scale-up maternal and child health programs where there is limited or no Afghan Government health care services.

Recommendation 20:

The Australian Government should also prioritise support for components of the BPHS that have not as yet been implemented, with a particular focus on tackling malnutrition. The Australian Government should ensure that its support for the health sector includes: a scaling up of direct nutrition interventions; support for the Afghan Government to develop and implement a national cross-cutting nutrition strategy; and support for capacity development in key ministries (particularly health, agriculture and education) with a view to enabling government staff to design and execute effective nutrition policies and programs.

3.5 Protecting Progress towards all Millennium Development Goals: Responding to Humanitarian Needs and Building Resilience

Afghanistan is vulnerable to disasters and recurrent/cyclical shocks that can have devastating effects on populations, due to the destruction of infrastructure, livestock and livelihoods, seriously putting development gains at risk and undermining progress towards the MDGs. This was tragically highlighted in 2010/2011, where limited rain and snow fall resulted in drought conditions across Afghanistan's north, north-east and west, pushing an estimated 2.7m people into food insecurity. The 2010/2011 drought was followed in May 2012 by floods in Afghanistan's north-east, and just a month later by three earthquakes triggering deadly landslides which hit communities in the same area who were still recovering from the floods.

Chronic food insecurity is a significant issue. The latest findings of the Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey points to an alert nutrition situation. The Global Acute Malnutrition rates in Afghanistan are at almost 18 per cent and the Severe Acute Malnutrition rates at 11.3 per cent – meaning that almost one million children under five years of age are acutely malnourished. While food security investments and the aid program's commitment to agriculture food production are welcome and will likely result in improved productivity and resilience of communities in the medium to long term, there is also a pressing need to respond with sufficient resources to meet immediate vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of communities to recurrent shocks.

There are an estimated 413,000 conflict affected people who have been displaced within Afghanistan, with a further 2.4 million refugees in Iran and 2.9 million in Pakistan.⁸⁷ The first half of 2012 saw a 14 per cent increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as compared to the same period last year, resulting in 115,000 new IDPs. Most IDPs are noting a general deterioration in security or direct conflict and attacks as the impetus for fleeing their homes. These IDPs have limited access to basic services and are extremely vulnerable to further shocks.

Additionally, there is increasing pressure from the Pakistan government for the 2.9 million refugees in Pakistan to be repatriated to Afghanistan by the end of 2012. Whilst there is a Solutions Strategy developed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and agreed by Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, whether it will work or cope with this number of people remains to be seen.

The role of the Afghan government, and in particular the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority, will be critical to ensure that both disaster management policy and legal frameworks as well as government capacity for preparedness and response ensures the rights and needs of vulnerable populations are met during crisis, and that development gains are safeguarded from disasters. Humanitarian and DRR coordination has improved, but the delivery of humanitarian assistance as well as resilience building continues to be challenged by the fact that the Afghan Government continues to have limited control over significant areas of the country, and thus access to vulnerable populations is substantially restricted.

The Australian Government has responded to the needs of vulnerable populations in Afghanistan, not least by supporting mine clearance, victim assistance and mine risk reduction education in Afghanistan as part of a \$20 million four-year commitment to the UN Mine Action Service, but also by providing funding to past CAP appeals and international NGOs implementing humanitarian programs.⁸⁸ As of 11 July 2012, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Financial Tracking Service reported that Australia had contributed US\$12,142,803 thus far for the 2012 CAP, accounting for 8.7 per cent of all funds contributed to the CAP.⁸⁹ The total value of Australia's humanitarian assistance provided in 2012, at \$12,434,916, accounts for just 3.3 per cent of total humanitarian assistance provided to Afghanistan in 2012.⁹⁰

The 2012 Afghanistan CAP, which requests US\$437 million to meet humanitarian needs, remains only 31% funded as of June 2012.⁹¹ Of additional concern is the fact that as of June 2012 no funding had yet been received for the OCHA-managed Afghanistan Emergency

⁸⁷ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian Bulletin Afghanistan' (Issue 5, 01 - 30 June 2012).

⁸⁸ The CAP is a tool developed by aid organisations in a country or region to raise funds for humanitarian action as well as to plan, implement and monitor their activities together. It is presented to the international community and donors once every year through a launch in Geneva as well as in-country for participating countries. Since its establishment in 1992, the CAP has become the humanitarian community's principal tool for coordination, strategic planning and programming.

⁸⁹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Financial Tracking Service, 'Afghanistan 2012' (11 July 2012) <http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R10_E16098_asof_1207110204.pdf>.

⁹⁰ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Financial Tracking Service, 'Afghanistan 2012' (11 July 2012) <http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R24_E16098_1207110204.pdf>.

⁹¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, above n 107.

Response Fund⁹² in 2012, with the result that there was only US\$100,000 remaining in the fund to address arising emergencies, as against US\$10 million requested.

With the withdrawal of international troops, it is imperative that the Australian Government fund impartial, non-politicised and effective aid delivery mechanisms, in accordance with the Australian Government's *Humanitarian Action Policy*. In addition, any shift to on-budget aid that includes building resilience through increased DRR capacity or humanitarian responses needs to ensure that humanitarian aid not only be principled, needs-based and impartial, and independent of transition objectives, but also that it be in support of national development programs. International NGOs and Afghan civil society provide an appropriate alternative for timely, needs-based humanitarian responses especially where Afghan Government structures are not present.

Afghanistan is in urgent need of timely and effective humanitarian responses that incorporate DRR and preparedness, and that meet the particular needs of women and girls. These responses will contribute to increasing the resilience of communities to recurring disasters and ensure that development gains are not lost, in turn becoming an effective means to contribute to achieving the MDGs. OCHA states that 'recurrent natural hazards affect most parts of the country and the North-Eastern region is susceptible to most of these hazards, hence the need to invest in community-based DRR programs that foster at building community resilience.'⁹³

Recommendation 21:

The Australian Government should ensure that its Afghanistan country strategy aligns with its *Humanitarian Action Policy*, and reflects a long-term commitment to humanitarian funding so as to ensure timely responses rather than a reactive approach.

Recommendation 22:

The Australian Government should increase its contribution to humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, either through the CAP or at least in line with the strategic objectives outlined in the CAP which have been agreed to by the humanitarian community in Afghanistan.

Recommendation 23:

The Australian Government should ensure that its aid funding is able to respond to uncertainty. Funding could be more agile and flexible, for example by including crisis modifiers in multi-year development grants⁹⁴ to build recurring-crisis response into

⁹² The Emergency Response Fund in Afghanistan was established to fill critical funding gaps and ensure most urgent humanitarian needs are met at the onset of a crisis.

⁹³ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, above n 107, 6.

⁹⁴ Crisis modifiers are a component of a development program that can be activated for a humanitarian response. USAID use this approach in Ethiopia, see for example Box 3 in *A Dangerous Delay. The Cost of Late Response to Early Warnings in the 2011 Drought in the Horn of Africa*, Save the Children & Oxfam, January 2012; <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-dangerous-delay-horn-africa-drought-180112-en.pdf>

development programming, and by ensuring that humanitarian funding can support pre-emptive or early response.

Recommendation 24:

The Australian Government should, in line with its DRR policy, ensure measures are taken to reduce disaster risk through all development and humanitarian programs. This will also ensure that development is safeguarded from disasters, and development and humanitarian programs do not create new forms of vulnerability. Strong DRR and preparedness will allow the reduction of dependency on emergency responses. The Australian Government should prioritise and fund principled humanitarian response programs, including providing support to Afghan institutions, NGOs and local communities to help build DRR, disaster management and response capacity, in accordance with Afghans' needs rather than reducing transaction costs.