



DT Global



Locally Led Development Framework

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Front cover: Emerging Leaders in International Development Program 2023 and 2024 cohorts

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Fifth Row: Vika Ekalestari, Edwin Arief, Rakara Raula, Manichanh Keoviriyavong, Robert Herdiyanto

Bottom Row: Teekoa Iuta, Shirley Tonkin, Alfiana Qisthi

1 Objectives

As a global international development firm, DT Global has a clear vision statement that guides all aspects of our work:

DT Global aims to be a force for positive change: promoting sustainable development and empowering people, communities, and nations for inclusive prosperity, social equity, and environmental stewardship.

Drawing on the motivation, innovation and expertise of a high-quality workforce, and with our commitment to ‘do development differently’, we aim to continuously improve our foundational approach of supporting locally led development.

As articulated in DT Global’s submission to Australia’s International Development Policy 2023, locally led development enables us to ‘come behind and bolster individuals and organisations that are most committed to genuine development outcomes in their countries and communities’, resulting in sustainable, long-term change.

This Locally Led Development Framework aims to support DT Global Asia–Pacific staff and contractors to implement this approach, which is grounded in evidence-based research; the perspectives and insights of the local leaders and partners with whom DT Global works; and the evolving policy settings of our key bilateral and multilateral donor clients.

The Framework also aligns with, and cuts across, DT Global’s five core values, highlighting that locally led development is not only the ‘right thing’ to do, but also the most effective way to achieve our vision. The Framework provides staff with both conceptual and practical tools to apply these values through the vector of locally led development.

Finally, our commitment to local leadership in the Asia Pacific region is demonstrated by our people and our investment in country offices in PNG, Fiji, Indonesia and the Philippines. It is also practically supported by our Development Effectiveness Unit (DEU), which provides dedicated technical assistance and learning opportunities to implement DT Global’s locally led development aims.



Figure 1 DT Global values

2 Context

Globally, development cooperation is evolving. While the concepts of ‘localisation’ and ‘locally led development’ are not new, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated international border closures were a critical juncture that led to reflections on the best way to deploy external expertise, while at the same time broader global movements highlighted the importance of unpacking systemic power dynamics. These shifts are underpinned by two decades of evidence that ‘thinking and working politically’ approaches, and navigating local context through local drivers of change, are critical for development effectiveness and sustainability.¹ All of this points to the need for development cooperation to be an optimal blend of contextualised, local reformist vision and capability, with international value-add to facilitate, support and amplify it.

¹ See <https://twpcommunity.org>; *Inside the black box of political will: 10 years of findings from the Developmental Leadership Program* (Hudson et al, 2018).

The development community has responded accordingly. DT Global's major bilateral donor clients, including the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and USAID, have released policies and guidance on their commitments to localisation and locally led development. Australia's new international development policy has as its first aim to 'support our partners to build effective, accountable states that drive their own development' with the recognition that 'supporting local leaders and actors' is central to the effectiveness of policy implementation.² The Performance and Delivery Framework associated with the new policy also has explicit indicators of increased localisation and local leadership against which all investments must report.³ In 2024 DFAT released its Locally Led Development Guidance Note, with the aim of 'enabling locally led development systematically across (its) development program'.⁴

At a collective level, during the Effective Development Co-operation Summit in December 2022, 15 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors endorsed a statement specifically supporting locally led development.⁵ While relatively broad, a commitment has been made to three areas of action for these donors and their contracted agents:

- **Shift and share power** to ensure local actors have ownership over, and can meaningfully and equitably engage in, development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding programs.
- **Work to channel high quality funding as directly as possible** to local actors while ensuring mutual accountability for the effective use of funds, management of risks, and achievement of development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding results.
- **Publicly advocate for locally led development** using our convening authority, partnerships and networks.

DT Global's Locally Led Development Framework encompasses all three of these action areas and builds on the significant work, successes and learnings of our programs and people over many years. We aim to leverage every opportunity to contribute to the local drivers of development within the political economy of each country. The programs we manage on behalf of donors present opportunities, particularly through the local people and organisations with which we work, to take a broader longer-term view of how we can contribute. As well as being effective program managers and implementers, DT Global will always take a bigger picture view of how we can influence and support longer-term 'nation-building' outcomes. This fundamental distinction has important implications to the thinking and approaches that underpin this Locally Led Development Framework.

Our thinking is also informed by the commitment of the Australian Government to embed First Nations perspectives into all development cooperation efforts. Locally led development is founded on the primacy of respect for the sovereignty and agency of local people and communities. Our approach seeks to listen to and support these local voices, and intentionally work against harmful power dynamics that are an inherent risk in externally funded development interventions. We seek to draw on and learn from the experience of Australia's First Nations people and communities to inform this way of working.

Importantly, this Framework and our conceptualisation of locally led development is *inclusive* of all the international personnel and organisations with whom we engage as valued contributors to our objectives. As stated below, locally led development is not about precluding a role for non-local actors, but about how local actors and non-local actors can work together to achieve positive change. This, we believe, is at the heart of international development cooperation, which further elevates the importance of getting locally led development approaches right. We will shape and offer international support through people, ideas and organisations and in innovative, respectful, facilitative ways.

Finally, the development of this Framework was catalysed by participants in the first cohort of DT Global's Emerging Leaders in Development (ELID) program (see Box 2 below) and has been informed by organisation-wide consultations and feedback from DT Global's programs and corporate personnel across the Asia-Pacific region.

² *Australia's International Development Policy* (DFATa, 2023).

³ *Australia's International Development Performance and Delivery Framework* (DFATb, 2023).

⁴ *DFAT Guidance Note: Locally Led Development* (DFAT, 2024).

⁵ <https://www.usaid.gov/localization/donor-statement-on-supporting-locally-led-development>

3 Definitions

The terms 'locally led development' and 'localisation' are often used interchangeably, and there is no universal definition. However, following its December 2023 summit, the OECD defined locally led development as follows:

Development co-operation is locally led when local stakeholders have as much agency as possible in decision making, delivery and accountability in given local and operating contexts.

As emphasised in DFAT's Locally Led Development Guidance Note, and given the breadth and diversity of DT Global's work in the region, this Framework does not use a 'one-size fits all' definition. Careful consideration must be given to variable factors including the operating context and local political economy; the articulation of the development problem being addressed; client priorities; and the ability to manage legislative compliance and key risks. For this reason, DT Global has adopted DFAT's conceptualisation of locally led development as a continuum along which programs can position themselves in light of the unique conditions of each operating context (see Annex A). With consideration of key development program characteristics, this continuum ranges from 'emerging'—with a focus on localisation of resources and context-informed implementation—through to 'advanced' locally led development.



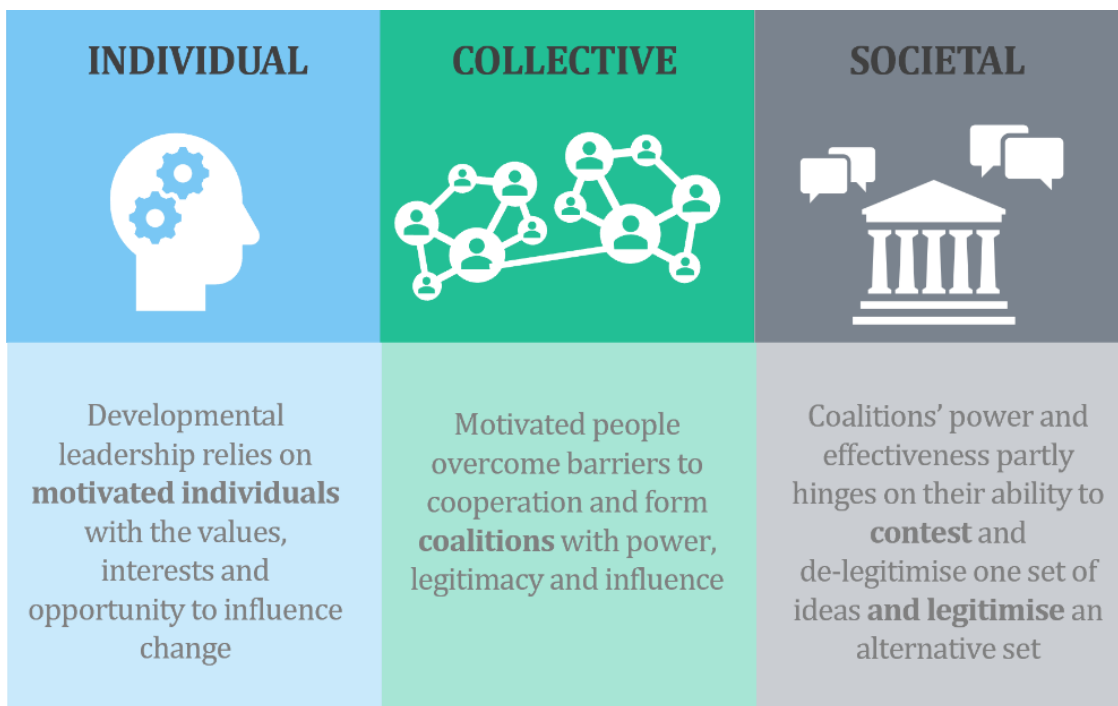
Figure 2 Conceptualisation of locally led development

3.1 Locally led development

The term 'locally led development', preferred by many local actors to 'localisation',⁶ explicitly underscores the reality that sustainable socio-economic progress – in any sovereign state and at any time – is only achieved when it is desired, driven, and perceived as legitimate by local actors. In this way, development as social change is a complex political process: one in which a non-developmental status quo is only shifted when motivated local leaders and coalitions have sufficient skills, opportunity and influence to contest the power structures, governance and service delivery dysfunctionality that prevent broad-based prosperity. This social change process, driven by locally led development, is captured in Figure 3.

6 *Localization, decolonizing and #ShiftThePower; are we saying the same thing?* (Mathews, 2022).

Figure 3 Social change through local developmental leadership



Source: Elements of positive development outcomes (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018)

As emphasised in Australia’s international development policy, local people—across government, civil society and business—are the key actors in achieving their own development ambitions; supporting the influence and impact of these local drivers of change is how external development programs can help ‘tackle the unequal power systems and structures that stifle economic growth and human development’.⁷

This enhanced focus on locally led development across the international donor community is premised on recognition that while external financial resources and expertise can support the achievement of national development goals, many of the factors that ‘stifle’ long-term reform are much more localised.

These ‘under the iceberg’ workings of power, relationships and norms are what need to be understood and navigated to shift an inequitable status quo – and is best done by local actors. It is nevertheless recognised that supporting local actors to tackle unequal power systems and structures is extremely sensitive, requiring adroit navigation by externally funded development programs which are working at the request of, and under the ultimate authority of, foreign partner governments. This is significantly more challenging in conflict environments and under authoritarian regimes. However, by simultaneously aligning our approaches with the stated policy settings and objectives of national governments and international agreements and coming in behind intrinsically motivated local actors with the legitimacy to push for the reform required to achieve these objectives, our programs will maximise their own legitimacy, relevance and effectiveness.

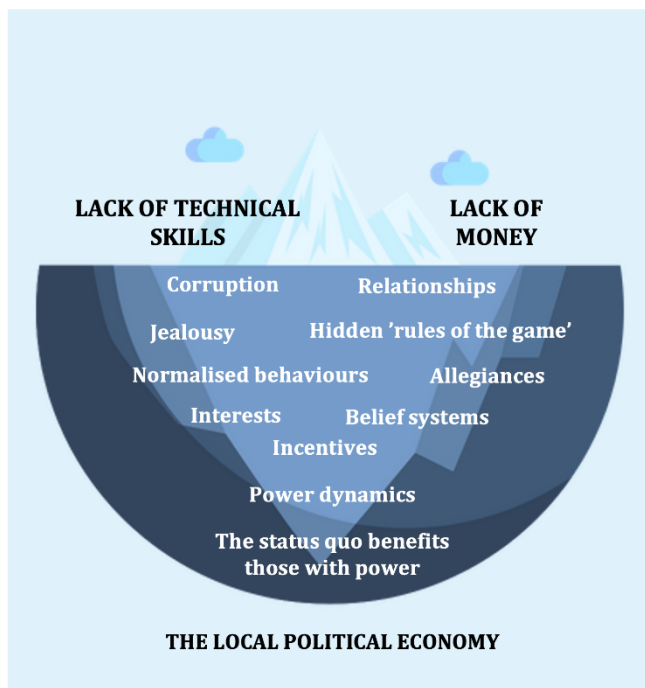


Figure 4 Blockers to development

7 (DFATa, 2023).

3.2 What locally led development isn't

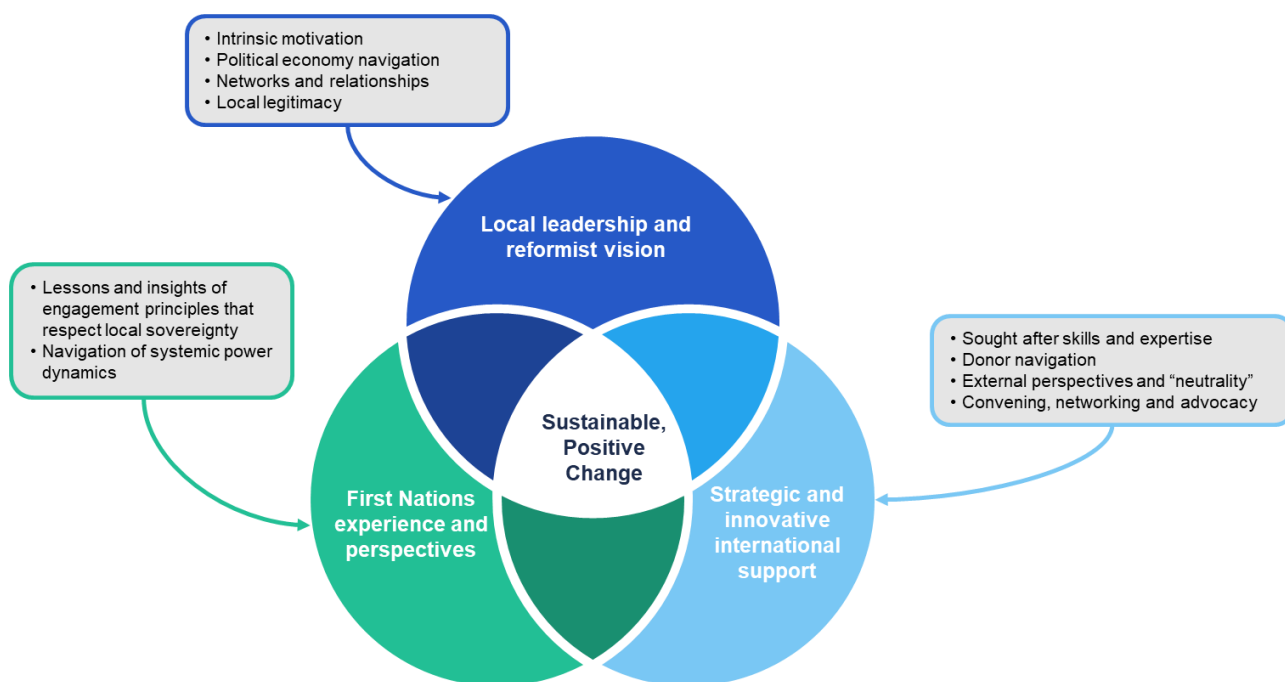
DT Global recognises the very real risk of over-simplification inherent within the definition and conceptualisation of localisation and locally led development. Two key risks are:

1. Assuming that local leadership in development cooperation precludes a role for non-local actors

While interventions that are driven, rather than supported, by external actors may not achieve long-term transformative social change outcomes, history shows that countries/movements/initiatives that are open to international collaboration and knowledge-sharing achieve outcomes superior to those that choose isolation and self-sufficiency. The benefits of locally led development assistance means that local drivers of change can be supported by 'useful outsiders'⁸ with perspectives, expertise, networks and experiences that can assist the social change process. Successful examples of local leadership in development cooperation are often characterised by strong, complementary relationships between local and non-local personnel and partners, with the latter often important in the transfer of specialist technical skills; management of the donor's political economy and public diplomacy needs; local leadership advocacy and amplification; and building cross-national networks. Figure 5 shows this complementarity in our conceptualisation of locally led development.

A major focus of this Framework is ways to optimise the effectiveness of external actors and how they can be best positioned to support local reformist actors to achieve positive change. Building on a wealth of experience, good practice and lessons learned, DT Global aims to innovate, test, learn and adapt our approaches and models of external assistance.

Figure 5 Maximising complementarity in international development cooperation



2. Assuming that all local leadership is developmental

If developmental social change is to occur – i.e. change that seeks increased inclusion, justice, and prosperity – the local leadership driving that change must also be developmental in nature. Only local leaders and locally legitimate coalitions will have sufficient power to shift the status quo; however, whether this shift is positive or negative will depend on the motivation and drivers of those leaders. Development cooperation efforts that do not make this critical distinction can inadvertently perpetuate, and even consolidate, the power of non-developmental systems and actors, many of whom have no interest in any change to the status quo from which they directly benefit. In this way, local leaders of our programs need to be *developmental* leaders—and all program leaders—regardless of nationality and/or ethnicity—should be subject to the same standards of accountability and performance management.

8 Useful outsiders – how can external actors support authentic locally led development (Gibert, 2021).

DFAT’s Locally Led Development Guidance Note underscores this need for nuance in adopting locally led approaches in development cooperation, and the main points of its schema are reproduced in Table 1.

Table 1 DFAT’s locally led development definitional schema

Locally led development is...	Locally led development is not...
Building organisational systems and project mechanisms that comply with both Australian and partner country legislation and policies.	Funding partners without due diligence checks and adequate safeguards, including ongoing attention to how they will meet DFAT’s expectations on key risks.
Initiatives that reflect shared values and international norms and standards (for example, gender equality, transparency, rule of law).	Sacrificing Australian values and international good practice and evidence.
Increasing the contribution and decision making by a diversity of local actors that contribute to program development design, implementation, MEL and policy dialogue.	Enabling monopoly of resources and decision making by local elites.
Enhancing equitable partnerships of mutual respect between local and international actors at all levels, including between indigenous peoples.	Implementing a donor-driven agenda and/or approaches that do not suit the local context, displace local leaders, do not have a local evidence-base or have not proven successful in the past.

Source: DFAT, 2024

4 Program-level Locally Led Development Strategies

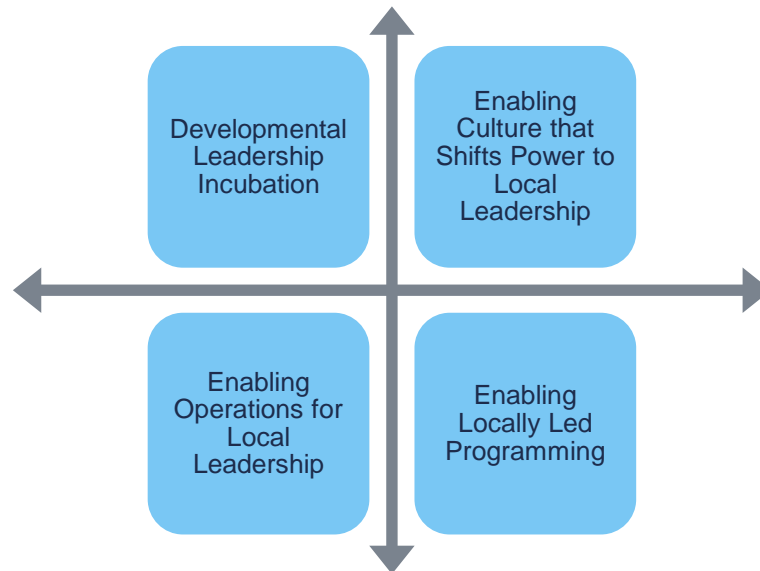
The purpose of this Framework is to assist programs to develop their own Locally Led Development Strategies – which will be fit-for-purpose for each program’s unique context and objectives. For DFAT-funded programs, these program-level strategies will align with DFAT’s locally led development priorities and will enable reporting against indicators of improvement, as specified in DFAT’s Performance and Delivery Framework. Additional assistance to develop these strategies is available through DT Global’s DEU. DT Global has also established Locally Led Development Working Groups to support implementation, as well as cross-program/region collaboration and networking. A number of programs are already well advanced in the development and implementation of such strategies, both formally and informally, and their experiences will continue to inform broader learnings across DT Global.

DT Global also commits to advancing its locally led development agenda within its corporate and management structures and monitoring progress against key indicators to demonstrate and model accountability.

5 Focus Areas

DT Global has identified four Framework Focus Areas to help programs to make progress against the three DAC action areas for locally led development, as well as the key aspects of DFAT's locally led development continuum. For each Focus Area, examples of approaches are provided, along with case studies of DT Global programs that illustrate how each Focus Area can be successfully operationalised.

Figure 6 Framework Focus Areas



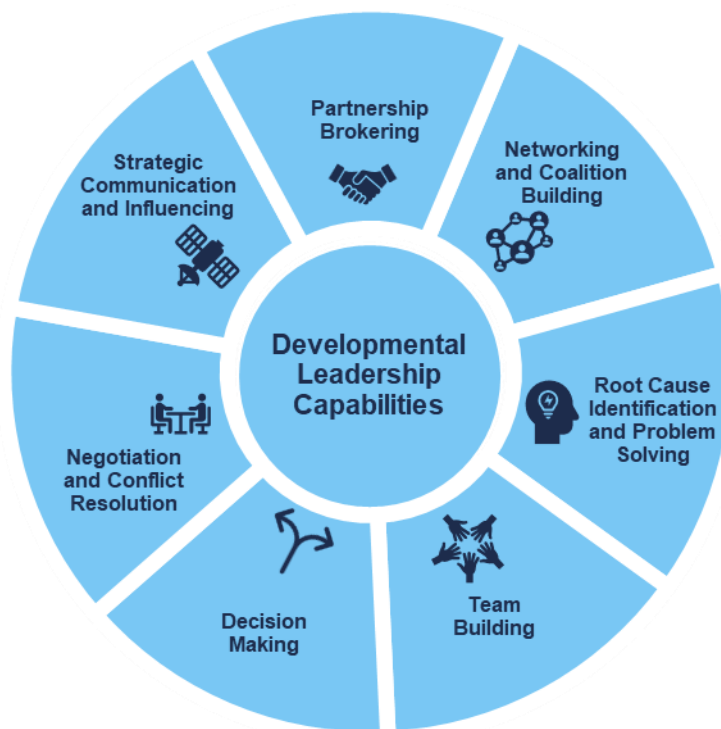
5.1 Developmental Leadership Incubation

Drawing on robust political economy analysis, we will identify, nurture, and amplify the influence of intrinsically motivated local reformists through our programs. Regardless of the aim and nature of the program, we will maximise every opportunity to both employ and engage with these local leaders – whether current or emergent.

We will use our resources and networks to help incubate and develop such leaders in ways that provide them with access to opportunities for their own growth, as well increasing their effectiveness as drivers of developmental change. This approach is not just relevant to roles of senior, overt positional leadership; we are focused on incubating developmental leadership across all roles on programs. This will lead to an expanded pool of personnel contributing to our programs' development effectiveness and open up increased pathways of influence and career progression for our staff.

- **Invest in local political economy analysis** to inform approaches of all bids, program mobilisation, recruitment and ongoing management. This analysis should be informed and led by local experts who have lived experience of the power dynamics and social and cultural norms that are blocking the achievement of development objectives, as formally endorsed in national policy settings, as well as the enablers and entry points that our programs can maximise.
- **Invest in local staff as developmental leaders for a long-term nation-building agenda**, not simply as employees for static roles on siloed programs. This requires intentionally planning for promotional pathways for all staff to develop their motivation, skills, and belief in themselves as change-makers, and to see the DT Global program as a platform to exercise and grow their leadership for broader nation-building goals. We will invest in professional development to strengthen the developmental leadership capabilities of staff, to be exercised in a range of technical and non-technical areas (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Core developmental leadership capabilities



- **Prioritise intrinsic motivation for reform in the recruitment and promotion of personnel.** We will identify attitudinal drivers in prospective personnel, seeking out individuals personally invested in the positive changes our programs aim to bring about. Shifting the status quo in complex local contexts is personally challenging and requires ‘skin in the game’ for the long-term commitment and risk-taking that social reform requires. We will apply innovative recruitment processes to identify candidates with these qualities, which are not necessarily obvious through conventional advertising, interviewing and written application processes. Prioritising this attitudinal criterion for intrinsically motivated leadership may mean that some technical requirements of a role may not be fully met; in these cases, other complementary resources will be deployed. Striking the right balance between immediate program performance (short-term) and contributing to sustainable locally led development (long-term) will at times create tensions and trade-offs which will need to be part of an explicit and agreed locally led development strategy for the program.
- **Create opportunities for local reformists to come together** to find motivation and encouragement to persist in their development efforts. This will also enable reciprocal learning and identification of entry points for collaboration and mutual support, to maximise the overall impact of our programs. By facilitating network building, programs can play a critical role in coalition-building between developmental leaders and initiatives which is at the heart of influencing social change processes. This should include facilitating networking and exchanges across programs and countries, to open up increased opportunities for new perspectives as well as new avenues for learning and expertise. In countries where DT Global has a significant presence and implements multiple programs, this will be part of the value-add that we provide to our staff, clients and stakeholders.
- **Provide international support in ways that increase the visibility and legitimacy of local leaders and long-term sustainability.** Wherever possible, the international technical expertise that we mobilise through our programs will work in ways that legitimise and promote local developmental leaders. We will adopt ‘strengths-based’ approaches that recognise the inherent contextual and relational expertise of local actors to drive long-term reform, which can be enhanced by outside technical advice and support. We will mobilise international resources to assist local leaders to meet donor requirements (such as report writing, donor communications, financial management and safeguards compliance), enabling them to prioritise and lead local political economy navigation and influencing, whilst ensuring that important accountability obligations are met.

Balance of Power



Balance of Power (BOP) is multi-country initiative across Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga that seeks to contribute to an increase in women in leadership, particularly in the political sphere, through influencing social norms around women's leadership legitimacy.

This sensitive agenda requires savvy local leadership to navigate culturally embedded norms, attitudes, and behaviours related to gender equality. To recruit the right leaders, several strategies were used.

Selection criteria that prioritised:

- intrinsic motivation and passion, i.e. people who would work to achieve the social change objectives regardless of the program's existence
- strong formal and informal networks and relationships across key stakeholder groups and power bases
- emotional and political intelligence.

Selection panels that included:

- influential local male advocates to strengthen their engagement with implementation
- DFAT Post officers to ensure support and buy-in
- independent consultants with experience in identifying and supporting local leadership in the Pacific.

Interview process that comprised:

- contextually situated role-plays to test ability to think and work politically
- observation of relational and networking skills
- in-depth questioning to probe strategic thinking and personal motivation
- psychometric testing for insights into ways of thinking, feeling and interacting that may be productive or counter-productive for BOP's ways of working.

Staggered recruitment of all key management roles to ensure that the selected senior managers led the recruitment process for the middle management positions.



Ministry of iTaukei Affairs official leads labour mobility research consultations in Fiji through Balance of Power. Photo credit: Balance of Power / DFAT

The Emerging Leaders in International Development Program (ELID)



Each year, the ELID program brings together 15–18 local staff members from DT Global’s Asia Pacific programs to support their professional development and leadership growth.

Over 12-months, the cohort participates in an intensive learning journey to strengthen leadership capabilities, knowledge, and networks within DT Global, the development cooperation sector, and beyond.

Central to the program is learning about Adaptive Leadership Theory and Transformational Leadership Principles. Supported by a team of specialist coaches, the cohort is guided through individual and group coaching, mentoring, contemporary development topics, problem-solving, teamwork, communication techniques, and personal development exercises.

For peer-learning and support, the program facilitates networks between these local drivers of change – increasing their effectiveness as vehicles for reform in their program roles, sectors and country contexts.

Participants may come from different sectors but share a common passion to develop their leadership skills to make a positive impact on their country’s future. Selection is based on demonstrated commitment in four key areas: engaging in professional growth and leadership; creating positive change in their countries; learning from and connecting with their colleagues; and promoting diversity and inclusion.



Manichanh Keoviriyavong (centre with flowers) graduates from the Emerging Leaders in International Development program. Photo credit: ASEAN–Australia Counter Trafficking program / DFAT

5.2 Enabling culture that shifts power to local leadership

Historically, much of the aid and development cooperation system has been premised on a deficit model which positions local stakeholders and staff primarily as ‘beneficiaries’ of external expertise and resources. This can lead to power dynamics which, often unconsciously, create inequitable attitudes and behaviours, in spite of individual best efforts and good intentions.

Shifting this culture will require deliberate and conscious efforts by all involved including unpacking unconscious biases and behaviours. We will explicitly address this risk of unequal power dynamics that is inherent in international development programs and can undermine constructive relationships between local and international actors.

- **Create ‘safe spaces’ for local personnel and partners** to express how they perceive donor/contractor interventions in their country generally, and the DT Global program specifically, and identify practical measures for improvement. These sessions can draw from the ‘Yielding and Wielding Power’ toolkit,⁹ developed by DT Global’s DEU personnel in conjunction with ACFID, with facilitation support available through the Locally Led Development Community of Practice and Working Groups (see section 8).
- **Change language and terminology** that reinforce harmful power dynamics. Much of the jargon of the development industry needs to be deconstructed to create a culture that fosters, rather than undermines, local leadership as the driver of social change. Examples include ‘advisers’ to refer indiscriminately to all international personnel, and ‘aid’—which reinforces a charity/deficit-based approach—rather than more equitable terms such as ‘development cooperation’. Externally created terms and acronyms which have no resonance in the local political economy should be used only when there is shared understanding and consensus, e.g. GEDSI, MEL, WPS, etc. See Figure 8 below.

Figure 8 Language adaptation examples



- **Wherever possible, overtly position international personnel in supportive, ‘behind-the-scenes’ roles** (with corresponding role titles), so local leaders can clearly exercise their leadership potential and establish their leadership legitimacy with other local actors and powerholders, while still benefiting from the skills transfer from international personnel. Ensure terms of reference (ToRs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) for international personnel emphasise this support for the leadership growth and success of local staff. It is, however, acknowledged that, in some contexts, astute navigation of the local political economy requires visibility of international expertise to build buy-in and engagement from key local powerholders.
- **Explicitly address attitudes** to locally led development and associated power dynamics with international personnel. This will both maximise the likelihood of employing international staff who value the locally led development agenda of DT Global and build a cohort of ‘useful outsiders’ who can be mobilised across DT Global programs to support local leadership. Effectiveness in implementing DT Global’s commitment to locally led development should be part of performance assessments (including 360-degree feedback from local staff). Programs should also ensure international personnel have access to professional development and cross-program learning to improve their practice.
- **Understand and protect the primacy of relationships within local political economies.** Within the socio-cultural operating environments of development programs, greater relational

9 <https://learnwithacfid.com/course/view.php?id=34>

allegiances are expected from local personnel, relative to non-local personnel. This will be influenced by relationships of kin, custom, and both formal and informal community hierarchies. Local leaders who need to make difficult decisions to ensure high performance on programs, but which may negatively affect inter-personal relationships, need to be protected and supported by non-local personnel to sometimes ‘take the blame’ for these decisions. For example, this might include mobilising an international Program Manager or Contractor Representative to manage a performance issue with a staff member who has connections with a range of local personnel/stakeholders.

Box 3 *Enabling culture for local leadership in action – example 1*

Cross-organisation ‘Yielding and Wielding Power’ learning sessions



Through DT Global’s DEU, a series on ‘Yielding and Wielding Power’ was facilitated with staff from programs across Asia–Pacific. These sessions introduced locally led development and localisation within the development industry, including history, rationale and key definitions.

Local and international personnel were then divided into separate teams for ‘safe space’ discussions (using structured reflection) on the interconnected pathways of yielding power (by internationals) and wielding power (by locals). Facilitation aimed to be sensitive but probing, to deconstruct often implicit dynamics and behaviours within programs that can enable or block local leadership. Such aspects were considered at individual, organisational and systemic levels.

Guest speakers shared their experiences along the ‘yielding and wielding’ journey, including how they have successfully navigated the challenges inherent in this change process.

Some programs used the sessions to develop their own Locally Led Development Strategies and continue to draw on advice and support from DEU as they design, implement and monitor their strategies.



DEU Partnership Brokering Specialist, Peni Tawake, facilitates ‘Yielding and Wielding Power’ discussions. Photo credit: Anna Gibert

Building Communities Engagement in Papua New Guinea Program (BCEP)



BCEP is funded by DFAT and works with partners across government, civil society, churches, and media. BCEP was intentionally designed to work adaptively to empower local actors and local organisations to implement ‘local solutions to local problems’, including coalitions and social accountability approaches.

BCEP’s Team Leader and 90 per cent of the BCEP team are PNG nationals, including the leads of four of five program components. The team is well connected and has a deep understanding of PNG politics and society, representing a broad cross-segment of PNG regions and provinces.

The program’s short-term staff are predominately international personnel, recruited to provide specialised and targeted support to the local team and partners. BCEP’s four full-time international personnel have clear responsibility to foster the growth of local leadership. This approach ensures the continuity of expertise while nurturing the emergence of capable local leaders. The program is dedicated to elevating the skill sets for national staff, focusing on leadership and technical proficiencies, such as through DT Global’s Emerging Leaders in Development Program and the forthcoming Adaptive Management Forum.

BCEP has an explicit commitment to foster an inclusive culture that empowers local leaders, redresses discriminatory power dynamics, and promotes equity. The BCEP Adaptive Management Strategy prioritises the creation of an open, humble, and inclusive culture that supports staff to bring new ideas, question assumptions and accepts failures. The BCEP Locally Led Development Framework further consolidates BCEP’s approach to promoting locally led development, including:

- Engaging talented, connected local staff to enable BCEP to work politically.
- Using strengths based (positive) language for local leadership, including a glossary that encourages the shift to local leadership and counters the implicit judgements and bias in the current development cooperation vocabulary.
- Emphasising the use of Tok Pisin where possible to shift the power and give voice to people who would normally not be heard.



BCEP Team Leader, Doreen Iga, speaks at a Church Partnership Forum in PNG. Photo credit: BCEP / DFAT

5.3 Enabling operations for local leadership

We will put in place administrative systems that support, rather than constrain, local leadership and empowerment in complex and unique operating environments.

Rather than operational processes that are driven by, and framed around, corporate and donor conventions, we will seek to customise systems for the local context. This will maximise program effectiveness as well as our engagement with prospective local staff, suppliers and companies. This Focus Area directly addresses key localisation indicators of DFAT's Performance and Delivery Framework.

- **Ensure recruitment processes and professional development mechanisms** are in place that enable local personnel to take on, or move into, leadership and technical positions. Linked to Focus Area 1, this means ensuring recruitment criteria and panels are constructed to identify leadership potential (including ensuring that local personnel/perspectives are part of selection process) and putting in place formal professional development mechanisms. It also means having a flexible approach to organisational structures—creating new positions to harness and grow expertise within the team, and opportunistically recruiting emerging talent currently outside the program.
- **Ensure local personnel receive remuneration** that incentivises them to work for DT Global and reflects their value as the local drivers of development. The core principle of 'equal work, equal pay' should be respected, along with considerations of local and international markets.
- **Ensure that the realities of the operating context inform administrative processes**, rather than these processes being defined by decontextualised and standardised systems and templates. Considerations should include cultural and customary behaviours, levels of written English required, and bureaucratic requirements stifling innovation and opportunism. This should not mean a decrease in professional excellence and accountability—noting that many donor requirements such as safeguards and fraud require strict compliance—but rather a professional excellence that is enhanced through customisation to the local context. This will also require advocacy with donor personnel to increase understanding of how such shifts support the broader locally led development agenda and maximise development effectiveness outcomes.
- **Put in place long-term commitments and financial resourcing** of local personnel and organisations. This means ensuring contracts and grants can be long-term, while still maintaining performance management mechanisms. This may require advocating with donors for increased (multi-year) commitments to program financing, based on the complexity of influencing development outcomes for sustained impact.
- **Prioritise local suppliers and direct payment to local organisations** rather than using international suppliers and intermediaries. This may call for additional organisational strengthening to support local providers to meet required standards or building in increased flexibility around requirements to reflect the local context where possible. It may also mean seeing 'value' as not simply a like-for-like cost comparison, but one that recognises that the growth of local providers contributes to the broader development objective. In this way, there may be opportunities to support local providers, in both the private sector and civil society, to improve their own performance in line with globally recognised standards of inclusion, staff working conditions, and technical capability.
- **Contribute intentionally to the growth of the local consultancy market**, not simply with the objective of engaging their services for our programs, but also by assisting them to access opportunities to develop and expand.

Pacific Women Lead Enabling Services (PWLES)

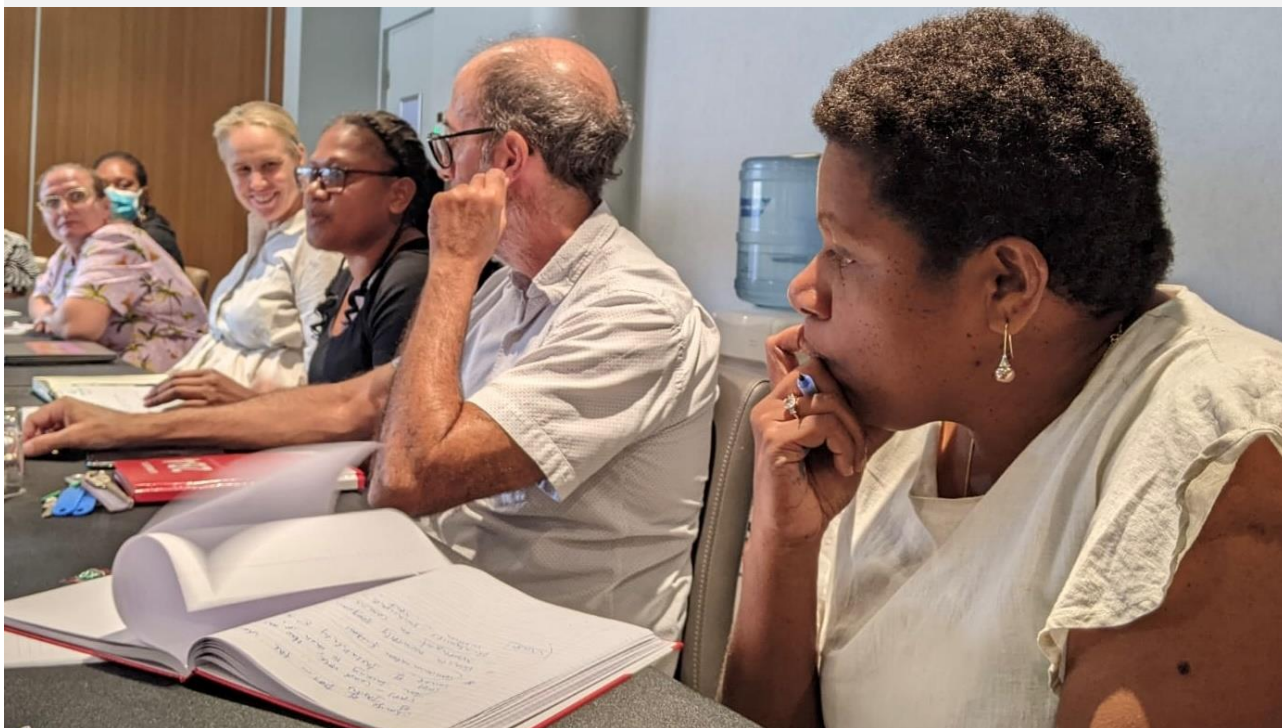


Pacific Women Lead (PWL) is a regional program funded by the Australian Government, with the Pacific Community (SPC) as its key implementing partner. It supports Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, to be safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities and decision-making with men and boys.

PWLES provides support to SPC and DFAT to implement PWL. It provides a range of support functions to the program, including program-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning functions, partnership brokering and an independent Quality and Technical Assurance Group (QTAG). The overall architecture of PWL underscores the pivotal role of Pacific leadership and ownership.

DT Global conceptualised the QTAG as an operational mechanism to increase participation of Pacific Islanders as consultants/technical advisers, given the preponderance of non-Pacific Islanders conventionally engaged in these advisory positions. Initially, the thinking was to have two streams of consultants – one for established consultants with a track-record in advisory roles (predominantly internationals) and the other ‘emerging’, i.e. Pacific Islander personnel with expertise but limited experience as consultants working for donor-funded programs. However, it was quickly agreed that this terminology had unintended negative messaging, i.e. implying that Pacific consultants were somehow less capable. A decision was made not to classify consultants in this two-tiered way, but rather to have PWLES staff work behind the scenes with consultants, to determine if professional development support is needed in specific areas and then provide this as required, including through team-based contracting.

PWLES intentionally prioritises the engagement and leadership of local personnel for in-country missions, often using a ‘pairing’ approach, whereby a local expert provides contextually grounded guidance on appropriate methodologies, and insights around key relationships and power dynamics. If the local expert does not have strong experience in other aspects of the assignment, they are paired with another consultant who can provide complementary inputs.



PWLES QTAG Consultant, Lisa Faerua, Team Leader of the GEDSI Review on behalf of the DFAT Port Vila Post, in stakeholder consultations. Photo credit: Anna Gibert

Economic and Social Infrastructure Program (ESIP)



ESIP is an Australian Government program which works with partners to deliver infrastructure that benefits all Papua New Guineans, across sectors such as energy, telecommunications, health and markets.

ESIP's approach to development seeks to invest in the local economy and support local supply chains. When money is invested in the local economy, a percentage of the related profits and wages stays in the local economy, circulating multiple times through the purchase of goods and services. This delivers benefits to local businesses and the people they employ.

Coolamon Advisors, a First Nations Australian-owned company, and their partner economic consulting firm, 35 South, have assessed the impact of the construction of Kimbe Market in West New Britain Province on the local and national economy using a Local Multiplier model. This is a type of economic analysis tool used in Indigenous communities in rural and remote Australia by Coolamon Advisors to estimate the potential economic impact of different design and construction approaches on a local economy.

The Kimbe Market redevelopment project is a AUD14 million investment that aims to enhance this critical piece of social infrastructure as a regional trading and economic hub for the Kimbe town and surrounding areas, and for West New Britain Province more broadly.

The redevelopment of Kimbe Market has brought economic benefits that reach far beyond the initial investment. For example, through construction alone for each AUD1 of investment, the project generated AUD1.66 of economic activity in the Kimbe regional economy; and AUD2.53 of economic activity in the PNG national economy.

These added economic benefits are the result of the project's efforts to ensure the participation of local communities in project design and delivery. This commitment to local participation also emphasised gender equality, disability and social inclusion– with women and people with disability playing key roles in project implementation.



Vendors and patrons at the redeveloped Kimbe Market, Papua New Guinea. Photo credit: ESIP / DFAT

5.4 Enabling locally led programming

In the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our programs, we will both prioritise the expertise and knowledge of our local staff and support developmental leadership within our programs' local partners.

Consequently, our programs will be informed by deep understanding of the local political economy, with implementation strategies that navigate the complex blockers and enablers of development outcomes. We intend our programs to catalyse, and increase the effectiveness of, drivers of change with government, the private sector and civil society.

- **Maximise the agency and leadership of local personnel and partners across all aspects of the 'programming cycle'**, as indicated in the locally led development continuum. This means that we put in place facilitative processes so that local insights and perspectives guide all aspects – from design through to implementation and evaluation. Programs may: influence the composition of design teams so that local reformists have key leadership and/or advisory positions; establish governance structures that give voice to local reformists and not just 'usual suspects'; use locally determined budget allocation processes with flexibility to respond to evolving operating environments and maximum direct disbursement to local suppliers and stakeholders; and establish ongoing monitoring and strategic planning processes where partner organisations and power-holders are meaningfully involved so that local buy-in to, and ownership of, reform objectives and results is fostered.
- **Ensure the monitoring, evaluation (M&E) and reporting processes** of our programs do not simply aim to meet donor accountability requirements but are also useful for the reformist objectives of partner governments and organisations, in terms of framing, content and format. Wherever possible, programs should seek to use local M&E frameworks and use program resources and expertise to strengthen their effectiveness for systemic impact. Opportunities to use M&E processes and reports as a key tool of implementation to strategically influence, and build support and motivation for, a reformist agenda should also be explored.
- **Explore the use of formal partnership brokering tools and approaches** to make explicit a program's intent to work 'day-to-day' in locally led, partnership-based ways. Drawing from DEU resources, these sessions can involve external facilitators and enable collective unpacking and defining of roles and responsibilities – involving not only program staff, but also key government/civil society partners, as well as donor and DT Global head office personnel.
- **Develop strong local sustainability strategies** at the outset of design and implementation, so that there is a clear intent for program investments and results to be localised for long-term systemic and structural impact. This may include intentionally incubating the growth of local organisations to which program functions and resources will be ultimately transitioned.
- **Use branding sensitively and strategically.** Conventional approaches that brand all program activity to give recognition to donors and contractors can work against local ownership of implementation and results, as well as undermine reformist influencing. This is particularly the case when programs are engaged in efforts to shift sensitive social norms and entrenched power dynamics, and where perceptions of local legitimacy are essential to success. Programs should use DT Global and donor branding where appropriate, and as guided by local personnel, in ways that give careful consideration to impact within the local political economy.

Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice 2 (AIPJ2)



AIPJ2 is part of nearly 20 years of Indonesia-Australia cooperation to strengthen Indonesia's justice and security sector. AIPJ2 is a flexible and adaptive facility that has a unique focus on working largely through civil society organisations (CSOs) to influence systemic reform in partnership with the Government of Indonesia (GoI) in highly sensitive areas (e.g. corrections reform, restorative justice, access to justice for women, girls, and people with disabilities, and preventing violent extremism and transnational crime).

Since the program's start in 2017, the monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) system has been strengthened with participatory approaches with national partners. Participatory reflections provide a forum for brokering partnerships between the GoI and CSOs and sharing best practices and success stories from the key stakeholders. These reflections support high-quality reporting and a focus on achieving results; information sharing, learning, and synergies of effort; and strategic decision-making and continuous improvement – with an intentional focus on increasing local leadership of this core MEL process.

AIPJ2 started with offline quarterly reflections with individual CSO partners, with facilitators from SOLIDARITAS (AIPJ2's local MEL partner). As AIPJ2 and individual CSO MEL capacities developed, and as the program's strategies became more clearly defined, they evolved into six-monthly reflections with groups of CSO partners working on related issues. These reflections were facilitated by program team members who increasingly utilised these spaces for convening and fostering coalition-building among partners and engaging with DFAT and the GoI to align common strategic priorities.

Initially, the reflections were led by the AIPJ2 MEL team, but over time the facilitation and ownership has been handed over to local partners. There is also increasing evidence that local CSO partners have internalised the six-monthly reflection process and are now using the format and structure to reflect upon and develop their own strategic plans.

AIPJ2 is also systematically collecting data on the progress of local leadership across its programming, including MEL, through its 'local ownership surveys', conducted annually with GoI and CSO partners and AIPJ2 local staff.



Islamic education teachers and principals visit a Buddhist monastery in Semarang as part of building peace culture, Wahid Foundation, supported by AIPJ2. Photo credit: AIPJ2 / DFAT

Australia Indonesia Partnership for Economic Development (Prospera)



Prospera supports strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Indonesia, working with more than 25 Indonesian government agencies, providing them with evidence for policies to support private sector development, safeguard macroeconomic stability and improve government performance.

Prospera’s *Tim Asistensi* is a group of senior Indonesians who have policy expertise and extensive networks. The team provides expertise to Government of Indonesia (GoI) ministers on overcoming the policy and service delivery challenges in a complex emerging-market economy. The ministers draw on Prospera adviser support for policy evidence and internal discussions to ensure consistency of their advice across government. Members of the team are jointly selected by GoI and Prospera, in consultation with DFAT.

Tim Asistensi is situated in the Coordinating Economic Ministry, working across ministries including Finance, Planning (Bappenas), the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime and Investment Affairs, Office of the President and the Vice-President’s Office. The access and influence of these advisers is significant because they can leverage their relationships and in-depth knowledge of the complexity of the local political economy to identify key reform entry points and build reform coalitions.

Through *Tim Asistensi*, Prospera and the Australian Government more broadly have been able to elevate and progress critical policy reform initiatives.



The Ministry of Finance sharing findings from a national logistics ecosystem survey with a range of stakeholders, including other Indonesian Government agencies and representatives from the private sector. Photo credit: Prospera / DFAT

6 Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion and Locally Led Development

There is strong correlation between locally led development and the effectiveness of efforts to advance gender equality, disability inclusion, and inclusion of other marginalised communities. As noted above, this is because a root cause of much of the discrimination experienced by marginalised groups is the deeply entrenched social and cultural norms and power dynamics of the local context. While there are important technical contributions that can be made by external actors to improve social inclusion outcomes, much work needs to be done to contest the prevailing norms and legitimise new behaviours and power shifts. When such work is not led by local reformists, initiatives are often perceived as external ‘foreign’ interference – perceptions that can be exploited and reinforced by those benefiting from the status quo. In this way, programs that are seen as outsider-led interventions can inadvertently cause harm to local actors driving change by generating backlash and allowing reform to be framed in ways that decrease broad-based buy-in. However, when led and informed by local experts who have lived experience of deep-seated norms and behaviours, initiatives will be viewed with greater legitimacy and will have increased likelihood of navigating the complex contextual barriers at the heart of discrimination and prejudice.

This is not to say that social inclusion efforts cannot be usefully and significantly supported by development cooperation programs and non-local allies. Many of the most important anti-discrimination movements of recent history have all involved solidarity from, and collaboration with, international efforts. However, all have ultimately succeeded because they had sufficient local legitimacy to bring about societal reconceptualisation of the status and roles of previously marginalised groups.

It is also critical that programs avoid enabling perpetuation of exclusive and elitist power dynamics under the guise of ‘locally led development’. In many countries in which we operate, the local actors with the most power and influence are men. With an increased commitment to locally led development, our programs will need to adopt perceptive and nuanced approaches that only ‘go with the grain’ of those local actors seeking to redress unequal power structures and injustice.



West Lombok community leaders participate in inclusive infrastructure national dialogue as part of KIAT's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Infrastructure (GESIT) Program. Photo credit: KIAT / DFAT

7 Monitoring and Measurement

As noted above, all DT Global programs will be encouraged to develop their own Locally Led Development Strategy, informed by the Focus Areas of this Framework and using the continuum at Annex 1 as a basis for self-assessment, planning for future improvement, and ongoing monitoring. For DFAT-funded programs, the monitoring of the program-level strategies will support reporting against the indicators of DFAT's Performance and Delivery Framework. DT Global will also draw from these monitoring processes to provide aggregated performance information to our donor clients on progress in achieving our locally led development objectives, including progress at an internal corporate level.

8 Organisational Learning and Support

DT Global, under its Development Effectiveness Unit (DEU), has a Locally Led Development (LLD) Community of Practice supported by LLD specialists as well as country-specific locally led Working Groups (such as in PNG). It convenes regularly to share lessons, insights and practice, and to discuss challenges and issues. The DEU is available to provide customised support to programs seeking guidance in specific areas of locally led development. Its aim, however, is not only to provide staff across DT Global with learning opportunities, but also simultaneously to serve as a mechanism to build coalitions of local leaders across our programs. A key initiative linked to the LLD Community of Practice which exemplifies this dual aim is the Emerging Leaders in International Development (ELID) program (see Box 2). This 12-month learning program provides DT Global local staff with a range of professional development opportunities to both enhance and consolidate their leadership skills and build their networks and influence across the region for increased developmental impact.

Annex 1 Locally Led Development Continuum

DFAT aims to progress investments along the locally led development ‘continuum’¹⁰ over time to meet their specific objectives, informed by the local context, capabilities of local and international partners, the scale of operations, choice of modalities, and management of risks and safeguards. The continuum outlined below is designed to help DFAT staff and implementing partners make informed decisions about defining the intent and level of ambition in relation to locally led development at portfolio and investment level, when new programs and phases are established, and to inform the monitoring of progress over time. We need to be realistic about the pace of change; it may take a number of years to progress from one stage to another.

Dimensions of local agency ¹¹	Emerging local actors consulted	Partial local actors co-responsible	Advanced local actors primarily responsible
Ideation, planning, concept and design	Consultation with partner government and diverse local stakeholders at Development Partnership Plans (DPP), strategy and design stages	DPPs and intermediary-led designs codesigned with local partners; local reference groups and quality assurance processes; local members on design teams	Partner-led strategies and designs, including local partners determining outcomes, priorities, logics, governance, MEL, resourcing; alignment with local plans, budgets and systems
Implementation and delivery approach	Local organisations used for logistics and program administration	Local stakeholders have significant roles in program governance, with partial adoption of local systems	Local partners lead in key areas, including priority setting, work planning, governance, management, MEL, reporting
Decision-making and responsibility	Decision-making mostly resides with donors and implementing agents; limited consultation with partner government and local stakeholders	Local actors have increased autonomy over selected components	Local actors have a high degree of responsibility for programs, including determining priorities, managing resources, and making decisions
Resource distribution	Local stakeholders, partner governments, or regional bodies receive donor funds with a narrow scope and limited timeframe; parallel systems	Local stakeholders, partner governments, or regional bodies receive funds with greater flexibility in scope and multi-year timeframe; partial use of local systems	Resources provided as directly as possible to local stakeholders, partner governments or regional bodies, aligned with own plans and budgets; partners have autonomy in expensing funds in line with program objectives; use of partner systems
Partnership approach	Limited partnership with government and local suppliers; local stakeholders involved are often members of an elite or have well-established relationships with donors	Partnership through specific instruments, including joint steering committees, subsidiary arrangements; some partnerships with local suppliers; diverse local stakeholders involved	Equitable partnership with respectful policy dialogue, resource allocation, program co-design, co-evaluation and shared risk management, using local governance mechanisms; diverse local stakeholders empowered to drive change
Staff profile and procurement	Limited national personnel in senior positions where appropriate skills and experience can be found; limited use of local suppliers	National personnel hired by implementing partners in management roles, staffing strategies support local leadership; mix of local and international suppliers	Mostly local program team including in senior positions; junior staff mentored and supported; international staff managed by local teams; enabling HR and procurement policies; majority use of local suppliers
Technical advisers	International technical advisers/firms are substituting local capacity or international firms are delivering an end-to-end technical package	International technical advisers/firms are substituting some capacity but also playing a capability development role	If present, internationally sourced technical advisers/firms play a supporting or complementary role; majority local advisers
MEL approach and accountability for results	MEL system mostly designed for donor accountability and reporting, parallel indicators and data collection, with limited tailoring to local data sets	Local knowledge and expertise used to adapt and tailor systems to local context; MEL system designed to balance a mix of local learning with accountability; some supplementation of local systems with additional data sets	Locally tailored MEL systems developed, aligned with local plans, using longitudinal local data sets, drawing on local expertise; donors adopt local MEL systems and harmonised reporting for shared accountability purposes; can influence international best practice
Role of intermediaries	International project management services with limited tailoring, both capacity supplementation and substitution	Capacity and capability development; hybrid systems for planning, budgets, governance, decision-making	Support and facilitation role; ongoing capacity assessment and handover, majority use of local systems for planning, budgeting, governance, decision-making

10 From DFAT’s Locally Led Development Guidance Note 2024.

11 These dimensions are linked to the dimensions of the OECD DAC and DFAT locally led development definition i.e. framing, design, delivery, resourcing, accountability.