



Management response to the mid-term review of the Kokoda Initiative under the Second Joint Understanding

Background

The Kokoda Initiative is a partnership between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) to conserve the special values of the Kokoda Track, Brown River Catchment and Owen Stanley Ranges while improving the lives of the people living along the track.

This partnership began in 2008 and was renewed in 2010 when the *Second Joint Understanding between Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia on the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River Catchment and Kokoda Track Region 2010 – 2015* (the JU2) was signed. The JU2 has five goals, each of which is the joint responsibility of both Australian and PNG stakeholders.

A mid-term review of the JU2 program was undertaken in 2014. The objectives of the review were to assess the progress of the Initiative from both Australian and PNG government perspectives, consider the practical constraints of program delivery in remote areas of a developing country, and to make recommendations on additional actions, timing or resources that may be necessary to achieve the objectives of the JU2 to the end of December 2015 (its expiry date).

The mid-term review report made 23 recommendations covering a range of activities. This management response encapsulates the Kokoda Initiative Taskforce decision on the recommendations of the review.

Response to Mid-term Review Report recommendations

The report put forward recommendations relating to the Conservation and Environmental Protection Authority of PNG (formerly Department for Environment and Conservation (DEC)). The four recommendations focus on its restructure from the Department of Environment and Conservation to a separate, statutory authority. The Australian Kokoda Initiative Taskforce supports and accepts all four recommendations.

The report made 11 recommendations relating to the Kokoda Track Authority and its core functions, financial accountability, governance arrangements and communication with stakeholders. The Australian Kokoda Initiative Taskforce accepts and supports ten of the recommendations. Recommendation seven of the report, to wind down the Livelihood activities under the Kokoda Initiative, is not accepted by the Taskforce.

The report includes five recommendations relating more broadly to community engagement and planning. The recommendations relate to strengthening ties to communities and non-government organisations living and operating along the Track and broadly improving the governance of the Kokoda Initiative. The Australian Kokoda Initiative Taskforce accepts and supports all five recommendations.

The final three recommendations of the report relate to the general coordination and planning processes of the Kokoda Initiative. The Australian Kokoda Initiative Taskforce accepts and supports all three recommendations

For reference, a list of the recommendations of the mid-term review is at **Attachment A**.

ATTACHMENT A: Recommendations of the Kokoda Initiative Mid-term Review

These recommendations are proposed to improve the cost-effectiveness and impact of the remaining two years of the JU2.

DEC / CEPA

1. Kokoda Initiative should support the transition of DEC to the new CEPA. During the transition phase, there should be limited changes to the current level of engagement with Kokoda Initiative activities.
2. The transition of DEC's responsibilities to CEPA which is planned to be self-funding will be challenging and justifies ongoing support to the new agency in both institutional development and specialised technical areas such as funding sources (PES, biodiversity credits, etc.) for community and landowner payments.
3. The focus of the long term DEC adviser activities should be reassessed in relation to the need for ongoing high level technical environmental management skills or if the adviser profile should change to mentoring the TEM team and providing high level strategic advice and support to the Minister and new CEPA executive.
4. As DEC transitions to the newly created CEPA, DEC / CEPA seek to make use of funds from the unused part of GoPNG funding committed at the start of JU2 for Initiative activities (an estimated K6 million).

Kokoda Track Authority

5. KTA should focus on its core business of regulating use of the Track and maximising the proportion of trekker fees used for basic track maintenance and contributions to communities along the Track.

This should be possible within the trekker fees and trekking company fee resources already in place. The implementation modality for KTA and work plans continue as described currently, except the KTA livelihoods activities which should be reassessed. DoE should only consider additional short term resourcing (to that scheduled in the work plans) when requested by the agencies (not advisers) or if there is an emergency.

6. The proposed appointment of a tourism promotion and marketing officer¹ should be reassessed. If KTA adopts a business focus on core Track management, the proposed position may not be appropriate.
7. The current Livelihoods activities should be wound down while the proposal under Community Engagement below is developed and implemented.

Uncommitted funds allocated to livelihoods activities could be directed into identified priority

¹ The KTA Board has advised the MTR team that this position will be called the Business Development Officer / Manager.

community activities such as completing the provision of solar lighting² for community assets such as the schools, health centres or other locations agreed by the communities. Or, subject to ensuring the ward development plans include the views all communities in the ward, disbursing these funds through the current ward development funds used to disburse trekker fees back to communities. Alternatively, or non-government organisation(s) (NGO) that are already implementing complementary community development activities along the Track could be supported.

8. Completion and commissioning of the trekking reservation and management website should be a high priority. Successful implementation of this website would contribute to rebuilding the KTA relationship with the Australian based trekking companies. Guesthouse / camp ground bookings should not be include in the initial website capabilities.
9. The tour operator forum approach and implementation should be reviewed and refreshed to make it more attractive for operators to participate. Part of this process should include ensuring that issues raised by and agreed to by operator participants are addressed and reported back to all operators.

The operator forum is a venue for providing capacity building and business development support to emerging local trekking companies.

10. KTA should publish and circulate an annual report detailing key information on track operations and improvements, trekker numbers and, transparent and detailed financial reports.
11. The draft KTA capacity building plan developed by the business systems adviser needs to reviewed and revised before implementation starts.
12. KTA should develop and implement a process to develop the skills and understanding of governance and business management issues for board members.
13. As part of preparing for a future activity, building on the Kokoda Initiative, a study(/s) be commissioned on the sustainable trekking load the Track and its communities can support and also the drivers of and future demand for Kokoda Track treks and other use by PNG communities. The study should have inputs from TPA on projected visits by trekkers to PNG and their interest in trekking the Kokoda Track.

These studies will facilitate assessment of the long term sustainability / financial viability of the KTA.

14. If resources and funding are available, the 2012 study on the economic benefits of the trekking industry should be updated with a more comprehensive analysis of the flow and quantum of benefits (cash and kind) to the communities and, local and Australian based trekking companies.
15. The relationship between KTA and the trekking companies needs to be strengthened with greatly increased cooperation (and tolerance) – it will be a major challenge to achieve it but would be a very worthwhile use of GoA funds to achieve sustainability. This could be part of the tourism officer's role but will require ongoing support from senior GoA and GoPNG officials.

² The KTF has funded an extensive program providing solar lighting for public facilities along the Track,

Community Engagement and Planning

16. Kokoda Initiative develop and implement a systematic and coordinated approach to community engagement that aligns with GoPNG processes at the national and sub national levels and ensures women and disadvantaged groups are included in the planning and fund allocation processes. This approach will need support with skills and resources not available in Kokoda Initiative implementing agencies.
17. Kokoda Initiative strengthen its relationships with and understanding of other civil society organisations or NGOs supporting and investing in Track communities.
18. DFAT (with DoE support) facilitates formation of a Kokoda Track development working group (KTDWG) comprising the provincial governments, representatives of the Ministerial Committee, KTA, the KDP (or its successor), relevant NGOs (KTF, etc.) and trekking companies. This aligns with a concept put forward at the recent Sogeri Ministerial meeting³. The newly established technical working group (TWG) of the KIMC may be able to fill this role with additional organisations co-opted as required.

If the KTDWG is successfully formed, the working group could be tasked with assisting the provincial governments to coordinate (but possibly later in planning and supervising) resources into community infrastructure and livelihoods activities along the Track and down to the northern beaches, ie. the provinces lead the community development / livelihoods activities.

19. The proposed Kokoda Initiative M&E plans be reviewed by the PLGP M&E specialist to simplify and operationalize the Kokoda Initiative draft M&E plan.

The Australian Aid section of the Australian High Commission has indicated that M&E system design and implementation resources within the KDP/PLGP could be made available to assist in refining and implementing the simplified M&E activities across the Initiative. The KTA Livelihoods officer should be included in these activities.

20. Additional Kokoda Initiative resources will need to be added (M&E position to act as a focal point, data collection/collation resources) to support the Kokoda Initiative M&E processes after the initial proposed M&E support through the PLGP.

Coordination and Planning

21. Kokoda Initiative start a process to improve coordination / linkages at provincial and local levels. The new KIMC TWG should be able to lead this function. This should also improve linkages to other GoPNG funding streams (such as PIP, DSIP, etc.).
22. The PMC processes be reviewed and a formal reporting process be adopted to ensure that priority agreed activities are documented with action plans and timeframes, and the DoE project director and senior PNG agency managers are aware of these agreed actions.
23. Kokoda Initiative needs to rebuild and/or develop relationships with other NGO stakeholders contributing to development of communities along the Track. The DFAT component of the KI

³ The Senior Adviser has reported that 'The recent ministerial meeting at Sogeri agreed to set up a technical working group of PNG officials to identify PNG national and provincial priorities and liaise with Australian officials about where Australian development dollars for Kokoda should be spent'.

needs work more closely with other relevant NGOs, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church), the Anglican Church, the KTF and Network Kokoda.