

**Assessing the  
Diplomacy Training Program - Oxfam Australia  
Partnership and the  
Long term impact of DTP Training Courses**

**Independent Evaluation  
August 2010**

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## **Executive Summary**

From March-July 2010 an independent evaluation was conducted of the partnership between the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) and Oxfam Australia (Oxfam). Its purpose was to assess the long term impact of the DTP training courses on alumni who have participated in an Oxfam-funded DTP training program, to assess the DTP-Oxfam partnership, and make recommendations for the future partnership between the DTP and Oxfam. The methodology involved a confidential, on-line survey, to which 41 DTP alumni responded, and semi structured interviews with 18 alumni (12 women and 6 men). Nine interviews were also conducted with past and present Oxfam head office staff, DTP staff members and the current coordinator of the Indigenous Human Rights Network Australia (IHRNA). In addition, a range of secondary sources were reviewed, including DTP participants' evaluations and program reports.

Alumni were overwhelmingly positive about the DTP program, which is perceived to have provided a range of benefits. These benefits include: developing knowledge of the international human rights system and avenues available to pursue complaints, exposing participants to the human rights issues of other countries and communities, developing practical advocacy skills, developing valuable support networks and building a sense of confidence. One extremely positive finding was that people are making use of the information, skills and networks gained during the DTP program over the long term. For example, alumni are making use of DTP training materials as a reference, they remain in contact with other training participants in order to share information on human rights issues and they share information with families, local communities and workplaces. In this sense it appears that the DTP really has helped to create a self-sustaining alumni network. The confidence gained from the DTP programs has also assisted people to become stronger human rights advocates for their local communities. A number of suggestions were made by alumni for improving the DTP programs, which encompassed issues such as the need for more accessible human rights materials, additional support to enable people to remain engaged in human rights issues when they return to their community, a greater focus on building practical skills during the training programs, and more attention to providing preparatory materials to participants prior to the programs. Many Australian alumni also requested that the DTP training program be taken to remote communities.

The evaluation also found that Oxfam's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSIP) and the DTP have a positive relationship. Part of what makes this partnership

distinctive is its responsiveness to emerging human rights opportunities and the commitment of both ATSIP and the DTP to learn from previous programs. For example, both ATSIP and the DTP are aware of the need to ensure that training programs are part of a wider commitment to building the capacity of Indigenous Australian advocates. To this end, they have worked together to help establish a new Indigenous Human Rights Network of Australia (IHRNA) that will facilitate the access of Indigenous human rights advocates – in particular, young adults – to information that will strengthen their participation and engagement in human rights processes. They have also collaborated on a preparatory training program for young Indigenous advocates selected to attend the UN Permanent Forum. Another area of collaboration has involved the production of more accessible human rights advocacy resources that are focused on the Australian context.

Based on these findings, the evaluation makes a number of recommendations for strengthening the DTP-Oxfam relationship. These encompass issues such as strengthening the national and regional Australia programs, expanding the participation of remote communities, renewing Oxfam's commitment to DTP's international program, devoting greater attention to planning and preparation of courses, expanding the practical focus of training courses, and developing more accessible human rights materials for use at the local level. Suggestions are also made for increasing the follow-up support to alumni to help overcome the isolation some feel they face when they return to their communities and to enhance the long-term sustainability of the programs. Given the value accorded to the international DTP programs by alumni, it is also recommended that Oxfam's International Youth Partnership (OIYP) Program consider renewing its support for these programs. Finally, the evaluation recommends that Oxfam and the DTP consider developing a longer term, and more strategic approach to future collaboration that is part of a broader commitment to capacity building and long term support for Indigenous Australian alumni. As part of this long term commitment, Oxfam should consider funding the DTP as part of a three year funding cycle that is not tied to one off programs, but considers the DTP's broader institutional needs.

In conclusion, the evaluation suggests that the DTP-ATSIP partnership is playing a valuable role in building the skills of Indigenous Australian community advocates to engage in human rights advocacy. This relationship is a healthy one that has been responsive to emerging human rights opportunities and has evolved in response to the needs of alumni. What is needed at this point is to build on these strengths in order to develop a more strategic partnership that involves a commitment to build the capacity of human rights advocates over the long term and better utilizes DTP's extensive alumni network.

## **List of Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

That ATSIP and the DTP strengthen the existing national Australia programs by linking these programs into broader human rights opportunities, including skills development opportunities within, and external to, Oxfam.

### **Recommendation 2**

That ATSIP and the DTP continue to support the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) and document the long term outcomes of the Perth program, with a view to potentially expanding the regional program model in future.

### **Recommendation 3**

That ATSIP and the DTP give greater consideration to the involvement of local human rights experts in regional training programs in order to increase their local relevance and to enhance longer term sustainability.

### **Recommendation 4**

That Oxfam and the DTP consider expanding the regional Australia program and make active attempts to encourage participants from remote areas to participate in these programs by developing partnerships with local indigenous organizations and NGOs.

### **Recommendation 5**

At a national level, that ATSIP and the DTP maintain a focus on building the skills and capacity of young people by continuing the youth-specific programs and considering the ways in which young people can benefit from learning from elders and from the experiences of Indigenous peoples in other countries.

### **Recommendation 6**

That OIYP consider supporting the DTP to develop a targeted training program for Action Partners that could be tied in with the three year OIYP cycle.

### **Recommendation 7**

As part of a renewed commitment to DTP's international work through the OIYP program, Oxfam and the DTP could consider how to enhance information sharing amongst human rights training organizations in the Asia Pacific region in order to avoid duplication and ensure that alumni are linked into other skills development opportunities.

### **Recommendation 8**

That Oxfam and the DTP consider investing more time and resources in the selection and preparation of training participants, including by undertaking detailed consultations with partners and sending out preparatory materials in advance.

### **Recommendation 9**

That Oxfam and the DTP consider incorporating a greater focus on practical skills development into the training programs. This could include additional case studies on how people have made use of human rights mechanisms and processes. It could also involve providing an opportunity for participants to develop an 'action plan' for a human rights campaign, which they could then receive support to implement post-program.

### **Recommendation 10**

That Oxfam and the DTP consider how to increase the domestic content of the Australian and regional Australia programs.

### **Recommendation 11**

That the 'Free and Equal' Guide is distributed more widely than has currently been the case and that Oxfam and the DTP commit to updating the guide in three years time.

### **Recommendation 12**

That Oxfam, the DTP and IHNRA continue discussions about human rights resources with a view to developing more resources that are accessible to remote Indigenous communities in appropriate languages and mediums.

### **Recommendation 13**

That Oxfam and DTP make efforts to involve alumni more systematically in future training programs, including as organizers, trainers, presenters and 'mentors' to younger less experienced activists.

#### **Recommendation 14**

That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA discuss the possibility of an Australian-specific human rights –e-newsletter to engender a sense of solidarity amongst Indigenous Australian human rights advocates and provide information on forthcoming human rights opportunities and events. Alumni themselves could be involved in preparing this newsletter.

#### **Recommendation 15**

That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA consider organizing annual, or bi-annual, reflections or social gatherings to enable DTP alumni to come together, meet with other alumni, share their achievements and challenges and form informal 'mentoring' relationships.

#### **Recommendation 16**

That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA discuss the possibility of establishing a small grants fund to provide support for specific, small scale human rights projects in remote areas.

#### **Recommendation 17**

That Oxfam consider shifting its funding to the DTP from an annual, to a three-year, funding cycle. This shift should be part of a commitment to a long term partnership between Oxfam and the DTP that gives greater consideration to the long term capacity building needs of alumni and their communities and other Indigenous community advocates.

#### **Recommendation 18**

As part of a three year strategy, ATSIP and the DTP should establish clear goals. This will enable indicators to be developed in order to better measure the impact of this collaboration after three years.

#### **Recommendation 19**



Units other than ATSIP (in particular Advocacy, OIYP and Asia Pacific Programs) should also be involved in the development of a three year strategy to make the most of potential links and areas of collaboration.

**Recommendation 20**

As part of a longer term, strategic approach to collaboration, ATSIP and DTP should consider undertaking a mapping exercise of Indigenous organizations in order to identify capacity building needs and partnership possibilities.

**Recommendation 21**

That Oxfam funds two staff places for DTP's annual program for new and existing Oxfam staff.

# **1.0 Introduction**

## **1.1 Background and Purpose of the Evaluation**

The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) is an independent, non-governmental organization (NGO) that seeks to advance human rights and empower civil society in the Asia Pacific region through quality education and training and the building of skills and capacity of NGOs and individual human rights defenders. Since its establishment in 1989, the DTP has provided training to over 1600 community advocates across the Asia Pacific, including 354 Indigenous Australians. In addition to its annual regional Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Course, since 2003, the DTP has also organized thematic courses focused on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Migrant Workers, Human Rights and Business and Human Rights and Trade.<sup>1</sup>

Oxfam Australia (Oxfam) and the DTP have a long history of working together. Prior to 2004, Oxfam provided support to the DTP in the form of subsidizing individual participants in DTP's programs by providing course fees and travel costs. In 2004, the DTP and Oxfam agreed to develop a broader partnership based on an acknowledgement of their shared commitment to protecting and promoting human rights and their shared objectives of building advocacy capacity among civil society in the region and Indigenous Australia as part of a strategy to promote sustainable development. As part of this commitment, Oxfam shifted its support to the DTP from individual training fee support to grant support. Since 2004, the Oxfam-DTP relationship has been managed by a range of different Oxfam units, including Advocacy and the Youth Engagement Program (formerly International Youth Partnerships). Since 2006, however, the primary relationship between Oxfam and DTP has been through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSIP, formerly IAP). As a consequence, the key focus of the partnership has involved Oxfam providing funding to the DTP to deliver courses for Indigenous Australian community advocates.

Both Oxfam and the DTP agreed that, as the more structured relationship enters its 6<sup>th</sup> year, it would be important to conduct an independent evaluation to determine the successful components of the partnership and how these can be replicated and strengthened.<sup>2</sup> This was viewed as particularly important given that ATSIP is currently considering developing the relationship into a long term partnership. In this context, an

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<sup>1</sup> DTP website

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Oxfam's advocacy unit was also invited to participate in the evaluation but declined to do so.

external consultant, Lia Kent, was engaged by Oxfam's ATSIP program to conduct an evaluation between March and June 2010, in close coordination with a DTP-Oxfam Steering Committee. A key purpose of the evaluation was to assess the long term impact of the DTP training courses on alumni, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and youth advocates and OIYP 'action partners' who have participated in Oxfam-funded training programs. A second purpose was to assess the DTP-Oxfam partnership, including ways of working, structure and management, in order to capture what is unique about the relationship, list key achievements, and identify lessons learned. Based on these findings, the evaluation makes a number of recommendations for the future partnership between DTP and Oxfam.

This report is divided into the following sections. The remainder of Section One discusses the methodology. Section Two discusses the Oxfam-DTP relationship, including key activities and achievements, and constraints. Section Three discusses the views of alumni about the value of the DTP program, the format and content of programs, and the long term benefits of the DTP program for individuals and communities. In addition, it lists the suggestions made by alumni for improving the DTP program. Section Four discusses the findings of the evaluation and lists a number of recommendations for strengthening the Oxfam-DTP partnership.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The evaluation methodology involved the following components:

- A confidential online survey was sent to the 216 Oxfam-supported alumni who had participated in a DTP training program between 2004 and 2010.<sup>3</sup> 41 DTP alumni responded to the survey, 27 women and 14 men. 25 respondents lived in Australia, while others were based in the Asia Pacific region<sup>4</sup> and Africa.<sup>5</sup> 32 respondents identified as an Indigenous person, and of these, 23 identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. 21 respondents were in the 26-34 year age group.<sup>6</sup> The largest group of respondents – 10 – had attended the Sydney 2009

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<sup>3</sup> This included DTP training courses fully funded by Oxfam, courses that were partially funded by Oxfam, and courses that Oxfam funded individual staff, partners or OIYP action partners to attend.

<sup>4</sup> Two were from the Philippines, two were Indonesian, one was Burmese, one was Cambodian, one was Thai, three were Indian, one was from PNG, and one was from Vanuatu.

<sup>5</sup> One Gambian and one Zambian

<sup>6</sup> 8 respondents were in the 35-44 year age group, 5 were in the 45-54 year age group, 4 were 55 or over, and three were aged between 18-25

Young Indigenous Advocates program.<sup>7</sup> 23 respondents lived in an urban area, 14 respondents lived in a rural area, and 4 respondents were based in a remote area.

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 alumni who had participated in an Oxfam-funded DTP program since 2004. The selection of interviewees sought to identify a mix of men and women, those who had participated in different DTP programs, different age groups, and different nationalities. Respondents included 12 women and 6 men. 12 were Indigenous Australian, 3 were from the Asia Pacific region<sup>8</sup>, and 3 were African.<sup>9</sup> Two of these interviewees were Oxfam field staff. Interviewees were identified through a combination of random sampling of participants and specific targeting of individuals based on a list of suggestions from Oxfam and the DTP. Most interviews took place via telephone, and lasted for around an hour in duration.
- Nine interviews were conducted with past and present Oxfam head office staff, DTP staff members, and the current coordinator of the Indigenous Human Rights Network Australia (IHRNA). Three of these past and present Oxfam staff persons were also DTP alumni.
- The evaluation also considered a range of secondary sources, including the report on the establishment of an Indigenous Human Rights Network of Australia (IHRNA)<sup>10</sup>, preliminary research conducted by an Oxfam intern, course evaluations by DTP participants,<sup>11</sup> DTP project reports from Oxfam-funded training programs, correspondence between alumni and the DTP, and the 2006 OIYP evaluation of the Trade Justice Project.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This was followed by 7 respondents who had attended the 2010 program in Perth WA and 5 respondents had attended the Sydney 2004 Indigenous Youth, Human Rights and Advocacy Program and the Sydney 2007 Capacity Building for Indigenous Advocates program.

<sup>8</sup> 2 were Cambodian and 1 was Indonesian

<sup>9</sup> This included 1 Nigerian, 1 Zambian, and 1 Malawian. The Zambian respondent was now living in Australia.

<sup>10</sup> Lyndon Ormond-Parker 'Report to the Steering Committee on the Establishment of an Indigenous Australia Human Rights Network', Report for Oxfam Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and the Diplomacy Training Program, August 2007.

<sup>11</sup> At the conclusion of each DTP training course, participants complete an evaluation form.

<sup>12</sup> See Sanushka Mudaliar, 'Trade Justice Evaluation,' April 2006.

## **2.0 The Oxfam DTP Relationship**

*Key points:*

- *Commitment to learning from previous programs*
- *Responsiveness of Emerging Human Rights Opportunities*
- *Annual funding constrains long term strategizing*
- *Scope for greater links between DTP's work and other Oxfam programs*

### **2.1 Overview**

Oxfam and the DTP have a long-standing relationship. As previously noted, from 2004, Oxfam's support for the DTP has been through grant support for DTP training courses as a whole, rather than the subsidization of individual participants, which reflected an acknowledgement that the organizations had common objectives. Oxfam also recognized that switching from individual training fee support to DTP's work would assist DTP to plan more effectively, to be more strategic and to allocate less of its staff time to the pursuit of funding and more to the development and delivery of programs. This relationship, as noted above, has been managed by a range of Oxfam units. The most significant collaboration has been between DTP and Oxfam's International Youth Partnership Program (OIYP) and ATSIP. This collaboration has involved funding on an annual basis. In 2004-05 OIYP funded DTP to the amount of \$150,000 for a range of international programs, including the OIYP program in Cambodia. Thereafter, Oxfam's ATSIP has funded DTP approximately \$60,000 on an annual basis and, in addition, has provided funding for the preparation of human rights materials and for the establishment of IHRNA.<sup>13</sup>

Both Oxfam and the DTP have benefited from this collaboration. From the perspective of ATSIP, the relationship with DTP has developed the human rights expertise of staff and partners, and has given ATSIP access to networks and contacts with international human rights experts. It has also increased links within the region through staff becoming part of the DTP alumni network. From OIYP's perspective, the collaboration with DTP has helped to support action partners more effectively than could have been done independently. The DTP also values the collaboration with Oxfam. Given that DTP is a small organization with limited resources, Oxfam's funding since 2004 has provided vital support to its work. Oxfam's specialist country expertise is also valued by the DTP, along with the links to organizations in the region and in Australia that have assisted in

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<sup>13</sup> See Table B for a breakdown of annual funding amounts.

the identification of training partners and participants. Oxfam has also provided support to the DTP's efforts to obtain Deductible Gift Recipient status, and advice and policy templates in relation to human resource issues and risk management. DTP believes that the partnership with Oxfam is also a key means of addressing issues of sustainability, in that, having invested in providing training to advocates, Oxfam is in a good position to offer follow-up assistance to DTP alumni to enable them to apply their skills.

## **2.2 OYIP - Supported DTP Programs**

Since 2004, approximately 57 young men and women have participated in a DTP training program organized in collaboration with Oxfam's International Youth Partnership Program (OIYP). Two such programs have taken place, and, in both cases, DTP and OIYP worked closely on content, including by consulting with participants beforehand.<sup>14</sup>

### *2004*

In 2004, OIYP and DTP organized a program for 31 Indigenous youth from the Asia Pacific region and Africa. Held in conjunction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Youth Parliament, this program reflected the DTP's renewed focus on working with partners to build the capacity of Indigenous advocates in Australia and the region.

### *2005*

In 2005, OIYP and DTP organized a nine day program in Cambodia on the theme of *Trade, Human Rights and the World Trade Organisation (WTO)* for 21 young advocates from around the world. OIYP was responsible for the selection of participants, most of whom were already OIYP 'action partners'. The program aimed to provide the young advocates with knowledge of both international human rights and international trade regimes, to explore the links between the two, and to develop skills in lobbying, advocacy and media.<sup>15</sup> This was the first program that DTP had organized on the theme of trade and human rights. A unique feature of this program was that it was preceded by a four week on-line training course facilitated by OIYP that introduced participants to the WTO and the international human rights framework. This online learning process provided a useful grounding for participants, and helped to develop a sense of solidarity amongst the group before meeting face-to-face. It also provided valuable information to

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<sup>14</sup> See Table A for a timeline of DTP collaboration with OIYP and ATSIP.

<sup>15</sup> See DTP 'Report on the Training Workshop WTO Human Rights and Trade 14<sup>th</sup>-22 September 2005, Phnom Penh, Cambodia'.

facilitators about the backgrounds of participants, and their level of knowledge, which was useful in preparation of the training sessions.<sup>16</sup> Another notable feature of the program was that, three months after the training, Oxfam and DTP facilitated the young advocates to take part in international lobbying and campaigning around the 6<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong. Given that most participants were OIYP action partners, they also had access to valuable follow-up support from OIYP, including assistance to implement ‘trade action plans’ on issues affecting their communities.

### **2.3 ATSIP-Supported DTP programs**

Since 2007, ATSIP and DTP have collaborated on a number of specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates. These programs have trained approximately 137 men and women from a mix of urban, regional and remote communities, and from a range of different backgrounds, including high school, TAFE and University students, and representatives from NGOs and community based organizations, including land councils and aboriginal corporations. The impetus for these programs has generally arisen from a request from ATSIP’s partners, and the content is devised through a collaborative needs assessment.<sup>17</sup>

*2007*

In 2007, Oxfam’s IAP collaborated with DTP to organise a five day program for Indigenous Australian advocates who were staff and partners of Oxfam. The program had a particular focus on the Right to Health in the context of the ‘Close the Gap’ campaign focusing on Indigenous peoples’ health in Australia.

*2008*

In February 2008, the DTP and ATSIP organized a special capacity building program for young Indigenous Australian advocates aged between 18 and 30. The program aimed to provide participants with information and knowledge of international human rights standards and the UN system, to explore their practical relevance, and assist in building advocacy skills.<sup>18</sup> The 27 Indigenous Australian advocates who participated were drawn from a wide range of communities around Australia and from a mix of urban, regional

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> See Table A for a timeline of DTP collaboration with OIYP and ATSIP

<sup>18</sup> See DTP ‘Human Rights Advocacy – a Capacity Building Program for Young Australian Indigenous Advocates, 10-15 February 2008, Sydney, Australia’, *final project report prepared for Oxfam Australia*.

and remote communities. Participants were selected through Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australian Youth Participation Program and also through DTP's Indigenous networks. The program took place in the context of the 'Close the Gap' campaign on Indigenous health, and also happened to coincide with the Rudd government's historic National Apology to Indigenous Australians and to the Stolen Generations. A number of participants were subsequently selected by Oxfam and supported to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues in New York. This gave them the opportunity to apply their knowledge and practical lobbying skills in an international forum.

In April 2008 ATSIP also collaborated with the DTP to organize a 'follow-up' capacity program for Indigenous Australian advocates who were staff and partners of Oxfam.<sup>19</sup> This course provided an opportunity for the DTP to bring back together participants from previous DTP courses, in particular, the 2007 program, and was designed to refresh, update and consolidate skills and knowledge developed in earlier courses. As a number of these participants were unable to attend for various reasons, the invitation was extended to other Indigenous Australian alumni from DTP's programs over the previous five years. A particular focus of this program was children's rights and the right to health (including developments in relation to implementing the recommendations made by Oxfam, Indigenous health organizations and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)). During this program, participants were also invited to reflect on the impact of their previous training by recounting what they saw as the 'most significant change' in their work and community since the training. This training program also incorporated a discussion of human rights advocacy materials currently available to Australian Indigenous communities, which contributed to Oxfam and DTP's development of a number of human rights resources, including the 'Free and Equal' guide, which is discussed further, below. At this training a Plain English version of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people was also distributed to participants.

## 2009

In 2009 ATSIP collaborated with DTP to organize a capacity building training for thirty young Australian Indigenous Advocates aged from 18-35.<sup>20</sup> The curriculum was informed by the feedback and evaluations of the February 2008 program. Alumni from the 2008 program were also involved in helping to organize this program. A key focus was the Australian government's continued suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act in relation to the emergency intervention in the Northern Territory. Women participants in

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<sup>19</sup> DTP 'Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy in Australia: Human Rights Training for Oxfam Australia and its Partners, Sydney, 28 April-2 May', Final Program Report.

<sup>20</sup> DTP 'Human Rights Advocacy – a Capacity Building Program for Young Australian Indigenous Advocates, Sydney, 16-20 February 2009', Final Project Report Prepared for Oxfam Australia.



this program were also able to take part in a discussion on issues of discrimination against Indigenous women that formed part of a consultation session for the preparation of an NGO parallel report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Australia. This added a practical dimension to the training program. During this course the 'Free and Equal' guide was also trialed for the first time. A number of participants in the program were subsequently selected and supported by Oxfam to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

*2010*

In 2010, ATSIP collaborated with DTP to organize a training program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates in Perth. This training was also held in partnership with the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, and the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University. A notable feature of this program was its regional emphasis, and the fact that a key purpose was to support the ALS to develop, and implement, its own state-wide human rights education strategy.

## **2.4 ATSIP and DTP's Commitment to Improving Programs**

ATSIP and the DTP are committed to working together to continuously improve the DTP training programs, including preparation for participants, training content, and follow up support. Part of the strength of the relationship has been its responsiveness to emerging opportunities, and its commitment to learning from previous programs. One of the ways in which learning takes place is through participants' evaluations that are conducted at the end of each DTP training course. Participants are given an opportunity to reflect on the program and what they have learned, and provide constructive feedback through an anonymous evaluation form, which covers the content of the program, the evaluation of each trainer, and the extent to which program objectives were met. The content and format of the programs is continuously adapted in response to these evaluations, and through the ongoing communication between the DTP, ATSIP and alumni. In addition to working to improve the programs themselves, ATSIP and the DTP have collaborated on a number of other initiatives, which are discussed below.

### *2.4.1 Increased focus on national and regional programs*

The commitment of DTP and ATSIP to adapting the programs is evident in the decision to design a specifically *national* DTP program. This decision was based on a growing recognition that there are particular issues and challenges facing Indigenous

communities in Australia. More recently, a growing awareness that the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have quite specific local dimensions, and of the need to strengthen local and regional networks, has led the DTP and ATSIP to initiate a *regional* training program. The 2010 training program in Perth built upon the experience of DTP's regional training programs in Katherine and Alice Springs, which were organized in collaboration with the Fred Hollows Foundation. Perth was chosen in part, too, because of Oxfam's existing program in Western Australia. This meant that Oxfam's WA office could provide advice on potential participants, there was the potential to build on the work already done by Oxfam, and a greater potential for long term capacity building. The initial response to this training has been very positive, and may lead to additional regional programs being organized in the future.

#### *2.4.2 Increased Australian content and focus*

The DTP has adapted its training content for the Australian context in response to feedback from Australian alumni. For example, the regional and national DTP training programs include a focus on the role of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), and the roles and functions of different levels of government in Australia. They also incorporate sessions on a range of practical issues, such as how to prepare for meetings, and how to get messages across to Australian decision makers. Local people, including MP's are also increasingly being used as resource people within the training programs.<sup>21</sup> This focus is considered particularly important given that Australian human rights advocates are more likely to have their issues addressed locally than through the UN system, and the fact that human rights language does not often have a great deal of traction amongst Australian MPs and decision makers.

#### *2.4.3 Development of accessible training materials*

Based on feedback from Australian alumni, ATSIP and the DTP also became aware of the dearth of accessible human rights advocacy resources suitable for use at the community level and focused on the Australian context. This was combined with a growing acknowledgement that the DTP's existing training manual was cumbersome, and was not particularly 'youth friendly.' To respond to these issues, ATSIP funded, and collaborated with the DTP to produce a number of more accessible training materials. As part of this process, discussions were held with participants at the April 2008 program about resource needs. Following this, a number of new materials were produced,

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<sup>21</sup> MP's who have acted as local resource people include Linda Burney (NSW), Barbara McCarthy (NT), Warren Snowdon (NT), Matthew Bonson (NT) and Ben Wyatt (WA). Other local resource people have included Tammy Solonec (WA), Jacqui Katona (NT), Don Christopherson (NT), John Christopherson (NT), Olga Havnen (NT) and Josie Crawshaw (NT).

including a guide for Indigenous Australian community advocates, entitled 'Free and Equal', which was published in 2009. 'Free and Equal' provides human rights information relevant to Indigenous Australians in an accessible form and case studies of individuals engaging in human rights advocacy, including within the UN system. The Free and Equal guide is now undergoing a second print run, can be downloaded from the Oxfam and DTP websites, and is currently used in DTP trainings as a reference.

Other accessible resources produced include a plain language version of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP), and posters of the DRIP and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). These materials have been sent to participants, and have been ordered by organizations including Aboriginal Legal Services and Land Councils. Another resource – a C.D Rom that provides a range of reference materials including training resources, treaties, and information about how to make human rights complaints within the Australian context – has also recently been produced, however has not yet been distributed.

#### *2.4.4 Establishing the Indigenous Human Rights Network of Australia (IHRNA)*

ATSIP and the DTP have also become increasingly aware of the need for follow-up support for alumni. To respond to this need, in 2007, ATSIP funded a scoping study (in partnership with HREOC and the DTP) to develop a framework for a national Indigenous Australia Human Rights Network. It was envisaged that the purpose of the network would be to facilitate the access of Indigenous human rights advocates – and in particular, young adults – to information that will strengthen their participation and engagement in human rights processes.<sup>22</sup> As part of this study, interviews with over 100 Indigenous Australians from a wide variety of organizations in the public, private and community sector were conducted, and a final report was prepared with recommendations in August 2007.<sup>23</sup> Based on these recommendations, the Indigenous Human Rights Network Australia (IHRNA) was established, and launched in May 2010. Both Oxfam and the DTP are represented on the steering committee of IHRNA, and funding for establishment of IHRNA and to support its work for three years has been provided by ATSIP.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lyndon Ormond Parker 'Report to the Steering Committee on the Establishment of an Indigenous Australian Human Rights Network', August 2007

<sup>23</sup> Lyndon Ormond Parker 'Report to the Steering Committee on the Establishment of an Indigenous Australian Human Rights Network', August 2007

<sup>24</sup> The Secretariat is based at the Australian Human Rights Commission.

One of the key aims of the IHRNA is to allow Indigenous human rights advocates to access information on national and international human rights standards that will strengthen their engagement in human rights issues. The IHRNA has recently established an interactive website that is providing information about human rights issues that relate the themes of health, housing, education, children, disability, gender, justice and the law, race discrimination, governance, water, traditional knowledge and climate change. It also has plans to provide information on international and national human rights events, and to provide an opportunity for Indigenous people (including DTP alumni) to connect with each other, and share information. Another goal of the IHRNA is to provide mentoring and 'expert advice' to Indigenous people through the development of a data base of experts.

#### *2.4.5 E-newsletter*

Another DTP initiative that is designed to provide additional follow-up support to alumni is a monthly e-newsletter. Initiated in May 2009, the e-newsletter provides advertising of other human rights training opportunities, employment opportunities, conferences, and provides information on human rights updates at the UN and new resources for advocacy.

#### *2.4.6 UN Permanent Forum Program*

An ATSIP initiative that seeks to address the need for alumni support is a program to assist young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to attend the UN Permanent Forum in New York. This program, which began in 2008, is supporting a new generation of Indigenous leaders to become involved in international advocacy work, and many participants have been selected from amongst DTP alumni. In 2010, ATSIP and DTP collaborated to provide the young Indigenous advocates a two day preparatory training program prior to their departure for New York. According to two young women interviewed for this evaluation, this preparation had provided them with valuable skills which had enabled them to participate effectively at the international level. The views of these women are reinforced by a recent evaluation by ATSIP, which found that the 2010 preparatory training had enabled the Australian youth delegation to play a very effective role at the 2010 Permanent Forum, as part of the Indigenous Peoples Organizations Network (IPON). This was evident in the number of interventions drafted by the Australian youth delegation that were reflected in the UN members' final report.

#### *2.4.7 Improving coordination*

ATSIP and DTP have also identified the need for better coordination between the various organizations working to promote the rights of Indigenous Australians, in order to prevent duplication and to link training programs more directly into specific advocacy opportunities. To this end, ATSIP and DTP convened a discussion in June 2010 between various organizations working in this area (including Fred Hollows Foundation, Amnesty International, ANTAR, Plan, Caritas, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the IHRNA). The meeting was a first step towards developing a more coordinated national, human rights education strategy. Oxfam and DTP will also continue to support, and work closely with the IHRNA, which has the broad role of providing human rights information and resources to Indigenous Australians.

## **2.5 Ad Hoc Collaboration between DTP and other Oxfam Units**

In addition to the tailored courses provided in collaboration with ATSIP and OIYP, the DTP has collaborated with other sections of Oxfam on a more 'ad hoc' basis.<sup>25</sup> For example, different Oxfam programs have funded staff, partners or OIYP action partners to attend a range of DTP programs.<sup>26</sup> Given their Asia Pacific expertise and partner contacts, Oxfam program staff have also provided valuable recommendations to DTP about specific organizations and individuals who would be useful to consult and include within particular training programs. Some Oxfam staff members have also participated in DTP training programs as trainers, including in the Indigenous regional program in 2010, the human rights and business programs in 2006 and 2010 and the Indigenous youth program in 2008. Oxfam has also provided organizational support to DTP in the form of policy documents on issues such as risk management, security, volunteer forms, photo release forms and general policy and procedures. In 2010, Oxfam's Extractive Industries Advocacy program provided some support to the DTP for its regional Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program, which trialed Oxfam's manual on 'Free Prior and Informed Consent'.

## **2.6 Operational Issues/ Lessons Learned**

Despite the productive nature of the DTP-Oxfam relationship, and its responsiveness to emerging human rights opportunities and the needs of participants, the fact that Oxfam's funding to the DTP is provided on an annual basis, that each year these funding

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<sup>25</sup> See table C

<sup>26</sup> This includes the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights Program, the Human Rights Advocacy and Business Program in 2008, the Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy Program in 2008, the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual program in 2008, the Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy Program in 2009, and the Human Rights and Business Program in 2010.

amounts have varied, and that this support is tied to the organization of specific programs has been a constraint to long term planning and strategizing. These difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that the DTP is a small organization, which has limited resources available for undertaking consultations and preparation with partner organizations and providing follow-up support for alumni.

Another constraint upon the Oxfam-DTP relationship is that, while DTP's work resonates with Oxfam's rights-based approach to development, and addresses some of the same priority areas (for example the rights of Indigenous peoples, business/extractives/trade), the DTP does not really 'fit' into Oxfam's country and regional based program structure. This has meant that, while the DTP has forged a strong relationship with ATSIP since 2004, and has 'ad hoc' forms of engagement with other sections of Oxfam, it has been difficult to generate a 'whole of Oxfam' commitment to its work. In 2007, ATSIP developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which aimed to illustrate the various kinds of engagement between the two organizations and to provide a basis for ongoing engagement between DTP and a range different Oxfam sections (including the Program Management Unit, the Oxfam Helpdesk, Program Coordinators Group, and the Learning and Development Coordinator).<sup>27</sup> However, it is fair to say that the MOU has not been particularly effective. This has meant that the DTP has had to forge its own relationships with different parts of Oxfam, rather than communicating with one focal point. This can be time consuming and frustrating for DTP staff.

It is also fair to say that, although Oxfam's 2004 decision to fund DTP programs as a whole (rather than subsidizing the fees of specific training participants) reflected a broad commitment to supporting DTP as an organisation, the form of this support has not been particularly well thought through. For example, Oxfam's funding has generally been tied to specific programs, which has not always recognized the range of other organizational needs that the DTP may have, for example, in the area of systems and policy development, staffing needs, fundraising and monitoring.

It is also apparent that Oxfam's decision-making in relation to which DTP programs to support, and how, has not always been based on sound research and evaluation. For example, the decision to discontinue funding for DTP's international programs was not made on the basis of an evaluation of the value of these programs. Rather, it took place when management of the DTP program shifted from the Advocacy unit to the ATSIP unit (which saw an opportunity for DTP to provide training for its partners). As discussed

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<sup>27</sup> See Program Management Group 'Oxfam Australia's partnership with UNSW Diplomacy Training Program (DTP)' 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007

further in Section Four, there is also scope for Oxfam to be more strategic about linking DTP's work and participants to other Oxfam programs.

### **3.0 DTP Training Courses: Views and Experiences of Alumni**

*Key Points:*

- *Alumni have gained confidence and strengthened advocacy skills from the DTP programs*
- *Alumni are making use of information, skills and networks over the long term*
- *Alumni would value additional follow-up support*
- *It is perceived that individuals from remote communities may miss out on DTP opportunities*

#### **3.1 General Benefits**

The survey findings and interviews showed extremely positive responses to the DTP program. When asked to describe what they had gained from the DTP courses, respondents identified the following benefits:

##### *3.1.1. Empowerment/Confidence from knowledge of human rights system*

A number of people emphasized that gaining knowledge of the international human rights system, including governments' obligations, and the avenues available to pursue complaints, has been extremely valuable. For many participants, the DTP training had been their first exposure to these issues. Some respondents explained that while they already possessed an innate sense of what was 'right and wrong' – based on their own lived experiences of injustice and discrimination – the training had given them a new and powerful international language to articulate their experiences. As one Australian respondent explained, 'I knew things were not right, instinctively, but the training helped to cement it'.<sup>28</sup> Gaining this knowledge has been enormously empowering and has given people added confidence to speak out about injustice and represent their community's concerns. One Indigenous Australian woman, for example, suggested that the training

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<sup>28</sup> Interview 11

had helped her to become more independent and outspoken, and feel 'equal to the world.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly, as another explained:

Sometimes you feel things are not right. Now I can link things to human rights ... cement my argument ... Using the language of rights in the Northern Territory makes people stop and think.<sup>30</sup>

An Indigenous Australian survey respondent made a similar comment, explaining that:

I now have the confidence to stand up for my own rights and the rights of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Prior to attending the DTP courses, I had an innate sense of injustice and morality, but did not understand the measures in place to ensure that everyone was afforded the basic human rights they deserved, or how I could help people who didn't [have these basic human rights].<sup>31</sup>

One of the participants from Africa, who had attended the Trade and Human Rights program in Cambodia, similarly remarked that, although she had worked in the area of human rights advocacy prior to the DTP training program, and would claim that people's rights were being violated, she didn't really understand what that meant. After the training 'I understood what it meant', she said.<sup>32</sup> 'I felt like I owned the language, understood how trade has an impact on all levels of life. I felt I could share my knowledge because I knew what I was talking about.'<sup>33</sup>

### *3.1.2 International Perspective:*

Many of those who participated in an international program appreciated being exposed to the human rights struggles of others in other countries. This had helped them feel that they are 'not alone'. For Indigenous Australians, the exposure to the struggles of other Indigenous peoples had helped them to put their own struggle into an international perspective, and enabled them to learn about the strategies of others. As one Indigenous Australian participant who had attended an international program explained:

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<sup>29</sup> Interview 3

<sup>30</sup> Interview 11

<sup>31</sup> Survey response 13

<sup>32</sup> Interview 7

<sup>33</sup> Ibid



It makes you realize how lucky you are. We were learning about Pakistan, India, other places ... they are not even acknowledged as Indigenous. Other people don't have the luxury that we have of fighting over government resources.<sup>34</sup>

As another put it:

It's good to expose Indigenous people to struggles elsewhere. It helps us feel not alone. We have these laws to protect us, but in Indonesia there are disappearances, some of our fellow Indigenous people around the world can't even speak up ... While the issues are different, there's similarity with inequality and discrimination.<sup>35</sup>

Another respondent suggested that the training had enabled him to recognise the similarities between the experiences of indigenous people in different countries:

One thing I came to realize at the time was that for Indigenous minority people the issues are essentially the same ... For the group down at the bottom it's the same set of circumstances ... we could learn from each other.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1.3 *Practical Advocacy Skills*

The training was also perceived to have sharpened practical advocacy skills. For example, some respondents explained that the training had given them a good insight into how to make an advocacy case, how to develop a campaign, how to conduct research on legal cases, and contacts for pursuing rights complaints. As one person explained:

I gained detailed in depth understanding and knowledge about human rights and advocacy which I had not had previous exposure to. Particularly with relation to Indigenous rights and what avenues can be pursued in order to protect them.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, as another respondent who had attended the Trade and Human Rights Program in Cambodia explained:

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<sup>34</sup> Interview 10

<sup>35</sup> Interview 11

<sup>36</sup> Interview 8

<sup>37</sup> Survey respondent 13

I gained knowledge on how to tackle multi-lateral and bilateral institutions including Missions and Embassies and through the Trade-justice training. ... Role-playing the process of advocating for human rights with politicians was really helpful – it gave us some practice and good advice on how to negotiate with politicians to get our human rights issues heard.<sup>38</sup>

As shall be discussed further in the 'long term benefits' section below, many respondents were also able to describe in some detail how they had been able to apply their skills in their work or community activities.

### *3.1.4 Networking/ Learning from other participants*

Being able to share stories with, and learn from, other participants was another highlight of the training for many respondents. This learning occurred both during the formal training program itself, and informally, such as during meal times and evening 'yarning' sessions. A number of people stressed that the training environment had been a 'safe place' to share their stories. An Indigenous Australian survey respondent who had attended a national program had been inspired by the stories of elders and other young activists:

For me, the most useful aspect of the workshop [was that it was] entirely made of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates. That was a powerful learning as the agenda itself. It was important to hear from elders and others with decades more experience than myself, and also inspiring to meet other young people doing amazing things.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, as Indigenous Australian interview respondent put it, 'I got to listen and learn from others, those who have been involved over the long haul.'<sup>40</sup>

The training has also helped to develop valuable support networks. For example, one person explained that the most valuable part of the training course had been 'interacting from and learning from others at the training program ... It was a great supporting network to build from.'<sup>41</sup> As another put it:

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<sup>38</sup> Survey respondent 1

<sup>39</sup> Survey respondent 22

<sup>40</sup> Interview 9

<sup>41</sup> Survey respondent 27

The most useful aspect was meeting new people, both participants and people who conducted workshops and training etc ... If I have any questions I have people I can contact or get help from the DTP training course.<sup>42</sup>

### *3.1.5 Value of the Training for Oxfam Staff*

Although the evaluation only interviewed a small number of Oxfam head office staff and field staff who had participated in a DTP program, these interviewees were very positive about the value of the program for their work, particularly given that Oxfam explicitly defines itself as a 'rights based' organization. One staff member suggested that if she had not taken part in the DTP program, she would not have been able to do her work properly, and would not have fully understood what a rights approach meant.<sup>43</sup> Another former staff person, who had participated in a DTP program soon after commencing work at Oxfam, explained that the program had given her a new perspective on human rights, and new contacts, ideas and resources. It had also been a good opportunity to spend time getting to know Oxfam partners which was invaluable in building ongoing relationships.<sup>44</sup>

## **3.2 Training Content and Format**

### **3.2.1 General views**

Most participants were extremely positive about the kind of content covered in the training course, and the participatory style of learning. The opportunity to listen to other peoples' stories was particularly valued, as were the guest speakers. The high quality of the trainers – in particular Sarah Pritchard – was mentioned by a number of people. The sessions on internet research were mentioned by a number of respondents as having been particularly useful, as well as the practical sessions on advocacy skills, media and lobbying, and the 'role playing' sessions.

### *3.2.2 What kinds of programs are the most beneficial?*

The evaluation attempted to assess whether some programs were more beneficial than others (eg, the international programs, the national programs, the regional Australian programs, and the youth specific versus mixed age group programs). This was a difficult

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<sup>42</sup> Survey respondent 12

<sup>43</sup> Staff interview 1

<sup>44</sup> Staff interview 2

issue to explore with such a small sample size and given the range of different programs. However, the fact that four respondents had attended more than one DTP program provided some limited possibilities to compare and contrast the different programs.

Overall, however, it is difficult to come to any definitive conclusions about the relative benefits of different programs. Those who had attended the international programs (eg the Cambodia OIYP program and the Timor program) suggested that they had really valued the opportunity to interact with, and learn from, human rights advocates in other parts of the world. Those who attended the national Australian programs stated that they had valued the chance to learn from Indigenous people in other parts of the country. Those who had attended the regional Perth training in 2010 were also extremely positive about the way in which this training had helped them forge a really solid, local level network, and get to know others working on similar issues. Positive feedback was also received about both the youth-specific courses and the mixed age group courses. Some Indigenous Australian alumni did express a view that the youth specific trainings may be more appropriate given that when elders are present, it can be difficult for young people to speak up. However, those who had attended mixed courses (including the Perth training) had really valued the opportunity to learn from their elders.

The four respondents who had attended more than one training course also suggested that they had gained different skills from each of the courses. For example, one woman who had attended the 2009 Annual Program in East Timor, and the 2010 Perth program suggested that while the Perth training had helped to bring people together who were working on similar issues, and had been a 'great bonding and networking opportunity', the East Timor training had really helped her to develop skills in working with people in cross-cultural situations, and had given her exposure to the human rights issues of different places. Another woman who had attended the 2007/2008 program in Bachelor, and the Indigenous follow-up training in May 2008 suggested that the combination of both programs had helped her consolidate her skills. She explained that during the second training she was able to relate the information much more to her own work.<sup>45</sup> Another woman who had participated in the program for young Indigenous advocates in 2008 and again in 2009, suggested that doing a second training had been a really good refresher, and she had gone along with far more specific questions in mind.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Who would benefit?*

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<sup>45</sup> Interview 11

<sup>46</sup> Interview 4

The evaluation also attempted to assess the extent to which the DTP is more beneficial for experienced or less experienced activists. On the whole, however, respondents suggested that the level of experience is less important for a good DTP experience than an interest in human rights and advocacy, a commitment to community work, and a willingness to learn. Many respondents also stressed that they had valued interacting with, and learning from, a diversity of participants from different backgrounds and with different kinds of experience. It was evident however, that a small number of respondents had struggled with the complexity and amount of material that they were required to absorb in a short amount of time. For example, one of the Indigenous Australian participants had found the information quite confusing and abstract.<sup>47</sup> The two Cambodian alumni had also found it difficult to follow the training because of their lack of proficiency in English language. On the whole however, it appears that the DTP has been able to create a supportive environment during their programs in which people feel comfortable to seek further explanations and request assistance from others if needed.

### **3.3 Long Term Impact**

One extremely positive finding of the evaluation is that people are making use of the information, skills and networks developed during the DTP training program over the long term, and in a range of different ways. For example:

#### *3.3.1 Using materials*

People continue to refer to the DTP training materials regularly as a reference. The Australian respondents who had received a copy of the Free and Equal guide are also making use of this (although participants from programs prior to 2009 did not know about it). Some people explained that they had put up the DTP's human rights posters in their offices, or in their local communities.

#### *3.3.2 Networking*

The majority of respondents said that they stay in touch with at least some participants from the training program on email and face-book. This is the case even for those who participated in the earlier programs. This contact is partly social, but it also involves sharing information about the issues and campaigns people are currently working on, and conferences they are attending. Alumni also ask questions and advice of each other. It seems that the DTP really has helped to create a self-sustaining network.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview 2

### 3.3.3 *Sharing information*

A number of the Australian alumni are also making real efforts to share the information with their families and local communities, including by engaging in regular, local level discussions on rights issues, distributing DTP materials, and providing advice. One respondent explained that he had been able to provide advice to his community about basic rights to services such as housing and education in order to make sure that people in his remote community 'don't miss out on things.'<sup>48</sup> An Australian woman explained that the training had enabled her to help her community to file complaints against the police. Another Australian woman, who was also the only Indigenous person in her team at work, presented the DTP information to her team and put up posters of the DRIP around her workplace. She is also involved in her local Aboriginal corporation, and has sent back the DTP materials to her community where they are being placed in the local library. The Indonesian respondent – who is now working as a Social Studies teacher at a high school – explained that she was using the DTP information in the classroom. She explained that the training has helped her refer to concrete examples in her teaching:

If I didn't go to the workshop I would just follow a text book. But now I can refer to examples from around the world, I can draw on my own experiences, not just a book.<sup>49</sup>

Although it is hard to measure the impact of the training in communities, some respondents highlighted that the information provided to their communities is encouraging them to be more active in defending their rights. For example, as one woman explained:

People are starting to ask more questions ... I can see that my community is becoming more active, but it's taken a while ... They have become more active citizens ... more confident.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3.4 *Strengthening advocacy skills*

People stressed that the confidence and knowledge they have gained has helped them become stronger advocates, both within their workplaces and more broadly. A number of people said that the training had changed the way they work. One woman, who was the

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<sup>48</sup> Interview 1

<sup>49</sup> Interview 12

<sup>50</sup> Interview 4

only Indigenous worker in her organization, had gained the confidence to educate her colleagues about the rights of Indigenous peoples. Another woman, who had become very interested in the 'right to food' in the Northern Territory context, explained that she had become a much stronger advocate on this issue since the DTP training. She also suggested that since a number of staff from her organization had attended the DTP training, the organization had developed a much stronger rights-based approach to its work. Another woman who worked in the juvenile justice area explained that she began to apply a rights-based framework to her policy work:

When I came back from DTP I had a big document placed on my desk about the Commonwealth Social Justice Response. I was able to take into consideration what I had learned in writing that report ... Otherwise I would have written what I was told. It made me more outspoken.<sup>51</sup>

One male respondent explained that he had become involved in a local court case that involved police trespassing on native title land. He suggested that if he had not participated in the training course he would have been far more cautious about challenging the police. He felt the course had given him knowledge and confidence to be able to take the case forward.

### **3.4 Suggested Areas for Improvement from Alumni**

Despite the positive responses to the DTP training courses, many alumni had suggestions for improving them, which encompassed issues such as materials, long term support needs, and preparation. These included:

#### *3.4.1 Materials*

While the DTP materials are being used, some respondents suggested that it would be helpful if alumni could access more copies of materials such as the DRIP booklets, posters, and the 'Free and Equal' guide so that they could distribute them more widely to their communities. The need for more simple, 'plain language' materials, including posters, was also mentioned by a number of people. Some people suggested that it would be useful to provide regular 'updates' on human rights issues (such as changes to international and domestic law) on the DTP website to keep their knowledge up to date.

#### *3.4.2 Follow-up support for Alumni*

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<sup>51</sup> Interview 4

One key issue raised by many alumni, was the fact that, after being engaged and energized from a training course, people can feel isolated after returning to their workplaces and communities. The need for additional follow-up support was often mentioned as an important way of ensuring that people are able to apply their skills and remain energized and engaged over the 'long haul'.

Alumni had a number of suggestions in this regard. Some suggested that having access to refresher training would be valuable. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to have access to different 'levels' of training. After attending a first, general training course, people could then have the opportunity to attend a more targeted training course 12 months later. This could also give people an opportunity to share the challenges of putting their skills into practice. Another related suggestion was that regular 'catch up' activities for alumni would be helpful, where people could come together and reflect on their challenges, and get 're-energised.' As noted below, this is something that the DTP has begun to address.

A few of the Australian respondents also suggested that it would be valuable to have an opportunity to work on a common project or issue with other alumni following the training. This could enable people to put their skills into practice and to collaborate with others. Another suggestion was that the DTP could equip people with some practical skills so that they could conduct their own human rights training or discussions in their local communities.

### *3.4.3 Targeting Remote Communities:*

A theme that came up regularly during interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents was that it would be great for the DTP program to be taken to remote communities. It was felt that people in remote areas often miss out on opportunities and would really benefit from human rights training. These perceptions seem to be confirmed by an examination of the DTP participants data-base, which suggests that the Australian-based DTP training programs have primarily (although not exclusively) targeted those living in urban and rural, rather than remote, areas.

### *3.4.4 Practical skills focus:*

Although, as discussed above, the focus on practical advocacy skills was mentioned by a number of respondents as a highlight of the program, some suggested that more of a practical emphasis would be valuable. For example, some participants in the recent



Perth program felt that more time could have been spent on skills development, including role plays, advocacy skills and contact with the media. It was also suggested that more of a focus on 'real world' examples would help to ground the information. Another related suggestion was for DTP programs to be more focused around the issues that people are currently working on. For example, a suggestion was made that people could come to the training with a specific human rights campaign or issue in mind which they could then have the opportunity to develop during the program.

#### *3.4.5 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Facilitator:*

Two respondents suggested that it could be good for the DTP to think about involving more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators in their programs. This would be good from the point of view of perceptions, but it was also felt that these facilitators could better communicate with, respond to, and relate to, participants.

#### *3.4.6 Preparatory materials:*

A number of people suggested that having preparatory materials sent out earlier (including the Free and Equal guide) would also be helpful. Some felt that they went along to the program not knowing what to expect. One woman who had attended the Timor program also expressed the view that more preparation about what to expect in terms of traveling to a developing country (including medical advice, information of telephones and currency), would also help people to be better prepared for the international programs.

#### *3.4.7 Language difficulties*

The two Cambodian respondents suggested that they would have benefited more from the training if their language skills had been better, or if trainers had spoken more slowly and simplified information. They also suggested that more attention needed to go in to assessing the English language proficiency of potential participants during the selection process.

## **4. Discussion and Recommendations**

### **4.1 What Kinds of Programs?**

#### *4.1.1 Increasing the Sustainability of the National and Regional Australia Programs*

The interview and survey findings suggest that the ATSIP funded Australian DTP programs have been valued by participants because they have enabled a specific focus on human rights in the Australian context. They have also enabled people to meet with, and strengthen their links to, other Indigenous Australian activists. At this point, however, it is important to think more about enhancing the long term benefits of these programs by viewing the training courses as part of a commitment to building the capacity of alumni over time, and seeking to ensure that training benefits reach communities as well as individual training participants.

One way in which the national programs could be strengthened would be by linking them to broader human rights events or training and development opportunities, including shadow report processes, to enable alumni to apply their skills in practical ways. There may also be scope for Oxfam's Advocacy Unit to be involved in identifying the kinds of national human rights processes that would benefit from greater community engagement. It could also be useful to give further thought to linking the national programs to other opportunities for skill development within Oxfam, such as Straight Talk, the Permanent Forum Program and the OIYP program, as well as opportunities offered by other organizations.

The recent regional program model also has a number of distinct advantages from the perspective of sustainability. For example, the recent Perth Program provided scope for DTP/Oxfam to work collaboratively with a local partner – the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) – on the selection of participants. It also has the potential to strengthen local support networks between people who are working on similar issues, and foster collaborative projects. This may help to overcome some of the isolation issues faced by alumni and also benefit local communities. For example, the Perth program, and the DTP program organized in Katherine in collaboration with the Fred Hollows Foundation, have both led to the establishment of local human rights networks. The Perth model is also particularly interesting given that it was organized at the request of the ALS as part of its efforts to develop a state-wide human rights education strategy. This means that

future training will be organized by ALS, and the role of DTP and Oxfam will reduce over time.

Another advantage of regional programs is that there is a potential for them to be more closely linked to the areas where Oxfam is currently working. In this way, there is the potential for alumni to benefit from Oxfam's ongoing support to these communities, and for the DTP program to complement Oxfam's community development work. Given the strengths of the regional program model, it will be important for Oxfam and DTP to continue the relationship with ALS in Western Australia, and document the long term outcomes of the Perth program, with a view to the potential expansion of the regional focus. In order to increase the local relevance of regional courses, it would also be worth considering how to increase the involvement of local human rights experts in these training programs as presenters/facilitators. This may also contribute to building the sustainability of the program if the capacity of local experts to deliver training could be developed over time.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That ATSIP and the DTP strengthen the existing national Australia programs by linking these programs into broader human rights opportunities, including skills development opportunities within, and external to, Oxfam.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**That ATSIP and the DTP continue to support the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) and document the long term outcomes of the Perth program, with a view to potentially expanding the regional program model in future.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**That ATSIP and the DTP give greater consideration to the involvement of local human rights experts in regional training programs in order to increase their local relevance and to enhance longer term sustainability.**

#### *4.1.2 Expanding the Participation of Remote Communities*

Based on an analysis of the DTP data-base of participants, it is apparent that the Australian based programs are primarily targeting those who live in urban and rural areas, rather than remote communities. As discussed above, many respondents strongly

support the idea of expanding the DTP program to remote communities. There may, however, be other ways that the DTP could increase its 'reach' to remote communities if this is a goal that ATSIP and DTP decide to work towards. For example, expanding the regional Australia programs could enable the development of partnerships between DTP, ATSIP and local indigenous organizations that could help to build local awareness of the DTP program and encourage more participants from remote communities to participate. Additionally, greater attention could be given to selecting a mix of urban, rural and remote participants for national training programs.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That Oxfam and the DTP consider expanding the regional Australia program and make active attempts to encourage participants from remote areas to participate in these programs by developing partnerships with local indigenous organizations and NGOs.**

#### *4.1.3 Youth Focus*

Based on interview and survey findings, it is apparent that ATSIP-funded DTP training programs have been targeting young Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates and community workers at a time when they most need support and encouragement. Young respondents expressed a strong interest in learning more about international human rights standards, and for many, the DTP program had been their first exposure to these issues. Based on these positive findings, the evaluation suggests that the current focus on building the human rights capacity of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be maintained. This should include a continuation of the youth-specific DTP programs, which are important to give young people their own space and voice outside of the cultural restrictions imposed by elders. In addition, consideration should be given to thinking about the ways in which young Australian Indigenous advocates could have the opportunity to learn from experienced, older human rights activists, and the experiences of human rights activists in the Asia Pacific region.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**At a national level, that ATSIP and the DTP maintain a focus on building the skills and capacity of young people by continuing the youth-specific programs and considering the ways in which young people can benefit from learning from elders and from the experiences of Indigenous peoples in other countries.**

#### *4.1.4 Reviewing Commitments to DTP's International Program*

It is apparent from interview and survey findings that participants have gained a great deal from participating in the DTP's International programs. The OIYP supported Trade and Human Rights Program in 2004 appears to have been particularly effective for a range of reasons, including the fact that it was linked to the WTO meeting, which gave participants a chance to put their lobbying skills into practice immediately. The assistance and resources provided by OIYP for this program also enabled a significant level of pre-program preparation using online training approaches, and participants were able to stay in touch with each other, and gain support from, their participation in the broader OIYP program. Participants were also supported to develop and implement trade action plans, and were eligible to apply to the OIYP Small Grants Scheme.<sup>52</sup> Given that many participants emphasized the value of the international programs, it is surprising that Oxfam has discontinued its funding for these programs. OIYP may like to revisit its relationship with the DTP, particularly in the light of its own positive evaluation of the collaboration with the DTP as part of Trade Justice Project.<sup>53</sup> One possibility might be for OIYP to commit to working with DTP on the development of a targeted training program that could be tied into the three year OIYP cycle.

If OIYP does decide to renew its commitment to the DTP's international programs, it would also be valuable for Oxfam and DTP to consider how to improve the coordination between the various organizations involved in human rights training at the regional and international level. The DTP already has good relationships with organizations such as Forum Asia in Bangkok, Earth-rights International in Chiang Mai, and the International Service for Human Rights, in Geneva, all of which offer some form of human rights training. A 'mapping' of these various programs, and their content, and a more systematic approach to sharing of information with these various organizations about upcoming human rights training possibilities, could help to ensure that training is complementary and that DTP alumni are linked into other training opportunities and skills development to strengthen their skills.

#### **Recommendation 6**

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<sup>52</sup> These plans included activities such as lobbying, workshops and discussion forums, community organizing and mobilization, producing basic information pamphlets and materials in local languages, and media work,

<sup>53</sup> See Sanushka Mudaliar, 'Trade Justice Project Evaluation', April 2006

**That OIYP consider supporting the DTP to develop a targeted training program for Action Partners that could be tied in with the three year OIYP cycle.**

## **Recommendation 7**

**As part of a renewed commitment to DTP's international work through the OIYP program, Oxfam and the DTP could consider how to enhance information sharing amongst human rights training organizations in the Asia Pacific region in order to avoid duplication and ensure that alumni are linked into other skills development opportunities.**

## **4.2 Planning, Content and Preparation**

### *4.2.1 Planning and Preparation*

Some consultation already takes place between Oxfam, DTP and local partners about participant selection and course content. For example, the DTP sends out a training needs analysis to participants before planning the content of training courses. When resources allow, some face to face consultation also takes place with local partners to help select program participants and design training content. There is scope, however, to expand this preparatory phase of course development in order to strengthen the learning outcomes of the DTP programs. For example, undertaking a comprehensive participatory needs assessment with local partners could help to build relationships prior to the training program itself, ensure that training programs are relevant to target communities, and that participants identified are those who would most benefit from the program. For the regional programs, these consultations may need to be face-to-face, particularly in rural areas where low literacy levels and irregular access to computers and email are an issue. Giving additional attention to this preparatory phase could also help to increase the number of participants from remote communities. Once participants are selected, a more detailed consultation on the issues that people are currently working on, needs and priorities, could also help to increase the relevancy and targeted nature of training content.

Giving more attention to sending out preliminary materials to participants would also assist alumni to prepare in advance for the programs. The online learning module that was developed as part of the DTP/OIYP Youth program in Cambodia could be an effective way of engaging people before the training itself, although this would obviously require a considerable investment in time and resources.

## **Recommendation 8**

That Oxfam and the DTP consider investing more time and resources in the selection and preparation of training participants, including by undertaking detailed consultations with partners and sending out preparatory materials in advance.

### *4.2.2 Practical Focus*

Interview and survey findings suggest that alumni have particularly valued the sessions on practical skills development, advocacy, lobbying and media. It is evident, however, that more case studies and practical examples about how people have used human rights standards and mechanisms in their advocacy work would be welcomed. Another way in which the practical skills-focus could be increased would be to ask participants before the training to think about an issue or campaign they would like to develop. They could then be given the opportunity to develop this further and put an 'action plan' into place during the training course. Further refining the content of DTP programs to focus on issues that people are already working on would also assist in building the long-term sustainability of program outcomes, particularly if people are given support to implement their action plans. It could be worthwhile conducting further research in this area, including by considering the Earthrights International Mekong School model, which asks students to develop a common advocacy project which they could commit to as alumni, or the OIYP model adopted in the Trade Justice Project, which involved support for the implementation of local action plans.

In addition, although the DTP has already begun to address the issue of local content within its training programs, there may still be scope for the Australian and regional Australian programs to include more emphasis on local and national human rights mechanisms and processes. This could include a greater focus on the role of the AHRC, the Ombudsman, state-based equal opportunity complaints mechanisms, local and state government, and national NGOs.

## **Recommendation 9**

**That Oxfam and the DTP consider incorporating a greater focus on practical skills development into the training programs. This could include additional case studies on how people have made use of human rights mechanisms and processes. It could also involve providing an opportunity for participants to develop an 'action plan' for a human rights campaign, which they could then receive support to implement post-program.**

## **Recommendation 10**

**That Oxfam and the DTP consider how to increase the domestic content of the Australian and regional Australia programs.**

## **4.3 Materials**

Oxfam and DTP have worked hard to produce materials that are accessible and relevant to the Australian context. It is clear that the Free and Equal Guide is a great resource that is appreciated and widely used by those alumni who have a copy. It would be valuable to distribute this guide more broadly, including to alumni from earlier DTP programs and to remote communities. It will also be important to ensure that there is an updating process of Free and Equal in a few years time.

Based on interview and survey findings, it is clear that Australian alumni would also welcome more accessible materials to distribute to local communities, in particular, visual materials such as posters. ATSIP and the DTP are already thinking about how best to support local communities to spread awareness about the rights in the DRIP in culturally appropriate and locally accessible ways (for example, through posters, or local radio and through the translation of the DRIP into local languages). In doing so, they are coordinating with other organizations including the IHRNA, the AHRC and Amnesty International Australia.

## **Recommendation 11**

**That the 'Free and Equal' Guide is distributed more widely than has currently been the case and that Oxfam and the DTP commit to updating the guide in three years time.**

## **Recommendation 12**

**That Oxfam, the DTP and IHNRA continue discussions about human rights resources with a view to developing more resources that are accessible to remote Indigenous communities in appropriate languages and mediums.**



## 4.4 Follow-up Support for Alumni

A key finding that emerged from interviews and surveys was that alumni would value additional support to help them overcome the isolation they face when they return to their organizations/communities. Building a strong and active alumni network is also important to increase the long term sustainability of the DTP programs. Supporting people to remain engaged in human rights advocacy when they return to their communities will ensure that investment of resources in a small number of participants will have a 'multiplier' effect by bringing benefits back to the broader community.

DTP and Oxfam are already actively taking steps to address the issue of follow-up support, most notably, by contributing to the establishment of the IHRNA. Given that IHRNA is in its very early stages, it will take some time to assess its contribution to these areas, and, at this point in time, very few DTP alumni have joined the network. At this stage, it is important for DTP and Oxfam to continue to promote the existence and role of IHRNA, including by continuing to involve Margaret Raven, the current coordinator, in DTP programs. Below are a few additional suggestions regarding follow-up support, which build on the comments made by alumni. Given that some of these issues may well fall within the scope of IHRNA, and many of them would require significant resources, it would be important for coordinated discussions to occur between Oxfam, DTP and IHRNA, about roles and responsibilities. It would also be worthwhile conducting more detailed research into other alumni programs. For example, the alumni program coordinated by Earthrights International as part of its Mekong School, and the OIYP 'model of change' that was adopted in the trade justice program, could provide useful insights into the strengths and weaknesses of these programs:

### 4.4.1 *Expanding the involvement of Alumni in DTP programs*

Although many alumni would value refresher training, whether this is an effective use of resources is difficult to assess. Aside from follow-up training, there may be a range of different ways that alumni could be involved in DTP programs. For example, a number of alumni took part in the Sydney 2009 program, which helped to assist other participants with unfamiliar concepts. As noted in the recommendations section of the 2009 program report, it could be valuable to involve alumni more actively as 'mentors' in future programs. In addition, while the DTP often invite alumni to programs as trainers, organizers and presenters, there is scope to further develop this idea, including by developing the training skills of alumni. Inviting alumni to future training courses to make presentations would also help to address the need for a more practical component to the

training programs, particularly if people are asked to present on a campaign or issue they have been involved in.

### **Recommendation 13**

**That Oxfam and DTP make efforts to involve alumni more systematically in future training programs, including as organizers, trainers, presenters and ‘mentors’ to younger less experienced activists.**

#### *4.4.2 Strengthening the Alumni Network*

Another way to increase the follow-up support to alumni would be to consider the ways in which the DTP’s active and extensive network of alumni could be better linked, beyond those who participated in the same DTP program. The DTP e-newsletter is a great initiative that helps to develop a sense of solidarity amongst alumni. The DTP, Oxfam and IHRNA might also like to consider the initiation of an Australian-specific newsletter, which could be a great way to build a sense of collective solidarity amongst Indigenous Australian human rights advocates, and to provide information on forthcoming human rights opportunities. Alumni themselves could perhaps be involved in putting the newsletter together. Another way to provide follow-up support to alumni would be to organize annual, or bi-annual, social gatherings, or day-long ‘reflections’ in particular regions to enable participants to come together, share their achievements and challenges, and meet with other alumni. This is something the DTP has already begun to address. A total of four alumni reunions have been organized already, in Manila, Dili East Timor, Darwin and Jakarta. They will look into continuing this. These get-togethers may be an important way of fostering the development of informal ‘mentoring’ possibilities between younger, less experienced activists, and more experienced activists who live in the same region.

### **Recommendation 14**

**That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA discuss the possibility of an Australian-specific human rights –e-newsletter to engender a sense of solidarity amongst Indigenous Australian human rights advocates and provide information on forthcoming human rights opportunities and events. Alumni themselves could be involved in preparing this newsletter.**

## **Recommendation 15**

**That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA consider organizing annual, or bi-annual, reflections or social gatherings to enable DTP alumni to come together, meet with other alumni, share their achievements and challenges and form informal ‘mentoring’ relationships.**

### *4.4.3 Small Grants Fund*

Another way of building the skills of alumni would be to consider the establishment of a ‘small grants’ fund to which alumni could apply to implement specific, small case projects in their local community. Such projects could include organizing a community discussion on a local human rights issue or about the DRIP, translating the DRIP into a local language, producing a poster or a radio program, undertaking research, or initiating a local human rights campaign. Perhaps DTP participants could be encouraged to think about a local project or campaign and develop this during the training course. This program would also have the benefit of helping to bring some of the knowledge gained from the DTP programs back to participants’ communities. It could be interesting to explore the Small Grants Program established by the Earthrights Mekong School, and the OIYP Small Grants Scheme as possible models.<sup>54</sup>

## **Recommendation 16**

**That Oxfam, the DTP and IHRNA discuss the possibility of establishing a small grants fund to provide support for specific, small scale human rights projects in remote areas.**

## **4.5 Developing a Three Year Strategy for DTP - ATSIP Collaboration**

Based on the evaluation findings, it is clear that ATSIP and DTP have begun to conceptualize their partnership as more than just one-off ‘training provision’ to a shared recognition of the importance of a long term commitment to capacity building of Indigenous advocates. The establishment of IHRNA, the Perth regional program, and the preparatory training for the UN Permanent forum are very positive initiatives which

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<sup>54</sup> The Earthrights program provides up to \$1000 to alumni of the Mekong School to support campaigns or community initiatives.

provide evidence of this shift. However, given its human rights expertise and extensive alumni network, there is a potential for the DTP to play more of a role in building the skills of individuals and communities over time. Developing a longer term, and more strategic, approach to future collaboration between ATSIP and the DTP would assist in making this transition. Developing a long term strategy with clear goals would also enable ATSIP and DTP to build in indicators in order to better measure the impact of this collaboration after a certain period of time.

#### *4.5.1 Shifting to a Three Year Funding Cycle*

It will obviously be difficult for ATSIP and DTP to develop a long term strategy if Oxfam funding continues to be provided on an annual basis, is tied to specific one-off training programs, and if the funding amounts continue to vary. Making the shift to a three-year funding cycle would make a significant difference. In addition, rather than tying this three year commitment to particular programs, it could be useful to undertake a collaborative needs assessment of the DTP's organizational needs, strengths and weaknesses before deciding where funding should be directed. This assessment could include considering staffing needs, sustainability of funding sources, systems, capacity issues and staffing needs. For example, if finding a sustainable funding base is an issue for DTP, perhaps Oxfam could assist by providing resources for research into how to realize this. It would also be valuable to involve other Oxfam units (for example Advocacy, OIYP and Asia Pacific Programs) in the development of a three year strategy to make the most of the potential links and areas of collaboration.

#### **Recommendation 17**

**That Oxfam consider shifting its funding to the DTP from an annual, to a three-year, funding cycle. This shift should be part of a commitment to a long term partnership between Oxfam and the DTP that gives greater consideration to the long term capacity building needs of alumni and their communities and other Indigenous community advocates.**

#### **Recommendation 18**

**As part of a three year strategy, ATSIP and the DTP should establish clear goals. This will enable indicators to be developed in order to better measure the impact of this collaboration after three years.**

#### **Recommendation 19**

**Units other than ATSIP (in particular Advocacy, OIYP and Asia Pacific Programs) should also be involved in the development of a three year strategy to make the most of potential links and areas of collaboration.**

#### *4.5.2 Mapping Exercise*

As part of a longer term, strategic approach to collaboration, it may also be useful for ATSIP and DTP to undertake a mapping exercise of Indigenous Australian organizations in order to identify which organizations require capacity building, and in which areas. There may be scope, for example, for expanding the partnership model that was adopted in the case of the Bachelor Institute in the Northern Territory, and the Aboriginal Legal Service in Perth to organizations in other states.

#### **Recommendation 20**

**As part of a longer term, strategic approach to collaboration, ATSIP and DTP should consider undertaking a mapping exercise of Indigenous organizations in order to identify capacity building needs and partnership possibilities.**

#### *4.5.3 Funding DTP places for Oxfam staff*

Given that many Oxfam staff expressed the value of DTP programs to their work, and the organisation's explicit rights based approach to development, a three year Oxfam-DTP strategy could also consider funding two staff places for Oxfam staff to participate in the DTP's annual program. New Oxfam staff could be encouraged to participate in a DTP training program as part of their induction process, and existing staff could also be given the opportunity to do so.

#### **Recommendation 21**

**That Oxfam funds two staff places for DTP's annual program for new and existing Oxfam staff.**

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Community empowerment requires long term investment in capacity building, including training, so that communities can effectively advocate for their own rights. In recent

years a partnership with DTP has been a key part of ATSIP's strategy to empower Indigenous community advocates in Australia. This evaluation has found that the DTP program is highly valued by alumni, and has helped to build their skills in human rights advocacy and expand their support networks. The ATSIP-DTP relationship is also a healthy one that has been responsive to emerging human rights opportunities and has evolved in response to the needs of alumni. What is needed at this point is to build on these strengths in order to develop a more strategic and long term partnership that views training as part of a long-term commitment to building the capacity of human rights advocates, and makes the most of DTP's considerable human rights expertise, training experience, and expansive alumni network.

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