
OXFAM SENSE MAKING EXERCISE

For a Selection of Evaluations 2013-2014

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The citation for this paper is: Roper, Laura, Sánchez de Ocaña, Mónica, Smiaroski, Mary Sue and Rocha, Jasmin (2015) *Oxfam Sense Making Exercise for a Selection of Evaluations 2013-2014*. Oxfam, February.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exercise would not have been possible without the voluntary efforts of MEL colleagues from across the confederation who graciously stepped up to review evaluations. We are really inspired by their commitment to “One Oxfam” learning.

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We also thank **Madeleine Jacob** for her painstaking review and correction of the bibliography.

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ACRONYMS

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BRICSAM	Brazil, Russia, India, china, South Africa and Mexico
CAMSA	Common Approach to MEL and Social Accountability
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CG	Change Goal
COGENHA	Combined Oxfam Gender and HIV Program
CONSOL	Common framework for consolidated financial reporting within the Oxfam Confederation
CPAU	Co-operation for Peace and Unity
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Community
EFSL	Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods
EQAT	Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool
EWS	Early Warning System
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GBV	Gender-based violence
GiE	Gender in Emergencies
GJ	Gender Justice
HIT	Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
IFI	International Financial Institution
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organization
JCAS	Joint Country Analysis and Strategy
LIWG	Land Issues Working Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur / Mercado Comum do Sul (Southern Common Market)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MPI	Multi-dimensional Poverty Index
OAU	Oxfam Australia
OCA	Oxfam Canada
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
OI	Oxfam International
OPA	One Program Approach
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
OSP	Oxfam Strategic Plan
PCVA	Participatory capacities and vulnerabilities approach
RBA	Rights-based Approach
RHV	Raising Her Voice
RIC	Rights in Crisis
RTBH	Right to be Heard
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
SRI	System of rice intensification
STD	Sexually transmitted diseases
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence against Women
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WIN	Worldwide Influencing Network
WRO	Women's rights organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Purpose

This document is a review of a sample of evaluations carried out between January 2013 and October 2014, conducted to meet the requirement of Oxfam's policy of program evaluation. The review serves both accountability and learning functions. It is meant to help Oxfam identify strengths/weaknesses and lessons from our programs, explore how our efforts to enable good program design are improving (or not) our programming and assess our evaluation quality. While this report tries to balance strengths and weaknesses, it is driven by learning, so it inevitably focuses more on what needs improvement or requires action. This report aimed to serve internal program audiences; it is shared now, in keeping with Oxfam's commitment to accountability.

2. Methodology

From more than 400 evaluations, the secretariat only had access to 214 documents (in spite of sustained and repeated efforts to obtain copies); this represents a serious knowledge management problem. Not one of the affiliates was able to provide access to all the evaluations that they themselves had commissioned. Of those 214 documents, 176 were deemed eligible for review. Each evaluation was assigned to a change goal category and 33 volunteer reviewers, two colleagues from the secretariat and two consultants reviewed 127 evaluations in total. Each reviewer looked at key outcomes, and gathered input on Oxfam's ways of working (e.g. added value, accountability, influencing, attention to women's rights etc.), and commented on methodological quality.

Since the previous meta-review of the last strategic plan, *Demanding Justice*, the number and quality of evaluations has improved significantly. Overall, evaluations were fairly strong, written in accessible language, and offered useful recommendations based on the evidence. Nonetheless, the majority of evaluations had some methodological issues, so this remains an area that needs improvement.

3. Key Findings: What the evaluations tell us about the nature of Oxfam programming

These findings are drawn from the six change goal chapters, where more detail about key achievements and challenges under each change goal can be found, along with specific findings regarding Oxfam's ways of working as it pertains to each change goal.

A. Programing is largely aligned with the priorities and strategies identified in the strategic plan. Oxfam is working with others to improve the capacity of citizens to demand their rights and hold government officials accountable for essential services; build the capacity of a range of CSOs organizations, especially women's rights and producer organizations, to be more effective; improve the quality of its own and others' emergency response and disaster risk reduction programs, and increase the resilience and productivity of small producers. There is notable progress in some areas, initial advances in others, and some hard lessons about the challenges of working on complex issues in resource constrained and politicized or restrictive contexts. However, the strategic plan appears to be a solid foundation for decision-making on strategy and direction.

B. Understanding and capacity to execute a rights-based approach has matured. Oxfam continues strategic support to civil society organizations so that rights-holders more effectively claim their rights, but this work is more frequently complemented by engagement with duty-bearers so they not only feel the pressure to respond, but also have increased capacity to do so. This is evident across change goals.

C. More national level influencing, but Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN) still a work in progress. Influencing is present in the majority of programs evaluated and takes many forms: from traditional Oxfam global campaigns, to regional initiatives linked to national legal reform; training of duty-bearers that allows for better access to justice and promotion of women's rights; better budget monitoring around essential services; and more say regarding extractive industries; to modelling "good" humanitarian practice in the hopes of influencing by example. More national level influencing has presented a number of challenges as Oxfam grapples with local politics and power structures, shrinking political space for civil society organizations (CSOs), on going capacity and revenue issues that plague governmental authorities and impede progress regardless of level of action, among others. Though both Oxfam and partners have had some successes, the articulation of a holistic model that integrates influencing from global to local or vice versa remains an on going challenge.

D. Relevance of the one program approach (OPA): re-examining it in practical terms. The one program approach posits that Oxfam will have greatest impact if it links long-term development, campaigning, and humanitarian assistance, including work on disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction programs most closely embodied the OPA (although they don't necessarily use the terminology) as they generally combined work with local authorities, livelihood resilience strategies and disaster preparedness. Overall, fewer than 15 percent of evaluations mentioned OPA and many of those that did understood it as development projects with some influencing or influencing with some other activities such as training and exchanges. OPA is included in Oxfam Program Standards, so this merits some re-examination; Oxfam may be missing opportunities or critical synergies.

E. Progress on placing women's rights "at the heart of all we do," but stronger focus on full range of women's rights is needed. As compared to the review of the previous strategic plan, there is evidence of a significantly greater focus on women. Of the change goals, Gender Justice programs were more explicitly interested in promoting a range of women's rights and addressing inequities and power imbalances. Under other change goals, women's rights work tended to focus on the issue of women's participation – either reaching more female beneficiaries and/or increasing their participation in programs, committees, and other public settings. Sustainable Food Systems was quite successful in this regard, with over two thirds of the evaluations reviewed documenting increases in women's participation, with a subset of those evaluations demonstrating higher levels of agency, empowerment, and/or economic benefits. The focus on women was much less consistent under other change goals and programs often demonstrated some level of gender awareness, but fell short of gender mainstreaming based on a strong gender analysis. Very few evaluations looked at women's empowerment at the household level and findings there were mixed. In short, there seems to have been considerable acceptance of the idea of putting women's rights at the heart of all Oxfam does, but still limitations and challenges in terms of what this means in practice.

F. Oxfam not maximizing its potential to add value. Only about one third of evaluations discussed Oxfam's added value either explicitly or implicitly. This type of assessment should be incorporated more routinely in our evaluations to have a more solid foundation to inform our choices as Oxfam moves further into new roles in our change process. Where discussed, Oxfam is widely recognized for its expertise and capacity in humanitarian response and campaigning and advocacy. In many cases, partners and allies want more from Oxfam in terms of peer learning and exchange opportunities, specialized training, a more effective coordinating and/or convening role, and better oversight and support during program implementation.

G. The prevalence of capacity building in Oxfam-funded projects and programs. In reviewing the full set of evaluations, it became evident that capacity building is a part of

many program strategies, yet it receives very little evaluative attention. This may warrant more attention as there is currently no way to judge the degree to which capacity building investments are useful.

4. Challenges to Achieving More

The following challenges came up a sufficient number of times to warrant more reflection and, in some cases, additional study or research. These are:

- **Ambition-capacity mismatch:** This was evident in numerous evaluations and was a function of some combination of overly ambitious goals, unrealistic timeline, lack of resources, poor understanding of contextual difficulties, and lack of capacity for partners and Oxfam. This was further exacerbated by some problems of inadequate scale and duration of investment
- **The “translation problem”** where change in one domain or level does not necessarily translate to change in other domains or levels. This is evident in women’s empowerment programming where women may become more active in the community, but still lack any decision-making role at the household level; in DRR planning at the local level, that is hindered or undermined by lack of support at the municipal or provincial level; or changes in men’s attitudes about VAW, but limited or no change in their behaviors.
- **Uneven attention to sustainability** that manifests in a variety of ways, such as attention to budget monitoring, but lack of attention to revenue generation; inadequate strategies for leaving installed human capacity; lack of attention to financial sustainability of partners; and too many livelihood programs (especially in the food systems change goal) that don’t have strong economic outcomes, undermining their long-term viability.
- **Lack of attention to cost-effectiveness** (a problem which was identified in the previous sense-making review) and no way to make judgments about the relative value of investments within programs, much less across programs. In a confederation context, with funding held across different systems, this is not an easy problem to solve. Nonetheless, given the current debate about aid effectiveness and the continued push for value for money, Oxfam really needs to address this challenge.
- **Siloed thinking and limited cross-fertilization** amongst change goals, thereby failing to build on strengths and capitalize on assets and good practices, such as strong gender analysis in Gender Justice, standard setting and accountability in Saving Lives, and experience learned about working in highly restrictive political contexts and/or controversial issues in Right to be Heard.

5. Oxfam is getting results, but is it having an impact?

The weight of the evidence makes a plausible case that Oxfam interventions are making a difference, although perhaps not always on the scale or in the timeframe originally envisaged. Among the methodological issues Oxfam needs to continue to work on, a number have direct bearing on whether Oxfam will be able to make claims about progress toward its change objectives by 2019. These are 1) the continued lack of baseline data or ‘beginning-state’ information for most programs; 2) the failure to document the reach of the programs and whether they hit their targets; 3) the tendency of evaluations to limit themselves to outputs or short-term outcomes and a failure to contextualize outcomes in a clear theory of change or by using comparison groups and 4) spotty evidence or insufficient independent verification, and 5) very limited analysis at the level of individuals in communities or households, where ultimately Oxfam seeks to have an impact.

6. Conclusions

The strategic plan appears to be providing adequate guidance for funding priorities and evaluations indicate that Oxfam is investing in most of the commitments embodied in the plan. Oxfam continues to mature as a rights-based organization, has strengthened and expanded its influencing efforts at the national level, continues to build the capacity of civil society actors to hold duty bearers to account and increasingly supports duty-bearers to develop the capacity to respond, and has advanced considerably in promoting women's participation and engagement, although more work needs to be done on gender equality. The evidence also highlights a number of areas where Oxfam could potentially contribute to the sector with its program informed knowledge and/or which merit further exploration. Oxfam supports complex, systemic change under difficult circumstances and many of the challenges it faces stem from this fact.

7. Recommendations

A. Big picture

- It may be opportune to begin thinking about how change goals should be formulated in the future. For example, the breadth of the natural resources change goal is quite problematic in terms of speaking about Oxfam's contributions to outcomes in this area. At the same time, the evaluators saw a great deal of overlap in the programs assigned to different change goals, along with lack of cross-fertilization amongst change goals. This suggests that there is a process of convergence going on that is not yet reflected in how Oxfam talks about or categorizes its work and may mean that Oxfam isn't fully capitalizing on potential synergies.
- The one program approach is a core standard and something of an article of faith, yet it does not seem to have been embraced in practice. This either doesn't matter or Oxfam is significantly under-performing – in any event, it is worth examining.
- Oxfam's ability to manage external relations, especially with partners, also seems to be uneven. This affects both program quality and potentially the Oxfam brand. Oxfam should pay more attention to how it wants partners to experience the relationship, be more intentional on delivering consistent added value, and more routinely solicit honest feedback from a wider range of stakeholders in its evaluations and through other mechanisms.

B. Program

- Tackle a limited set of recurring "program knots" (e.g. the translation problem, moving beyond women's participation to changing power relations) and develop explicit strategies to address them (we've seen, as the result of this review, that Oxfam can make progress when it sets its mind to it). A key element of this will be learning across change goals (see next section).
- As an organization committed to being more than a funder, Oxfam needs to engage more consistently and think more strategically about each component of the program cycle (planning, implementation, embedded M&E) and invest time, funds and human resources to deliver on that commitment, especially for struggling or at-risk partners or those engaged in complex, collaborative endeavors or coalitions.
- Continue to develop more consistency and quality in monitoring and evaluation practice. Lessons can be learned from Saving Lives in terms of developing, widely adopting, and applying shared standards and indices.

8. Implications of this Exercise for Greater Accountability, Learning and Impact

This report cannot begin to do justice to the content and lessons found in the evaluations and what they represent in terms of Oxfam's and partners' commitment to finding ways forward to deal with the complex political and practical issues in their daily work. One of Oxfam's currencies is knowledge and we want to highlight that Oxfam is significantly under-exploiting a wealth of knowledge and experience. There is enormous potential for capitalizing on this knowledge to improve program quality and contribute to the broader (I)NGO sector through in-depth, cross-program, cross-change goal reviews, discussions, peer learning, supported by a research agenda. Examples include:

- Programs in Right to Be Heard have gained significant experience with advocacy in restricted political contexts that is worth sharing more broadly. It also grapples with how to ensure that policy victories translate into change in people's lives. The latter is an issue across change goals, where some inroads have been made, which can be usefully explored.
- Many of the programs under Gender Justice use a sophisticated conceptual framework that seeks to analyze the roots of resource and power differential between men and women and guide programs to push for transformative change. This framework can be applied not only to gender relations, but also to other characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, any and all of which can be the basis of discrimination. As Oxfam ramps up its work on inequality, the groundwork the Gender Justice team has done may be quite useful.
- Under a number of change goals, Oxfam has engaged with local authorities to both collaborate on common goals and influence future action (and certainly Oxfam Italy has given the matter a great deal of thought). There are many thorny issues – financing, capacity, turnover in government personnel, and political dynamics – that emerge in the course of such collaborations and many problems could be avoided or mitigated if knowledge was exchanged and broadly shared on this issue.
- There is certainly widespread gender awareness under all the change goals, with targeting of women and efforts to enhance their participation. This might be considered a first stage benchmark in putting women's rights at the center of Oxfam's work, but is also the stage at which many programs get stalled. At the same time, there are some stand-out programs that have worked toward transformative change under Sustainable Food, Saving Lives, etc. Further learning on mechanisms and techniques that equip non-gender experts to take on the daunting task of challenging cultural and political norms and practices would help advance gender mainstreaming.

Over the same period that is covered by this exercise, MEL colleagues across the confederation have worked hard to put building blocks in place in order to improve our evaluations. As this exercise reveals, Oxfam colleagues continue to struggle with some fundamental problems, such as putting baselines in place, effective monitoring for program and project implementation, and the over reliance on either purely qualitative or quantitative methodologies. MEL colleagues will be examining this report, and the evaluations that informed it, to continue to improve our practice. Methodical work over time, combined with close accompaniment from MEL colleagues, will focus our efforts on the key necessary improvements. We are highly motivated by the potential and imperative of becoming a knowledge-driven organization.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Two fundamental principles underlying Oxfam's efforts to evaluate its work are learning and accountability: we want to ensure that we learn from our evaluations to improve our program quality, benefiting both Oxfam and the people with whom we work. It is no surprise, therefore, that Oxfam's policy of program evaluation requires that every two years, Oxfam undertake a review of the evaluations (internal and external) completed during that timeframe. Further, it requires that findings be shared with Oxfam senior leadership for discussion and action. This exercise has been carried out to comply with that mandate.

In an effort to effectively use its resources, Oxfam hopes that the review will allow us to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify strengths, weaknesses and lessons from our programs as identified in the evaluations
- Understand how some of Oxfam's efforts to enable good program design (our enabling goals) are contributing to program quality
- Identify methodological strengths, weaknesses and innovation in evaluation
- Assess compliance with our evaluation policy

Oxfam organized this process to review evaluations that were completed from January 2013 – October 2014.¹ Taken from almost all affiliates², the evaluations cover all the Oxfam functions (development, humanitarian response, and advocacy and campaigns initiatives). They cover all the regions where Oxfam works (including domestic poverty programs), and all the change goals; they are a mix of internal and external evaluations carried out either at mid-term or final points in the interventions³.

This document begins with an explanation of how this work was carried out, followed by an overview chapter that consolidates the general findings from the review of the evaluations under each change goal. For those interested in detailed change goal analysis, the overview chapter is followed by chapters that cover each change goal. Each change goal section begins by outlining Oxfam's commitments within the change goal (as stated in the OSP) and briefly profiles the evaluations reviewed that informs the analysis. It then assesses whether or not the evaluations show that Oxfam is making a difference by highlighting some achievements and challenges to achieving more. This is followed by an examination of Oxfam's ways of working – looking at Oxfam's added value, gender mainstreaming progress and challenges, evidence related to participation and accountability, progress on adopting the One Program Approach (OPA) and supporting Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN). These program quality issues were included as they partially reflect the enabling goals in the OSP, as well as Oxfam's Program Standards. As a last step, the authors draw conclusions and recommendations that are specific to the corresponding change goal.

1.2 Methodology

This exercise is a meta-review that, in this situation, is defined as a process that distills key lessons across the evaluations produced for individual projects and programs across the confederation and identifies recurring or systemic strengths or challenges that merit special attention.

There were three steps in this process:

1. In a first step, the secretariat reviewed all documents received (214 in total) covering all the regions where Oxfam works (including domestic poverty programs) to ensure that only actual evaluations were included in the review. Thirty-eight (38) documents were excluded as annual reports and other lessons documents that were not considered suitable for this exercise. Individual Real Time Evaluations were also excluded due to their sheer volume and the fact that a meta-review for these was already available. All evaluations considered eligible for this review (176) were then classified by change goal, geography of implementation, type of project/program, type of evaluation (mid-term/final, internal/external), etc. to help us assess to what extent the sample of available evaluations adequately covered our work.
2. With the collaboration of 33 volunteers from across the confederation, the team (two colleagues from the Secretariat and two consultants), the team was able to review in depth 127 of the 176 available evaluations (72%).⁴ Reviewers assessed each evaluation report in terms of its methodological soundness in line with the mandatory evaluation quality assessment tool (based on the Oxfam policy for program evaluation and found in the Common Approach to MEL and Social Accountability [CAMSA]). This provided us with a basic understanding of the level and extent of evaluation quality across the confederation (and consequently a better understanding of additional work needed to improve evaluation processes). Additionally, this assessment was a prerequisite for any further analysis. With some limited exceptions, only those evaluation reports that were considered to be methodologically sound (i.e. “absolutely” or “with minor exceptions”) were included in further analyses. For evaluation reports not considered appropriate for further analyses, the main reasons were documented (again contributing to our understanding of additional work that is needed to improved evaluation processes).
3. The final step was to review the evaluations, preparing a format that summarized program or project key outcomes, and gathered input on Oxfam’s contribution, cost effectiveness, accountability, women’s rights, Oxfam’s partnership model, Oxfam’s program approach, influencing efforts and methodological innovation.

The consultants developed the report based on their in-depth review of between 16 and 20 evaluations each, covering a cross section of the different change goals⁵; the in-depth reviews of the Secretariat team (who reviewed 20 evaluations); and the additional information provided by the 33 MEL colleagues from across the confederation who served as volunteer reviewers. It is not the purpose of this review to “add up” outcomes across the confederation, as that would produce distorted results. However, some of the more significant results reported in the evaluations and captured by different reviewers are explicitly mentioned as examples to illustrate different points in the document.

Limits of the Methodology

The sample was built with different criteria for volunteers and for the consultants/secretariat group. While volunteers self-selected the evaluations to review according to their thematic interest (disregarding those from their own affiliate), the Secretariat was guided by the need to ensure that the documentation would provide sufficient evidence to cover all change goals adequately. All attempts were made to avoid favorable selection bias.

The evaluations were categorized according to Oxfam’s system of change goals, with the corresponding limitation that some evaluations might have provided insights into several change goals. In some respects, the work in each change goal is underrepresented

because it was impossible to review all the evaluations that might have fit under a change goal.

Under methodologically ideal circumstances, two reviewers would have looked at each evaluation, preceded by a shared training and regular quality assurance checks. However, given the large number of volunteer reviewers, and the limited resources available for the exercise, Oxfam faced a trade-off between coverage of the evaluations versus greater consistency in the reviewers' inputs, and opted to review a larger number of evaluations. While guidance was provided, we could not ensure consistency in the review process across all our volunteers, as there was no common training.⁶

Finally, as with any global level meta-review, there is a significant degree of distillation of findings; inevitably, some lessons will get lost. Yet, the richness of this confederation-wide exercise is undeniable; the change goal chapters can be read for further analysis.

Overview of the Sample

As noted above, the evaluations covered all the Oxfam functions. Among the documents reviewed, the vast majority of evaluations focus on long-term development interventions, of which about half include some form of influencing. In total, only 16 campaign evaluations were reviewed of which only three included some form of programming (see also table below). The majority of evaluations reviewed are final (71%) and external evaluations (80%).

Table 1: Evaluations by type of program/project

	No.	%
Campaign	13	10,92
Campaign w/some programming	3	2,52
Development	45	37,82
Development w/ some influencing	33	27,73
Humanitarian	16	13,45
Humanitarian w/ some influencing	9	7,56
Total	119	100,00

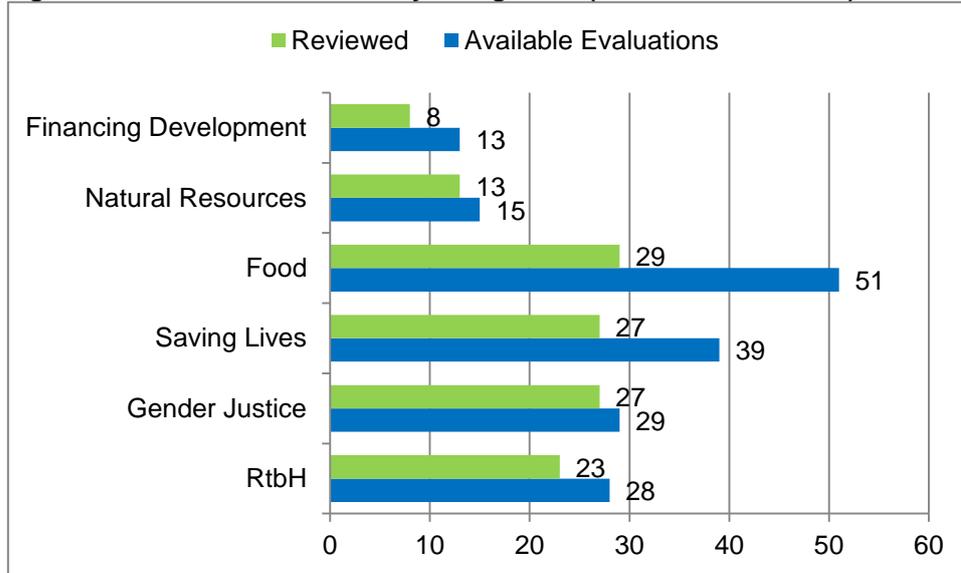
No information on type of program/project for eight evaluations.

Evaluations by Change Goal

In many cases, projects and programs contribute to more than one change goal and we would expect all our work to contribute to achieving Gender Justice and the Right to be Heard objectives by integrating them into all our work. However, a rough classification of the 176 evaluations that were considered eligible for this review shows that the areas of Sustainable Food and Saving Lives have the highest number of evaluations available, while Financing for Development and Natural Resources have a significantly lower amount of evaluative information to use.

As not all evaluations could be reviewed due to resource constraints, we made an attempt to balance the number of evaluations for each change goal so as to be able to develop meaningful analyses across the whole, while prioritizing multi-year and final evaluations. As a result, a relatively large number of Food Systems and Saving Lives evaluations could not be reviewed.

Figure 1: Numbers of evaluations by Change Goal (available vs. reviewed)



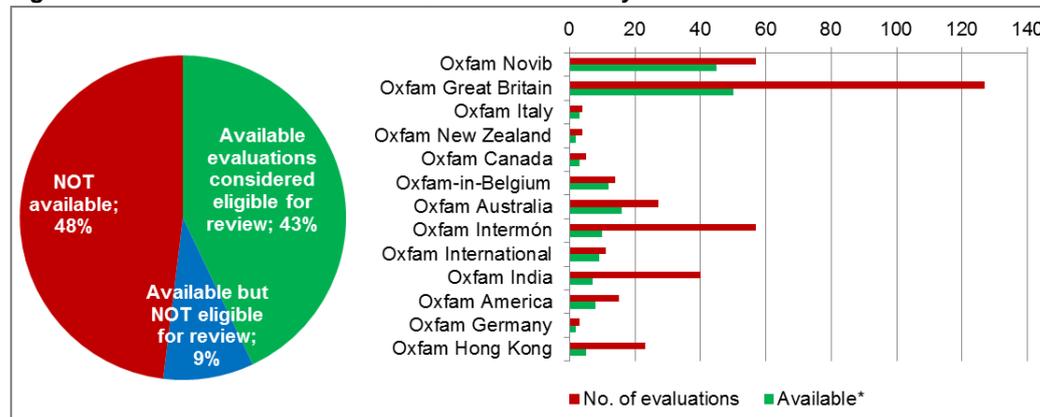
Note: In total 127 evaluations have been reviewed.

Deficiencies in access to and use of evaluations

Evaluative work has significantly increased but **knowledge management needs to be improved so that we can make better and more widespread use of knowledge generated** in evaluative processes. During the last two years, we have seen a significant increase in evaluations commissioned across the confederation compared to the number of evaluations that were available for the period 2007-2012. Along with the Oxfam International Secretariat, affiliates reported commissioning more than 400 evaluations.

According to the Oxfam policy of program evaluation, we are not only committed to sharing evaluations externally but also internally, yet we are not complying with this facet of our policy. In fact, almost half of the commissioned evaluations are not readily available to internal and external colleagues beyond primary users. For this exercise, none of the Oxfam affiliates was able to provide all evaluations that they themselves commissioned over the past two years. A thorough examination of the challenges that this part of our policy represents for affiliates is in order. Evaluations are a knowledge resource. We clearly need to strengthen our knowledge management not only to comply with the evaluation policy but also to be able to demonstrably **use** evaluative information for improving program quality, not only for those involved with an individual project or program, but more broadly across the confederation.

Figure 2: Almost half of our evaluations are not readily available



Note: Available evaluations by affiliate include only those that were considered eligible for review. Refer to the methodology section below on reasons for excluding evaluations from this review.

The Oxfam policy of program evaluation stipulates that by 2019 we will dedicate 5% of our program budget to MEL. We did not collect financial figures for this in this exercise for a number of reasons. At this time, there is no agreed common approach to measure this commitment (although it is on the agenda for the MEL colleagues' network for this year). Furthermore, evaluation budgets are held in different places across the confederation (team budgets in headquarters, regions and countries [depending on the affiliate], within large donor-funded programs, shared initiative budgets in different locations, etc.). In Oxfam's current situation of heavy O2020 commitments at regional and country levels, attempting to gather that information without the systems in place would have been extremely burdensome. Consequently, comparison of evaluation spend (had we been able to gather it) to program spend based on CONSOL data at this time might have given us a misleading picture.

Final Methodological Considerations

The three steps outlined above resulted in three types of information which we have tried to capture in this report: data about the scope of our evaluative work, evidence about evaluation quality, and information on program and project achievements, challenges, and insights about program quality issues.

Over the course of this year, we intend to further use this information to build good examples of evaluation in those areas where we remain weak and to provide a limited number of methodological notes or webinars for complex evaluation issues. Organizational resources will be allocated to arrange more systematic access to the evaluations for the knowledge hubs, for further cross affiliate program learning and to systematize and/or profile a few exemplary evaluations. The number of initiatives will be contingent on available resources and the demands on the MEL system.

1.3 Quality of the Evaluation Reports

Naturally, the evaluation documents reflect different purposes and a range of levels of investment, with a corresponding range of rigor and quality. This review assessed the quality of evaluation reports along nine elements⁷ and provided an overall assessment of the methodological soundness of each evaluation report. As noted previously, except for a few cases, only evaluations considered absolutely sound or exhibiting minor quality issues were included in the further analyses⁸. In total, 29 evaluations were found to have major quality issues; an affiliate-specific analysis will be carried out to identify any areas of particular concern for follow up.

In general, the majority of the evaluations were considered to be fairly strong. Most evaluations are considered to have been written in accessible language, offering useful recommendations based on evidence. However, the **notable weak point across many of our evaluations is their lack of a gender perspective**. Fewer than half of the evaluation reports disaggregate data, experiences and/or feedback by gender. Many also do not offer conclusions and recommendations that target gender justice issues (including power relationships). While this weakness may be related in some cases to evaluators' technical capacity, Oxfam evaluation managers must assume greater responsibility to ensure that we overcome this problem.

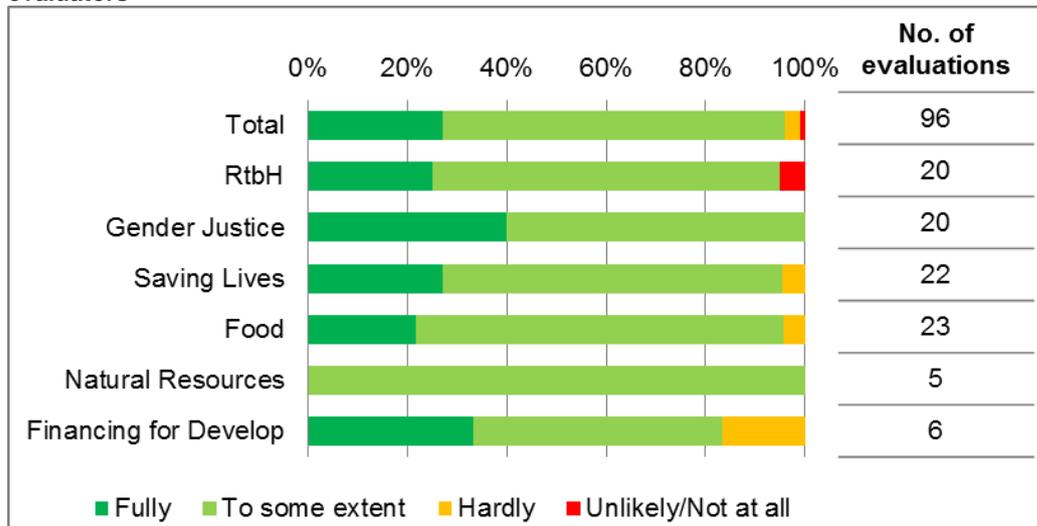
Information from evaluation quality assessments identified several challenges that are worth mentioning. In some cases, reviewers found that evaluations did not assess the extent to which objectives were being achieved. In other cases, evaluations focused on

the description of project activities (possibly compensating for a lack of project documentation). In a few cases, conclusions and recommendations remained generic and did not link to the evidence gathered. In some instances, limited technical capacity (related to baselines or quantitative analysis) or poor project or program design (e.g. lack of clear objectives) were found to have impacted the evaluation quality. And, of course, there were those evaluations that set out to answer very difficult questions with inadequate methodologies and resources. These situations are fairly common pitfalls. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive assessment; nonetheless, this mixed picture sets out a work plan for MEL colleagues across the confederation.

The majority of our programs and projects are achieving their objectives

Roughly 28% of the evaluations that include an assessment of effectiveness conclude that Oxfam fully achieves its objectives (see Figure 3, below). An additional two-thirds of evaluations conclude that the intervention is achieving its objectives to some extent (see graphic below). Only four evaluations (1%) present an assessment of failure. In most cases, failure and success is impacted both by internal and external factors. Only rarely, purely external factors are considered to determine the intervention's success or failure.

Figure 3: Degree to which Oxfam interventions achieved their objectives according to evaluators



Note: The figures are based on volunteer reviewers' assessments. For some evaluations we have missing information. Therefore, totals do not equal the total number of evaluations reviewed. Differences by change goal should not be considered to represent systematic differences given the small number of evaluations per change goal.

For more detailed analysis of achievements, challenges, and ways of work, please see the following Overview and Change Goal chapters. The expectation is that this document will stimulate conversations and debate about the findings that will help advance Oxfam's MEL practice and program quality.

2 OVERVIEW – CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Introduction

The evaluations reviewed provide a wealth of materials with considerable insight and evidence regarding the effectiveness of Oxfam funding and engagement. When compared to the number and quality of reviews from the last OI Sense Making Review of its strategic plan, *Demanding Justice* (Roche, et al, 2012), Oxfam has made remarkable progress, building up a body of evidence that serves both accountability and learning purposes. On the whole, evaluations were responsibly designed and, even with methodological deficiencies, the conclusions and recommendations generally were consistent with the evidence gathered. This chapter synthesizes findings from evaluations across the six change goals, identifying trends and cross-cutting characteristics.

2.2 What the evaluations tell us about the nature of Oxfam programming

Alignment with strategic plan

The evaluations demonstrate that **programming is largely aligned with the goals and strategies identified in the strategic plan**. For five out of the six change goals, one gets a strong sense that Oxfam has decisively moved from a situation in which projects and programs 'fit' under a change goal 'umbrella' to one in which funding and other forms of support are targeted at advancing a clear agenda.⁹ **Particular areas of strength** are:

- Encouraging citizens to engage in public decision-making and promoting a culture of accountability among public servants, particularly in contexts where there is limited political space (CG1, Right to Be Heard). This was the only change goal where Oxfam appeared to be making progress on all its commitments.
- Providing core support and building the capacity of women's rights organizations and successfully fostering women's capacity to engage with and influence policy-makers at the local, national, and global levels, underpinned by a shared analytical framework for transformative gender relations and strong use of theory of change (CG2, Gender Justice).
- Improving the quality and consistency of Oxfam's own emergency response and disaster risk reduction capacity and working with other stakeholders, particularly governments, to improve theirs (CG 3, Saving Lives). Significant progress has been made under this change goal in terms of the quality of evaluations and the use of indices (Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit, Real Time Evaluations, Gender in Emergencies and others) that allow for critical reflection across cases.
- Increasing the productivity and resilience of small scale producers, strengthening the focus on women producers, and influencing national agricultural policy and, to a much more limited degree (under the Beyond the Brands campaign), the private sector (CG 4, Sustainable Food).
- Promoting access to essential services as a right, and citizen participation and oversight in service delivery and poverty reduction strategies (CG 6, Financing for Development and Universal Essential Services).

There appear to be some gaps in programming (noted under each change goal section), but whether that reflects reality or is an artifact of the evaluations available for review is hard to judge.

A Maturing of Oxfam's Rights-Based Approach

There is evidence that Oxfam's understanding of and **capacity to execute a rights-based approach has matured since the last strategic plan**. This is manifest in several ways:

- While in the past Oxfam might have funded programs that worked around deficiencies in local and national governments, under this plan **there is a much stronger focus on holding duty bearers accountable** not only for delivery of services or humanitarian aid, but also for the protection and promotion of rights of the individuals, communities and groups that Oxfam prioritizes.
- Oxfam remains committed to supporting “courageous, innovative and risk-taking” civil society organizations (CSOs) and has some **notable successes in promoting rights in restricted and high risk political spaces**, from promoting women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, to supporting community-based conflict resolution efforts in Afghanistan, to tackling extractive industries in Asia and the Pacific, to finding political openings at the local level to promote more responsive governments on a wide range of issues.
- Likewise, under this plan, while **rights awareness-raising** for individuals and communities remains central, it is often much more closely and consistently **linked to taking specific, practical actions** to uphold those rights, and is more frequently combined with positive outreach and engagement with political authorities.
- Finally, there is much more evidence that Oxfam is concerned about **not only creating political will** on the part of duty bearers to respond, but also on **enhancing their capacity** to do so, with capacity building of local authorities, policy-makers, and/or actors in the legal system.

More National Level Influencing, but Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN) a work in progress.¹⁰

Related to the more mature RBA is the **centrality of influencing in many projects and programs**. All or the vast majority of evaluations under Right to be Heard (RTBH), Gender Justice, and Financing for Development included influencing of government authorities, while it was also regularly evident in Saving Lives and Fair Sharing of Natural Resources, but less consistently evident under Sustainable Food. Influencing can take many forms – from high profile, global campaigns such as Behind the Brands (using tools such as media, research, lobbying and popular campaigning) to more subtle and diverse forms of influencing. This includes:

- Organizational and technical support to CSOs to help them understand and engage in policy-making processes, as in El Salvador on legislation affecting the right to water and ratification and “domestication” of the regional Protocol for Women's Rights in Africa; and/or monitoring the implementation of policies, such as gender-based violence legislation in India and Vietnam;
- Support of national governments in international arenas, such as during the campaign to mobilize funding to address the emerging Sahel food crisis.
- Training of both civil society and government actors to enhance their capacity to actively promote rights or respond to rights violations. Some examples are efforts by Oxfam Italy to work with local authorities and Oxfam GB's capacity building with CSOs in Lebanon to address the Syria refugee crisis; training of legal authorities (judges and lawyers) on women's rights in the MENA Access to Justice Program; positive engagement and training of local Tanzanian government officials that not only increased transparency and accountability, but also helped combat small-scale corruption and fraud at village and district level; and multiple examples under Gender Justice funding of training policy-makers on women's rights.

For the Saving Lives change goal, **modeling ‘good’ behavior** also seemed to be an important strategy as evidenced in Oxfam Hong Kong’s efforts to influence the Chinese government through its own efforts to meet SPHERE standards; the adoption of social accountability mechanisms in the Zataari refugee camp in Jordan by others in response to Oxfam GB’s use of the same; and the piloting of disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning that was subsequently taken up by local government in neighboring communities in multiple countries, as documented by Oxfam Australia, Oxfam in Belgium and Oxfam Intermón in Nicaragua.

As Oxfam does more advocacy at the national level, it **regularly confronts a range of challenges**. These include:

- The complexity of dealing with local politics and power structures in highly politicized and/or highly restricted political spaces, as covered in many of the RTBH and Financing for Development evaluations; with harassment, detention, as well as accusations of subversion not uncommon.
- In more democratic systems, the built in turnover of government authorities and the risk that gains can be undermined by change in administration, especially if partners or policy positions are associated with specific political parties.
- The situation in which an inability to change or implement policy at the local level is often a function of lack of political will or capacity at a higher level (e.g. municipal, district, provincial, state), as documented in DRR efforts in multiple locales.
- Piecemeal change, change at the margins, or token rather than substantive change.
- An inability to sustain advocacy efforts to the implementation phase, when energies tend to flag or dissipate. Resistance is commonly expressed at policy implementation level –and rarely experienced at the point of policy ratification-, and must confront attitudes, beliefs and cultures, which are often slow and hard to change.

Evaluations document a range of **mechanisms for leveraging change** in both more open and closed political contexts. The actions CSOs have taken include:

- Improving and using access to information through budget monitoring, the employment of free, prior and informed consent around extractive industries, and demands to be full participants in poverty action plans.
- Improving access to justice, ensuring that existing laws are understood and implemented; this was particularly notable in gender justice efforts to address violence against women.
- Legal or policy reform, addressing a range of laws that affect women’s rights such as family law, personal status, nationality, and/or domestic violence laws in Africa; policy reform strategies related to provision of essential services; and some success in promoting more pro-poor national agricultural policy.
- More proactively accessing positions of political power and preparing candidates with appropriate political analysis.
- Strengthening evidence-based advocacy and empowering communities to gather that evidence.
- Mobilizing national and international support to fight government attempts to curtail civil society space, as in Zimbabwe and Cambodia.

Particularly in the case of Gender Justice, the effectiveness and reach of these efforts has been fostered and improved by **regional or cross national programs with a strong learning component**, such as the Women’s Learning Partnership, the Raising Her Voice Program, support for the Solidarity for African Women’s Rights (SOAWR) coalition, and the Women’s Training and Empowerment for New Citizenship Program in South America.

Despite commitments in the strategic plan, from the evaluations reviewed, there is **limited evidence of efforts to work with or influence private sector actors**, the big exceptions being the Behind the Brands Campaign and work around extractive industries targeted at corporations, as well as some work with small and medium enterprises under Sustainable Food. Likewise, there is limited evidence of Oxfam's attempts to reform the broader humanitarian system, although again this may be an artifact of the evaluations reviewed. A number of those evaluations do note better levels of coordination with other humanitarian actors in emergency response.

While Oxfam is supporting much more influencing work at the national level, work remains to be done on **articulation of a holistic model** that integrates influencing from global to local and vice versa. A key issue that came up in all the change goals was the fact that leveraging **policy change at one level** (e.g. ratification of a human rights instrument) **doesn't necessarily translate to change at another level** (e.g. the national level). Likewise local efforts to address VAW or high risk of disaster cannot be sustained and expand without an enabling policy environment. One program that tackled this issue directly was the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) coalition that sought ratification at the national level of the regionally agreed upon African Protocol on Women's Rights *and* its "domestication" through reform or passage of laws that would make the protocol the law of the land. Likewise, with GROW's focus on both national agricultural policy and corporate practices at the country level, Oxfam has sought to translate general support for sustainable agriculture and corporate social responsibility into on-the-ground policy and practice changes with direct impacts on producers' lives, with some success. **This seems to be most effective when a program articulates specific objectives to address the translation challenge as an integral part of the design.** There are also lessons to be learned about building up change from the local level to national and regional levels from Oxfam's work on DRR in several countries and regions; women's rights efforts in the MENA region and South America; and Oxfam Australia's and America's work on extractive industries.

Relevance of the one program approach (OPA): re-examining it in practical terms

As discussed in Oxfam Program Standards, Oxfam's ability to achieve greatest impact:

"...lies in our ability to link long-term development programs, campaigning and advocacy at local, national and/or international levels, and humanitarian assistance and protection in rapid onset and chronic emergencies, as well as effective disaster risk reduction and preparedness work in order to support and preserve development and policy gains." (Program Standard 5)

Fewer than 15 percent of the evaluations mentioned the one program approach and those that did **demonstrated a poor understanding of the concept**. The one program approach was generally understood as a program or project that included two different types of interventions (often development projects combined with some influencing) or was understood as a program that had multiple, well-integrated components (e.g. a leadership program that includes training, exchanges, direct advocacy, etc.) **The projects that most closely embodied the OPA** in practice, without necessarily analyzing it in the evaluations, **were disaster risk reduction projects** that generally combined work with local authorities, livelihood resilience strategies and disaster preparedness. A number of Sustainable Food projects concerned themselves with resilience, both from a technical (e.g. resistant crops) and a livelihoods perspective (ensuring poor rural households were better placed to counter shocks without losing their assets), addressing two out of three elements of the one program approach.

The exception was Oxfam Italy that invoked the one program approach in its design and implementation of its emergency work in Syria (and more broadly its approach of working on other themes), where it combined emergency response with development projects, in part because local authorities (politicians) pressed for longer-term investments that served both refugees and the host communities. It also advocated more broadly in the humanitarian sector for the efficacy and effectiveness of making the investment in local government capacity. Similarly, an Afghanistan peace building effort was a conscious collaboration with the RIC team and the Afghanistan national office, focused on ensuring women's participation in the peace process through behind-the-scenes advocacy and positioning of women activists – seen as essential for creating an enabling context for peace, women's rights, and development.

Progress on placing women “at the heart of all we do,” but stronger focus on the range of women's rights is needed

As compared to the review of the previous strategic plan, there is **evidence of a significantly greater focus on women, particularly women's participation**, which, while important, is only one aspect of greater gender equality. Of the change goals, the **Gender Justice programs** evaluated are more **explicitly interested in promoting a range of women's rights** and in **addressing** inequities and **power imbalances**. Under **Sustainable Food the majority of programs reviewed targeted women farmers or women-headed rural households**, with a number of them demonstrating good gender analysis and documenting solid evidence of advances for women, from greater decision-making and bargaining power, to access to and use of labor saving technology, such as an Oxfam Canada program in Ethiopia where numeracy and literacy training improved women's bargaining power with buyers and eligibility for formal leadership positions. The **focus on women is much less consistent in other change goals**. There are a number of strong examples, but the majority have weak or non-existent gender analysis, although usually there is, at least, some minimal level of gender awareness. There is, for example, somewhat greater consistency in collecting gender disaggregated data, especially in humanitarian programs, but this is still an area of weakness.

Linked perhaps to the stronger focus on influencing, many evaluations document increased engagement in the public sphere by women, although there is much less information regarding how substantive that engagement is and whether it transforms gender dynamics in meaningful ways. There are **relatively few evaluations that look at changes at the household level**, almost all of them Oxfam GB effectiveness reviews, and those that do often find little or very modest changes in household decision-making or control of assets, although there are exceptions, such as an Oxfam GB sustainable livelihoods project in Malawi where women are more likely to play the main role in household cash management due to program interventions. There are also encouraging instances of Oxfam staff making a significant effort to address gender and promote women's rights in programs that show deficiencies in this area. Oxfam affiliates in Ethiopia conducted an assessment of its 2011-2012 drought response using the Gender in Emergencies (GiE index) to assess its own performance and that of a couple of key partners. A Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit (HIT) evaluation of an emergency program in Mali indicated that Oxfam staff made “notable efforts” to promote gender equality in both service delivery and in its advocacy content, including redoubling efforts to educate the community on the benefits of women's control of cash transfers and ensuring that cash transfers went to women.

Oxfam not maximizing its potential to add value

A relatively small number of evaluations *explicitly* discussed Oxfam's value-added, much less evaluated it (an exception is an Oxfam India evaluation on VAW in which partners

scored Oxfam along seven dimensions), but it was either explicitly or implicitly addressed in up to a third of evaluations. **Oxfam is widely recognized for its expertise in emergency response and in advocacy and campaigning.** The evaluations highlighted **an organization that can operate in diverse contexts, can adapt** to dynamic circumstances, but stays focused on its objectives. It is seen as **expert in key policy issues and valued for the coaching it provides** both CSOs and government officials, especially those involved in negotiations at the international level. Oxfam's capacity to work well with others seems to have evolved, although there were some **criticisms of Oxfam being too domineering at the national level in a few cases.** There was, however, limited evidence of collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. academic institutions, private sector, peer international organizations) beyond partners and traditional allies. **Partners and allies clearly want more from Oxfam,** especially in terms of exchange and learning opportunities. Further, there were **some pointed criticisms** of Oxfam's consultative practice, its coordinating capacity, and/or oversight of projects – often in situations in which it appeared Oxfam was over-stretched or otherwise not in a position to fully support partners and other collaborators. This seemed to occur often enough to suggest that institutional, as well as situational, factors are at play that warrant some reflection. It should be noted that there were a number of evaluations that highlighted “Oxfam at its best” that offer important lessons.

The unrecognized importance of capacity building in Oxfam-funded projects and programs

One thing that emerged from the review is the **frequency that capacity building is an element of Oxfam's influencing strategies.** The evaluations document a wide range of capacity building efforts – on women's leadership, education on legal rights, agricultural and marketing techniques, development of DRR capacity, capacity building for local authorities on a range of issues, enhancement of advocacy capacity of organizations, networks and movements. However, **only a few evaluations explicitly assess capacity building efforts** (e.g. institutional capacity building in Guatemala and Zimbabwe, a survey to assess the impact of Access to Justice trainings in the Middle East, evaluations of DRR interventions that employ and assess the utility of the participatory assets and vulnerabilities framework; and frequency of and results from adoption of new agriculture practices after training). This may warrant more attention, especially as a number of evaluations identify deficiencies in training such as inadequate curriculum, insufficient duration or one-off trainings, quality of training using the training of trainers model, and lack of follow-up.

2.3 Challenges to achieving more

Ambition - capacity mismatch. Numerous evaluations noted that projects/programs failed to meet their ambitious goals – this was evident in agricultural programs, water systems projects, RTBH efforts, and some humanitarian projects, amongst others. Reasons varied, but common factors were overly ambitious goals, lack of understanding or underestimation of contextual difficulties and risks, implementation and capacity problems on the part of partners, and problems with Oxfam coordination, management and/or oversight. While many humanitarian projects met their beneficiary targets and delivered high quality technical services, they still fell short on gender mainstreaming, community participation, contingency planning, and/or integrating advocacy into the response.

Inadequate scale and duration of investment. While a finding in many evaluations was that Oxfam got significant results from its funding, in others under-investment was identified as an issue. For example, the mid-term evaluation of the GROW campaign

found that key inhibiting factors included the rapid thematic shifts during the campaign and the lack of resources, both human and financial, to support ambitious targets. Again, this took a variety of forms from spreading limited funding across too many organizations, to under-investing in:

- Capacity building
- Agricultural inputs (e.g. funding for only a few fruit trees per farm, not enough to make an appreciable difference in household income),
- Exchange and linking and learning activities,
- Oxfam staffing, technical and organizational support, and
- Coordination, particularly in multi-country initiatives that failed to fully capitalize on potential synergies.

The ‘translation’ problem. Many programs are quite successful, up to a point, but then falter when change in one domain or level doesn’t deliver or ‘translate’ to subsequent expected changes. A number of gender-focused program evaluations, based on surveys at the household level, found that support of individual empowerment seemed to translate into greater engagement in the public arena, but not to greater equality in decision-making at the household level. Other evaluations of programs targeting the knowledge, attitudes and practices of men did register changes in knowledge and attitudes, but found limited changes in individual practices, much less systemic changes at the institutional level. Likewise, programs targeting youth have tried to address the barriers limiting their ability to influence change, yet, while these programs have had a catalyzing effect on young activists, they have not significantly contributed to activists delivering lasting and significant change. This also affects progress with WIN, as noted above. This happens enough that this might be considered a program “knot” that challenges some basic elements of program theory of change and requires some concerted thinking and cross-case comparison.

Uneven attention to sustainability. On the one hand, concerns about sustainability have shaped Oxfam programming:

- Oxfam’s rights-based focus where it is supporting both citizens’ capacity to hold duty-bearers to account and governments’ capacity and motivation to respond, is informed by a desire to promote sustainable change (and consequently reduce the role of INGOs in development and humanitarian programs).
- Likewise, Oxfam’s increased focus on DRR and issues of resilience and diversified livelihood strategies is also informed by a desire to promote sustainable development in contexts of increasingly strained natural resources;
- The focus on moving producers up the value chain and enhancing their negotiating power through organizing so that more income stays at the community level is also meant to contribute to greater self-sustaining economic growth.

On the other hand,

- To get to the point of responsive government is a long-term proposition and a key barrier for local governments is **often lack of financing**. For example, most of the water system projects fell well short of their targets due, in significant part, to lack of financing; and in India, with the closeout of a VAW program, it was likely that response centers in police stations initially funded by Oxfam were going to close once Oxfam funding ended. At the same time, Oxfam-supported projects on the government budgets tend to focus on budget monitoring and advocacy around the application of existing revenue, with no advocacy attention given to identifying new sources of revenue or revenue collection.

- Grants that intended to leave **installed capacity** through capacity building efforts, faced **issues of appropriate content, quality control** (particularly in training of trainers), turnover in CSOs and governments, and **lack of follow-up** to reinforce the capacity building.
- Actual results from funding in Sustainable Food Systems show weaknesses in terms of applying best practices in production activities, generating income as a result of better market access and value-added production, and course correction based on monitoring.
- Finally, Oxfam appears to **pay episodic and limited attention to the financial sustainability of its partners**, prioritizing the issue only as part of its exit strategy, if then.

Lack of attention to cost-effectiveness. Oxfam's cost-effectiveness is **rarely adequately addressed** in evaluations. When it is considered, it is **often superficial and there is no uniformity in how this is approached**. While it appears that funds are generally well managed (timely disbursement, projects implemented activities within reasonable time frames and within budget parameters, etc.), evaluations of projects and programs rarely examine in any detail whether their investment choices were good ones and delivered expected outcomes at reasonable cost. Only a handful of evaluations dedicate more than a few paragraphs to any kind of budget or cost-effectiveness analysis and share their analysis in detail. Given this situation, obviously Oxfam is in no position to make judgments about the relative payoff on investments across projects, programs or geographies.

Siloed thinking and limited cross-fertilization. It is evident from this review that Oxfam is supporting a lot of interesting work and that different parts of Oxfam can make significant progress in improving performance when it is intentional about it. As it is, progress tends to lodge in change goal pockets, occasionally permeating a change goal (as in the shared gender transformative framework widely used in the gender justice work), but rarely informing other change goals. The benefit of overcoming these siloes and building on each other's good practice is examined in section 2.7 (p.17).

At the same time, there is a **good deal of overlap in the change goals**, judging by the large number of evaluations that were categorized under one change goal, but could just have easily been categorized under one or even two others. This suggests that there is a **process of convergence going** on that is not yet reflected in how Oxfam talks about or categorizes its work and may mean that Oxfam isn't fully capitalizing on potential synergies. At the same time, other key issues have had trouble finding a home, most notably climate change, which has been prioritized by Oxfam at different points, but appears episodically in several change goals.

2.4 Oxfam is getting results, but is it having an impact?

As discussed above, the change goal chapters that follow document a range of results from individual empowerment, to greater engagement in public spaces, to policy advances at the global, national and local levels, increased preparation and resilience in the face of disasters, and positive livelihoods outcomes. **The weight of evidence makes a plausible case that Oxfam interventions are making a difference**, although perhaps not always to the scale or degree, or within the timeframe, originally envisaged. However, the ability to talk about the degree to which Oxfam has advanced on its 2019 expected impacts remains elusive for a number of reasons. Five of the most important are 1) Programs still **do not systematically establish a baseline**, either a quantitative one or a narrative of initial conditions (for example for an advocacy effort), and consequently it was difficult to establish the degree of change over time.¹¹ 2) Evaluations often **don't**

document the reach of the program and whether a program met targets or addressed a significant proportion of those in need, with the exception of Saving Lives and to a lesser degree Sustainable Food Systems. 3) Evaluations often **focus on outputs and short-term outcomes** – number of people in a cash for work program, number of participants in a training, number of women on local councils – without examining second order outcomes (e.g. what people did with the cash and whether the cash stimulated the local economy; how people applied the training; whether council decisions changed after women joined). 4) **More supporting evidence is often needed to confirm findings.** There are some fairly common weaknesses in evaluations – consulting with a limited range of stakeholders, failure to explicitly consider alternative explanations of change (e.g. other actors, contextual factors), and/or data collection marred by a range of methodological shortcomings – that can lead to challenges to accuracy and validity of findings. 5) Very **few evaluations actually look at the community, much less the household levels** in a systematic way. Those that do (e.g. OBG effectiveness reviews under various change goals, Oxfam India endline evaluation of VAW programs), tend to find mixed and often not terribly strong results. In some cases, this may be a timing issue (too soon to see some impacts), in others this can be partially attributed to implementation problems, but in others may represent theory of change problems. Tackling these five points requires some changes in practice that can be achieved without significant resource implications (e.g. integrate M&E planning into the program planning process). Other things, such as measuring outcomes in the medium to long term or at the level of the household, require strategic decisions about how M&E funds should be spent.

2.5 Conclusions

Since the sense making exercise of affiliate evaluations under the last strategic plan, completed in 2012, Oxfam has conducted significantly more evaluations that, on the whole, are of reasonable to good quality. The strategic plan appears to be providing adequate guidance for funding priorities and evaluations indicate that Oxfam is investing in most of the commitments embodied in the plan. The one change goal that warrants serious review is Fair Sharing of Natural Resources both conceptually and practically, given the breadth of that change goal, the relatively limited programming (if the proportion of evaluations is any indicator), and the fact that several of the evaluations could easily have been accommodated under other change goals.

Oxfam continues to mature as a rights-based organization, has strengthened and expanded its influencing efforts at the national level, continues to build the capacity of civil society actors to hold duty bearers to account and increasingly supports duty-bearers to develop the capacity to respond, and has advanced considerably in promoting women's participation and engagement, although more work needs to be done on gender equality. Oxfam supports complex, systemic change under difficult circumstances and many of the challenges it faces stem from this fact. A combination of scaling back ambition, investing more in planning shaped by a solid theory of change, adopting more realistic time frames, and making more sustained investments that consolidate capacity-building gains, promote deeper learning, and enhance coordination would address many critiques. All this means a labor-intensive approach that Oxfam must consider when allocating its own resources and making its case for cost-effectiveness with others.

2.6 Recommendations

Big picture

- Although there are a number of years left under the current plan, it may be worth beginning discussions on **whether these change goals are still the best ones for**

Oxfam. As mentioned, there seems to be a lot of overlap between change goals and maybe new configurations make sense.

- The **one program approach** is a core standard and something of an article of faith at Oxfam, yet it **does not seem to have been fully embraced in practice**, with a few notable exceptions. This either doesn't matter or Oxfam is missing synergies – in any event this might be an issue Oxfam wants to examine more through a structured set of evaluations and case studies.
- Oxfam's **uneven ability to manage external relations**, especially with partners, affects both program quality and potentially the Oxfam brand. Oxfam should pay more attention to how it wants partners to experience the relationship, be more intentional on delivering consistent added value, and more routinely solicit honest feedback from a wider range of stakeholders in its evaluations and through other mechanisms.

Practical Program Considerations

- Oxfam might **consider tackling a limited set of recurring program knots** that evaluations highlighted, as it has demonstrated in different ways that when it sets about addressing challenges with intentionality, it often makes significant progress. Among those are the “translation problem” (getting a better handle on getting change in all the domains/levels necessary to realize rights); further mainstreaming gender in all change goals, getting beyond increased participation to meaningful change in power relations; and targeting consistent weaknesses revealed in Saving Lives indices.
- As an organization committed to **being more than a funder**, **Oxfam needs to** engage more consistently and think more strategically about each component of the program cycle (planning, implementation, embedded M&E) and **invest time, funds and human resources to deliver** on that commitment, especially for struggling or at-risk partners or those engaged in complex, collaborative endeavors or coalitions.
- Continue to build on the quality and **increase the consistency of monitoring and evaluation practice**. Lessons can be learned from Saving Lives in terms of developing, widely adopting, applying, and analyzing results from shared standards and indices.
- Improve evaluation use with **better knowledge management of evaluation results**, beginning with facilitating internal access to all evaluations and proactive sharing of strong evaluations and/or programs.

2.7 Implications of this exercise for learning, accountability, and impact

Potential of cross-change goal learning for greater impact

This report cannot begin to do justice to the content and lessons found in the evaluations and what they represent in terms of Oxfam's and partners' commitment to finding ways forward to deal with the complex political and practical issues in their daily work. **One of Oxfam's currencies is knowledge** and we want to highlight that Oxfam is significantly under-exploiting a wealth of knowledge and experience. There is **enormous potential for capitalizing on this knowledge, improving program quality, and contributing to the sector** through in-depth, cross-program, cross-change goal reviews, discussions, and peer learning. For example:

- Programs in **Right to Be Heard** have gained **significant experience with advocacy in restricted political contexts that is worth sharing more broadly**. They also grapple with how to ensure that policy victories translate into change in

people's lives. The latter is an issue across change goals, where some inroads have been made, which usefully can be explored.

- Many of the programs under **Gender Justice** are shaped by a **sophisticated conceptual framework** that looks at formal and informal, and individual and systemic factors that perpetuate inequality and power differentials between men and women, and guide programs to push for transformative change. It is a framework that not only can be applied to gender relations, but also incorporate other characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, etc. that make up each individual's identity. **As Oxfam ramps up its work on inequality, the groundwork the Gender Justice team has done may be quite useful.** At the same time, evaluations confirm that transformative change is complex and getting from change in attitudes and beliefs (of both men and women) to changes in practice and institutions is not straightforward. Oxfam should closely examine those programs in which change in both individual and institutional change has occurred in this and other change goals, including the Sustainable Food Systems programs that made the most inroads in advancing women's rights.
- In **Saving Lives**, Oxfam has made **significant advances in working with local authorities** on both DRR and to a lesser, but important degree in emergency response. This is an area where local authorities tend to be motivated to engage with CSOs, **potentially creating openings for advocacy around other issues**, suggesting the merit of cross-change goal collaboration to move strategic agendas forward at the country level. Although there has been some progress on **gender mainstreaming, this remains an area of weakness.** Certainly evaluations (and experiences) that have **tackled this in a concerted way**, such as one that applied the Gender in Emergencies Index to a response in Ethiopia, **should be widely shared and replicated.**
- In **Sustainable Food Systems** work, many evaluations show gains in productivity and/or greater resilience and Oxfam programs have shown progress in targeting women and increasing their participation, an important benchmark in promoting women's rights. **Learning from the GJ and DRR experiences would likely reinforce this work and vice versa.** The evaluations reveal a troublesome **shortfall** in that few programs seem to result in improved positions in the value chain or significantly **increased income and assets.** Here is an area where **greater engagement with those outside** of Oxfam (e.g. research centers, other international and local specialist NGOs) might usefully inform Oxfam's work.
- In both **Financing for Development** and some programs in **Fair Sharing of Natural Resources**, a key element of sustainability is ensuring that governments assume their responsibilities for service delivery and protection of natural resources. Evaluations demonstrate the complexity of working with local authorities where **revenue gaps are pervasive and impede progress.** Because this has been a relatively limited area of work, within-Oxfam **learning may usefully be supplemented with greater outreach and commissioned research.**

Work of MEL colleagues moving forward

This exercise also serves as a kind of baseline on accessibility, quantity, and quality of Oxfam evaluations, as over the same period that is covered by this exercise, MEL colleagues across the confederation have worked hard to put building blocks in place in order to improve our evaluations. In mid-2014, we finalized **operational guidance** to support teams in countries and regions in compliance with the **Policy of Program Evaluation.** As one key aspect of that guidance, the new **Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT)**, which we pilot-tested in this review, will help us to track evaluation quality issues more closely. More work needs to be done to disseminate the

guidance and support program teams to ensure monitoring the EQAT becomes a standard part of our practice.

During the last quarter of 2014, MEL colleagues began to implement **Common Approach to MEL and Social Accountability (CAMSA)** through regional workshops designed to **socialize MEL minimum requirements** and promote the development of plans to improve our overall MEL work. As this exercise reveals, Oxfam colleagues continue to struggle with some fundamental problems, such as putting baselines in place, monitoring program and project implementation, and the over reliance on either purely qualitative or quantitative methodologies. With **CAMSA** (scheduled to be implemented over the course of the OSP), teams should be able to **address some of these persistent challenges**. Methodical work over time, combined with close accompaniment from MEL colleagues, will focus our efforts on the key necessary improvements.

Currently, Oxfam's confederation-wide **output reporting** exercise (carried out as part of our work to evaluate the OSP) allows us to **speak about the reach of our programs and projects**. This has to be clearly linked to our evaluation efforts so we routinely know how many people and communities Oxfam reaches *and* the outcomes of that engagement. In addition, MEL and program colleagues have formed teams around the outcome areas to develop **common frameworks to report on indicative outcome areas** (with shared key questions and agreed methodologies) that will pave the way for Oxfam to **carry out some cross-program analyses**, per change goal. An exercise of this nature will be a first for Oxfam; its significance should not be underestimated.

With this review and the operational steps Oxfam has taken to improve both MEL and program quality over the last two years, we believe Oxfam has a solid foundation for continuing to move forward. The next evaluations review will help Oxfam assess progress in two years.

3 ANALYSIS OF EVALUATIONS BY CHANGE GOAL

3.1 Change Goal 1: Right To Be Heard

Preamble

Oxfam's expected impact by 2019

More women, young people and other poor and marginalized people will exercise civil and political rights to influence decision-making by engaging with governments and by holding governments and businesses accountable to respect their rights.

To achieve this impact Oxfam committed to:

Organizing civil society

- Organize to persuade governments to lift restrictive laws that deny civil and political rights and to engage constructively with civil society
- Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to self-organize around the priorities of poor and marginalized people (in particular women and youth) in both rural and urban settings
- Work with youth, women's and indigenous people's organizations, recognizing and supporting their own ways of expression and organization

Access to information and technology

- Use the disclosure policies and laws that guarantee right to information and revenue transparency to enhance the transparency of governments and companies
- Use digital communication and social media to make information more accessible and understandable to poor and marginalized groups – especially women and youth – so that they can generate and share their own information, ideas and opinions (citizens' reporting)
- Enhance access to the information that is needed by poor people to participate in decision-making and to persevere in the event of shocks, stresses and uncertainty (such as early warning, weather and market information)

Public decision and policy-making spaces

- Encourage women, young and indigenous people and other vulnerable people to influence and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, and to strive for political leadership
- Promote social accountability tools such as participatory monitoring of government income and expenditure to monitor and influence public decisions and to ensure that poor people benefit from revenue flows, including from extractive industries
- Enhancing public participation and accountability is especially relevant for policies on revenue collection/ taxation and therefore directly connected with the goal on financing for development

Access to justice

- Support legal aid, rights awareness and public litigation initiatives that primarily benefit women who are marginalized from usual legal systems; use legal strategies to enable civil society to use the law to uphold the human rights of poor and marginalized people

Global citizenship

- Encourage Oxfam supporters to act as global active citizens through personal choices and actions - as consumers of energy and food, through Fair Trade products, as political constituents regarding aid, social justice, transparency and accountability; and through their actions as employees and employers
- Support organizations of poor and excluded people (in particular women and youth organizations and networks) to link with other organizations and activists to learn from each other and collaborate on joint campaigns for people's participation, civic awareness about global challenges and pro-poor policies
- Support the most vulnerable to participate in processes and debates that identify and manage risks and uncertainty

Description of the evaluations reviewed

This analysis has entailed the review of 19 evaluations commissioned by four affiliates.¹² Evaluations reviewed cover Oxfam programs and campaigns in nine countries¹³, three regions (pan Africa; Middle East - Maghreb and East Asia & Pacific) and worldwide. They represent a variety of exercises: outcome and process evaluations; retrospective studies; key informant and literature reviews; formative evaluations; and organizational evaluations. All of them are external evaluations¹⁴.

Quality of the Evidence

Most of the evaluations used standard methodological tools – literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, workshops and/or surveys. A third of them used both qualitative and quantitative methods. None used control or comparison groups and only two established baseline data, and only a few specified the number of beneficiaries targeted or reached. A third of them explicitly analyzed the programs theory of change, and only four attempted an analysis of cost-effectiveness, of which only two made (positive) definitive judgments. Only one, using a combination of Process Tracing and Outcome Harvesting, considered alternative explanations for program outcomes, other than the program. Evaluations under this change goal were much more likely to formally obtain consent from respondents and the use of validation workshops was frequent to discuss preliminary findings. The nature of the programs in Right To Be Heard (RTBH) – dealing with high level goals such as governance, accountability, peace-building and/or active citizenship; involving multiple stakeholders; with some programs covering several countries – presents a number of evaluative challenges. Judging from the volunteer reviews, work needs to be done to meet those challenges; however, the conclusions drawn from the vast majority were clearly informed by the available evidence.

3.1.1 Do the evaluations make a case that Oxfam has made a difference?

Achievements identified

Accountability is at the heart of the RTBH change goal's work and all but two evaluations directly address it. All in all, communities have been actively engaged in designing programs as well as in implementation, so that local ownership has prevailed. As a whole, Oxfam supports partners who are responsible and transparent in their resource management and use or are striving to improve the use of consultative and participatory processes with their stakeholders. **Influencing is both a strategy and a goal** and present in virtually all of the evaluations. A number of programs have approached influencing effectively through building the understanding and capacity of community members to **engage proactively on their own behalf**. These have also often reduced the gap between rights holders and duty bearers by *"bringing policy makers to*

the communities and getting communities to the corridors of power” (Anthony, 2013a, p. 30).

Other strategies employed, in Cambodia, Afghanistan and by Adalah in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), have been the establishment of **multi-stakeholder platforms** and solid **local to global networking**, with strong **visibility** strategies based on publications, participation in conferences and/or seminars, and a nuanced understanding of the national and international media. In Laos, the Land Issues Working Group (LIWG), a platform of national and international NGOs that grew from 88 to 171 members, used this mix of approaches to get to the table in negotiations on national land policy and, while the weight of its influence is hard to ascertain, its ability to position civil society in a policy debate was unprecedented (Kammanichanh and Philpott, 2013).

For most of the projects reviewed, influencing has been undertaken in extremely challenging contexts, where engaging in civic rights is **not without risk**. Evaluators repeatedly refer to the **closing of civil society space** (in Zimbabwe, Cambodia, Tunisia and Egypt for instance), with **religious fundamentalism** and emerging **political conservatism** endangering human rights gains, especially women’s. Often CSOs have to interpret and navigate contradictory signals. An evaluation of a women’s rights coalition in Africa comments, *“While we are seeing more legislation to enhance women’s rights, we are also seeing new legislation that seeks to criminalise and control women’s sexuality and their bodies. This ambivalent give-and-take is increasingly defining the legal and policy arena on women’s rights in Africa”* (Maina Ayiera, 2013, p. 34).

In these circumstances, Oxfam seeks to promote civic rights mostly by supporting **local civil society organizations** (CSOs) that are generally playing a critical role and are described as having significant leverage, and are courageous, innovative and risk-taking. For example, Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), an Oxfam Novib partner in Afghanistan, operating in a context of entrenched violence, has managed *“inspirational achievements”*, including delivering quality research that has helped shape policy at national and international level (Fidelity Consultancy Services, 2012, p. 6).

One of the recurring strategies Oxfam has pursued to promote citizen participation is **budget monitoring and expenditure tracking**. Programs have helped convene diverse civil society agendas on the issue of financing and delivery of basic services. For example, in Zimbabwe a platform of 19 organizations drew membership from people with disabilities, business, church, residents associations, and women, children and youth pressure groups (those most at risk or vulnerable) to engage with local authorities and *“speak with amplified voices on issues of common interest”* (Anthony, 2013b, p.31). This strategy, employed in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, has helped bridge the gap between duty-bearers and right-holders *“who in the past treated each other as adversaries,”* allowing for a more meaningful engagement on issues such as **service delivery** – cleaning and refuse collection, sewage, water supply and other social services (p. 31).

Oxfam regularly supports **access to information** programs. The strategic relevance of such an approach varies hugely from country to country depending on the quality and diversity of media; the use of social media and internet; access to and use of public information; the independence of the judiciary, and transparency of government budgeting and spending, according to the evaluation of the Solidarity for African Women’s Rights coalition. Where **political factors** largely **deny people effective access to information**, *“strategic litigation on Freedom of Information, finding informal sources, and ‘bottom-up monitoring’ is one of the few ways in which opposition can be effective in exposing what is actually happening”* (Nexus Research Cooperative, 2013, p. 44). The access to information approach can critically contribute to *“widespread mobilization*

during times of rapid, even revolutionary, change, which is where information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new media have gained high profile” (p. 44). In contrast, in times of relative stability, this approach can also help address **endemic** corporate and government **corruption**, with extractive industries being the archetypical example – for instance by reinforcing inter-governmental agreements combined with community based impact monitoring. Finally, it can play a potentially significant role in encouraging and facilitating the active and informed **participation of marginalized groups** in the political process, including prevention of voter fraud and electoral violence, and broader governance issues.

Access to justice has been used as leverage for citizens’ rights in deeply feudal and patriarchal settings, such as in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region and Afghanistan or in countries with a tragic human rights record, such as Cambodia. Through a combination of legal awareness, legal counsel and representation, projects in the MENA region have been instrumental in improving the use of legal services by women, with more women accessing courts and believing that resorting to court allows them to access their rights (Oxfam GB, 2014). Positive changes have occurred at the institutional level too – with an increased understanding of family law by women and better knowledge of CEDAW¹⁵ among courts officials, with some exceptions – but these changes have been more modest (Oxfam GB, 2014a). In Afghanistan, communities have been trained in peaceful conflict resolution, and are self-managing conflicts and successfully avoiding their escalation into open violence through district Peace Councils, which are widely recognized “as being the most effective community institutions elected and drawn from a wide diversity of the communities they represent,” (Fidelity Consultancy Services, 2012, p. 6). In this case not only have councils helped regain stability and ensure peace, but also are changing beliefs and practices too – for example, the use of corporal punishment in schools has disappeared. In Cambodia, partners have successfully encouraged several thousand civilians (many from rural areas in the most remote provinces of the country) to come forward and have helped them engage meaningfully in the trials and justice restitution from Khmer Rouge officials (Balthazard, 2013).

Work on **Free, Prior and Informed Consent** (FPIC) among CSO and communities has been instrumental in influencing regional and global policy. Based on an evaluation of Oxfam Australia’s work in the Asia Pacific region, this is a theme where **Oxfam’s added value** is evident. “There is evidence Oxfam Australia has made a significant contribution to the global ‘noise’ around FPIC. Stakeholders across all groups agree Oxfam Australia, along with its Oxfam counterparts, has made a substantive contribution to pushing FPIC onto industry, government and civil society agendas over the last three to five years” (Kelly, 2014, p. 12). Among Oxfam Australia’s contributions were **expert advice**, provision of independent expert advisors, and its role as **convener**, enabling civil society participation in engaging in policy change and with the private sector. The work on FPIC is also an area of long standing collaboration between Oxfam Australia and Oxfam America. Because of that long history, they “played an important advocacy role in the background with those Australian and US member companies who then joined the discourse at the International Council of Mining and Metals.” (p. 35).

Some evaluations speak of moderate success of organizations in **restraining government** attempts to pass **laws curtailing NGO space**. In response to proposed legislation in Cambodia, “[c]laimed by the government as a must to increase good governance, transparency and accountability among NGOs, but perceived by these as an attempt to increase public control over the right of citizens to freely organize and express themselves, the approval of LANGO¹⁶ has been delayed until nowadays due to the pressures from Cambodian NGOs and INGOs” (ECODE and CCC, 2012, p. 20). At the

same time, the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia has worked with Cambodia-based NGOs to “*create a more cohesive, accountable and transparent NGO sector, contributing more effectively to the development of Cambodia*” through its Governance Hub Program, so CSOs are positioned to comply or negotiate with government on a more equal footing (p. 19).

An average program employs a combination of activities: **training of partners** (and at times of governmental actors); **lobbying** of local and national **governments** as well as regional **institutions**; **networking**; **litigation** (including legal counseling and representation); and **awareness building** in national and international forums. Capacity building addressed to both rights-holders and duty-bearers seems to generate a range of positive changes. For example, in Tanzania, “*The training was the first time the programme engaged positively with government, rather than supporting citizens in challenging the authorities*” (Smith and Kishekya, 2013, p. 30). This successfully changed beliefs and practices, helped increase transparency and accountability, and also helped combat small-scale corruption and fraud at village and district levels.

Despite Oxfam’s relatively large investment in **capacity building**, there is actually little specific evaluation of the effectiveness of those efforts. Nonetheless certain lessons emerge on what makes training effective: (a) differentiating training according to educational level or experience of recipients; (b) using context-specific and culturally-appropriate training materials; (c) ensuring the inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized groups; (d) carefully targeting trainees; and (e) drawing on local culture and arts to design and animate sessions.

Quite a number of projects have **targeted youth**. Lessons derived from Oxfam Australia’s International Youth Partnerships global program have helped Oxfam understand the **circumstances** in which youth evolve and the **barriers** they may face when **trying to influence change**. This includes their lack of access to decision-makers; their relative lack of experience and knowledge of the broader political, economic and social context in which they are operating; and the pressure to choose between continuing their work for social change or securing their livelihoods through formal work. While programs have **successfully acted as catalysts** for young activists, they have **not significantly contributed** to activists delivering **lasting, significant change** in their communities. This work has nonetheless revealed the critical importance of **personal empowerment**, a precondition for young people to contribute to broader community change. A structured approach to youth empowerment must consider skills and knowledge development, contextually grounded mentoring, and ideally opportunities for engaging with a larger constituency of peers (Oxfam Australia, 2013).¹⁷

Only two of the programs reviewed have women as the key targets, although most projects sought to enhance women’s capacity and create a critical mass of women positioned to play significant roles in their communities and organizations. In peace-building, in particular, women seem to have played a central role (Anthony, 2013b; Fidelity Consultancy Services, 2012; and Raab and Naw, 2013). In terms of **women’s access to justice** in very traditional societies, evaluations highlight that, if changes in women’s agency and spheres of control are to be gained, **men and community leaders** must be engaged, too.¹⁸ In such harsh environments, small steps forward can make a big difference to women’s everyday lives: “*The attitude and behavior of our men have significantly improved towards us. They treat us much better than before and they now allow us to do our own shopping and to go to the adult literacy classes*” (Fidelity Consultancy Services, 2012, p. 21).

Challenges to achieving more

Ensuring that **policy gains transform into positive changes in peoples' lives** is one of the greatest challenges programs are facing: *"The realisation that human rights instruments are only as effective as their implementation, and advocacy for adoption of such instruments must be [followed up] with advocacy strategies for implementation"* (Maina Ayiera, 2013, p. 8). The excitement and focus a policy change effort can rally is apparently harder to sustain when working towards policy implementation. This is a much longer-term and multi-pronged process. Also *"there is more resistance experienced at the point of implementation than at the point of [policy] ratification"* (p. 8). This has sometimes meant waning support precisely at a time when such support is deemed most critical since it must confront **attitudes, beliefs and cultures**, which are often slow and hard to change.

Likewise, despite Oxfam's long-term investment on training, there is still considerable room for improvement. For instance on the **selection of animators**: *"a lot (too much?) is being expected of those with little or no education. Being able to facilitate, lead, take the initiative and respond with resilience when one person in authority does not yield to your demands, requires people with a reasonable level of education"* (Smith and Kishekya, 2013, p. 47). At times, trainings have not been up to par, being mainly **academic**, with scarce attention paid to *"demonstrate and reinforce democratic participation"* or to *"stimulate thinking and debate among participants"* (Raab and Naw, 2013, p. 20). Above all, a key challenge has been **sustainability**: how can participants be supported so that training induced changes become lasting transformations?

Budget monitoring work has tended to focus on **application of revenue** with little or no attention given to **sources of revenue and revenue collection**, which is a significant oversight when governments repeatedly fail to meet their obligations at the local and national levels because of lack of revenue. While **FPIC** has been used to promote community rights, *"stakeholders point out the **significant challenges CSOs face, including political sensitivities, corruption and weak legal protections**"* (Kelly, 2014, p 40). Moreover **the effectiveness of FPIC for promoting community rights is often limited by a lack of gender analysis** or a failure to engage other marginalized groups (e.g. youth, people with disabilities), which raises questions about accountability.

Overall, **staffing** issues, **weak management** and the challenges derived from working in heavily constrained **contexts have stalled** implementation and affected programming. This can be exacerbated when organizations, operating in top-down, paternalistic contexts, unwittingly replicate the practices of the undemocratic system they are so immersed in. That, in turn, inhibits the capacity of CSOs to promote broad-based empowerment and complicates the process of building coalitions through horizontal linkages (ECODE and CCC, 2012).

Organizations also face **security risks** – harassment, detention, as well as accusations of political partisanship. This can be true in reasonably open systems, as well as more authoritarian ones. In Tanzania, *"There have been cases of false imprisonment and violence directly linked to activities inspired by CH [Chukua Hatua]...[It] is perceived by some local leaders as having the hallmark of opposition party activism"* (Smith and Kishekya, 2013, p. 21). A strongly non-partisan approach can help confront the above to some extent.

While women are very present in many of these programs and are often prioritized among target groups, greater participation or empowerment in public spaces is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for transformational change. One evaluation concedes this point, saying, *"How CIVNET [the partner] take this forward more*

substantially in a way that begins to change power relations constructively is a major challenge" (Anthony, 2013a, p.23). There is a recognition found in a number of evaluations that overall progress on women's rights stemming from active citizenship will only come through continued, relentless and long-term efforts. This includes **tackling** prevailing gender **tokenism**¹⁹ and ensuring state actions – the enactment of laws and policies or the creation of gender or women ministries and departments – are backed by state initiatives such as budgetary allocations, staff support, etc. As one evaluation notes, *"Many of these actions are rendered toothless and used merely as public relations exercises and to make a show of mainstreaming gender without taking any firm measures that would propel transformation"* (Maina Ayiera, 2013, p 21).

3.1.2 Things to Consider about Oxfam's Ways of Working under the RTBH Change Goal

Oxfam's added value

Almost half of evaluations speak about Oxfam's role, although only one – the Oxfam Australia commissioned evaluation – explicitly elaborates on its added value, which was substantial, as noted above. The majority that discuss Oxfam's role refer to **Oxfam Novib**, –unremarkably, given that it is the main funder of the the RTBH change goal – and generally highlight its role as a **funder**, praising its long-term funding commitment, its **hands-off support** and flexibility and its training opportunities. A few evaluations, commissioned by other affiliates, recognized Oxfam as a source of **technical inputs** and as a **facilitator of learning**. Several evaluations suggest that Oxfam could be more engaged, especially when dealing with CSOs that are confronting internal challenges and external risks. An evaluation of a project in Myanmar found that *"the three international funding partners approved the proposal despite its design flaws. Understaffing, delays and deficiencies in implementation went unnoticed for more than a year. None of the three international donors had carried out any monitoring visits to the project, nor had there been any direct contact with the Project Manager"* (Raab and Naw, 2013, p. 25).

Looking across the evaluations, one aspect of Oxfam's added value is the regional and global perspectives and experience it brings to country level work and vice versa. This experience can inform Oxfam's efforts to build a **worldwide influencing network**.

Gender

As noted, women's role is considered to at least some degree in the majority of evaluations and several have strong gender analysis. However, **programs generally did not include stated gender objectives**, and consequently this made evaluation of gender impacts, even if requested in a terms of reference, difficult to assess. Many of the planning and assessment tools used by programs were not gender responsive and managers acknowledged the need to pay greater attention to gender in program design. This meant that basic data, especially gender disaggregated data, was rarely captured. This is a **significant oversight**, considering that women's voices are often silenced, in direct and indirect ways. Good gender analysis can be especially critical in sensitive interventions related to peace building or conflict resolution where one evaluation noted that a keen understanding of the gendered dimensions of conflict is essential (Anthony, 2013b). While limited progress in promoting women's rights may reflect poor understanding of the multi-dimensionality of gender justice and women's rights by some partners (or even many in some settings), it is also a failing on the part of Oxfam, if the issue is not flagged up and addressed in the course of program planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Judging from the evaluations in this change goal, there is **rarely a vision** or assessment of the degree to which right to be heard projects are **advancing women's rights**.

Participation and accountability

Participation and accountability are core values embodied in RTBH projects and programs. In terms of Oxfam's accountability to partners, a little over half of evaluations we reviewed address issues of partnership and of Oxfam's role. A recurring recommendation is for Oxfam to **promote collaboration among its partners**. Linking and learning is proving an extremely effective strategy (as in Oxfam Australia's Free, Prior and Informed Consent program for the Asia Pacific region) but, judging from these evaluations, is not commonly practiced among Oxfams: "*Several global partners reported they would like to see ON(L) take a more proactive approach to promoting networking and knowledge exchange, facilitating better communication between global and national projects*" (Nexus Research Cooperative, p.40). A number of evaluations also called for closer accompaniment by Oxfam. In another critique that extends beyond Oxfam, several projects that supported coalitions or platforms of local, national, and international NGOs noted the tendency of international NGOs to dominate. For example, in the Laos case, "*There had always been a certain tension between the more direct approach of many international members of the LIWG and the more indirect, non-confrontational one of the Lao members. Foreign members tended to dominate meetings, despite efforts to encourage more active Lao participation*" (Khammanichanh and Philpott, 2013, p. 16). This was also noted for efforts in Cambodia (ECODE and CCC, 2012) and Myanmar (Raab and Naw, 2013).

One Program Approach (OPA)

Oxfam's OPA is not explicitly addressed in evaluations – perhaps because the RTBH is so focused on voice/advocacy.²⁰ The one exception was the evaluation of the Oxfam program on free, prior, informed consent. It notes the importance of the program-advocacy link, arguing that "[t]he ways the program connected to other Oxfam programs and initiatives...created crucial synergies that enhanced program effectiveness in achieving progress. Program intersections with other Oxfam initiatives [were] particularly enhanced in the Mekong region due to the large regional program and maturity of partner relationships" (Kelly, 2014, p. 39). It is worth examining existing RTBH funding and asking whether **being more mindful of the potential of linking advocacy, with development programming and/or humanitarian interventions**, including disaster risk reduction (DRR), **would potentially create more openings and opportunities**.

Right to Be Heard's contribution to the Worldwide Influencing Network

As noted above, influencing is a core element of this change goal. It is also a change goal that has a **long history of working at the national level** and often doing so in contexts with limited political space. There are many valuable lessons to be shared about how to **effectively open up and occupy political space and manage risk**. Likewise, Oxfam staff working on this change goal can learn a great deal from the gender justice work and may get some insights on forms of collaboration with government authorities from work on DRR.

3.1.3 Conclusions

Based on the sample of evaluations reviewed, Oxfam appears to be making progress towards all its stated commitments under the OSP:

- **Organizing civil society** by strengthening its capacity to engage duty-bearers. Also tapping on communities' strength and capacities for self-management, particularly in peace building and conflict resolution.

- Furthering people's **right to information** and increasing transparency and accountability of government officials and companies. Also using mechanisms such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent not only to raise communities' awareness on their rights but to influence policy, too. While the use of social media does not appear to be at the heart of programs reviewed it is certainly a key instrument for some partners.
- Helping **women** and victims of human rights abuses **access justice**.
- Encouraging **citizens** to engage in public decision and **policy making** and promoting a culture of **social accountability** among **public servants**. Using, among others, budget monitoring strategies -with an emphasis on public spending rather than revenue-, supervising policy formulation processes and mobilizing for policy implementation.
- **Supporting organizations of vulnerable people**, mostly youth, to link with others, learn from each other's practice and be better able to engage in the struggle for a voice.

Oxfam is pursuing this work where it is needed most, that is, **in contexts facing heavy civil and political restrictions**. However, it should do more to bring out those voices that are often stifled, particularly those of women.

3.1.4 Recommendations

- Flexibility anchored by strong program design: Evaluations note that a success factor is being alert to **opportunistic change** and flexible enough to incorporate it into planning. (ECODE and CCC, 2012; Maina Ayiera, 2013; Oxfam Australia, 2013; and Smith and Kishekya, 2013). *"This flexible, opportunistic approach is, in our view, entirely appropriate because accountability and governance programmes need to be responsive to the opportunities and obstacles that the ever-changing context of their work brings"* (Smith and Kishekya, 2013, p.16). At the same time, that flexibility has to be anchored by strong program design and clarity on outcomes, such as defining "what exactly 'improved capacity' and 'civic engagement' would look like for different target groups" (Raab and Naw, 2013, p. 17).
- Medium to long-term support in the context of collaboration: This is necessary to build up CSO capacity in complex and restricted political contexts. This includes very intentional, persistent and patient action by international agencies in collaborative efforts, so that local CSOs can eventually set and drive their domestic agenda.
- Investments sufficient to build quality programs: Investment in qualified human resources, recognizing the realities of staff turnover and burnout given the risk and demands associated with many of these efforts; adequate investment in capacity building and peer exchanges that replenishes and advances capacity and commitment; and investment in practices and processes of embedded learning are absolutely critical.
- Finally nurturing a supportive environment, including identifying and cultivating responsive public officials has been deemed as significant also.

All in all the most successful programs are those with a strong focus on learning and which have actively promoted **knowledge sharing** between project actors, for instance through Learning Events. Similarly, ways of working that have emphasized **networking and collaboration** have yielded more, as programs in Afghanistan, Israel and the OPT, and Cambodia have shown. Finally, approaches which recognize **others' significant roles** should be much more predominant, such as this effort in Tanzania where *"the programme [was] conceived on the basis that it is one influence among many in a complex landscape of actors and influences that affect citizen and leader attitudes and*

actions relating to accountability and governance of public resources” (Smith and Kishekya, 2013, p. 18).

Going forward specific, practical steps Oxfam can take to enhance its work under this change goal include:

- Ensuring a stronger **focus on women** with program **design that begins by identifying gender-specific outcomes**, supported by clear gender mainstreaming strategies and implementation plans, all of which should be carefully monitored throughout the course of the program.
- **Raising its MEL standards and practice** in RTBH programs.
- Strengthening its investment in **program design**, including a closer interrogation of Theory of Change (ToC) **assumptions** as well as developing evaluation and learning frameworks that will collect meaningful data to assess the ToC.
- Promoting **wider and more in-depth** reviews of the effectiveness of specific strategies – as was done with Oxfam Novib’s Access to Information program (Nexus Research Cooperative, 2013) – and disseminating good practice through, among other things, partner exchanges.
- **Engaging more with a broader range of actors and stakeholders** for greater program effectiveness.

3.2 Change Goal 2: Advancing Gender Justice

Preamble

Oxfam's Expected impact by 2019

More poor and marginalized women will claim and advance their rights through the engagement and leadership of women and their organizations; and violence against women is significantly less socially- acceptable and prevalent.

To achieve this impact Oxfam committed to:

- Core support to women's rights organizations (WROs) to strengthen organizational capacity and sustainability of new or growing movements. We will support alliance-building, including with civil society organizations; skills-building in advocacy and campaigning; risk analysis, transformative leadership and monitoring of complex change.
- Support WROs' access to influence those responsible for advocacy, law reform and implementation and use direct influence of global, regional and national level duty bearers in alliance with WROs; train poor, marginalized and at-risk women to understand their rights, build their capacity to lead and to influence decision-makers; support peer-to- peer learning across women's organizations and civil society organizations; promote leadership and participation of women producers in Oxfam's Fair Trade networks.
- Support research to generate models of support for survivors of gender violence; research and pilot programs that reduce women's care burden; showcase work that transforms gender relations and strengthen the ability of men and boys to promote women's rights and challenge violence against women.
- Promotion of women's agency and transformative leadership across all of Oxfam's work.

Description of Evaluations Reviewed

Twenty evaluations commissioned by seven affiliates were reviewed in detail for this section.²¹ There were 13 country-level studies;²² six were multi-country studies, including two global reviews (Raising Her Voice Program [RHV] and the Women's Learning Partnership), a regional review of RHV in Africa, two reviews of VAW efforts in the Middle East, and a regional review in South America.

Quality of the Evidence

The evaluations spanned the gamut of highly technical quantitative studies (including four that used quasi-experimental design), to highly participatory evaluations, with the preponderance being qualitative using a standard mix of methods (i.e. document review, focus groups, key informant interviews). Several of the more qualitative evaluations provided very detailed documentation of program strategic evolution and primary stakeholders' experience of those programs. These serve **important functions of systematizing complex and diverse experiences** (especially in multi-country, multi-level efforts, when documentation is uneven) and promoting internal learning. There does, however, **tend to be a bias toward the positive in some of these approaches**, especially when respondents/participants are those who have been directly active in the program. This problem can be mitigated when complemented with quantitative data that provide more concrete measures of change (e.g. changes in budget allocations, number of women in elected office, etc.) and/or with a broader range of opinions. These can be gathered through well-designed surveys or by soliciting the views of persons knowledgeable about the relevant program and/or issues it is working on, but not directly

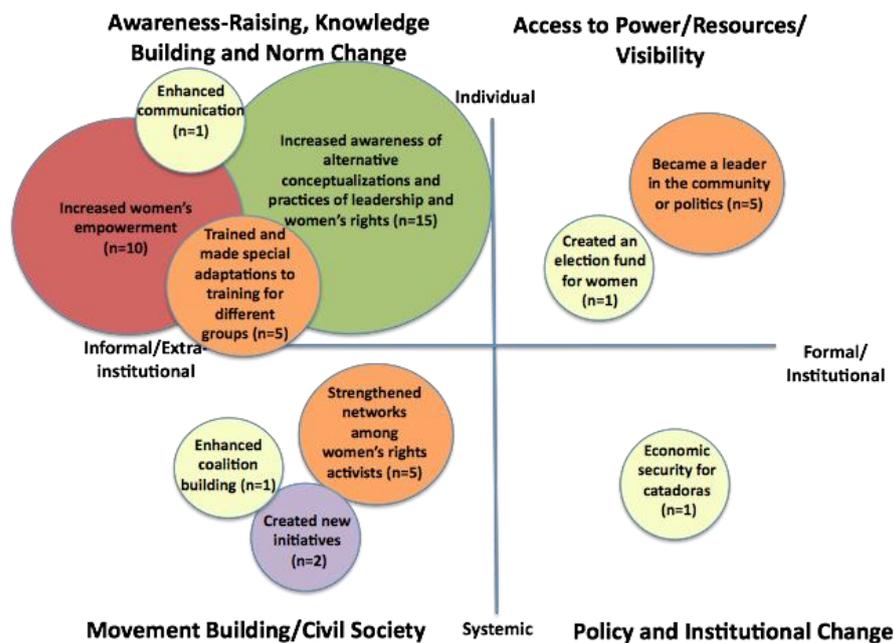
involved in the program. Surveys were in fact used in five of the qualitative evaluations, but were not always well designed.²³ The exception was the evaluation of Oxfam India's program on ending VAW (Oxfam India, 2014), in which a large scale survey was administered, with both baseline and endline data for the project group. Supporting the argument for the utility of surveys is the high quality baseline-endline survey conducted for the Access to Justice Program in the Middle East (Oxfam GB, 2014c). Conversely, the Oxfam GB quantitative evaluations in Sierra Leone and Nigeria would have benefited from a qualitative, more participatory component, as has been recognized by OGB (Bishop and Bowman, 2014). **In about two-thirds of the evaluations, there is an explicit discussion of a theory of change or logic model** that generally incorporate a multi-dimensional approach to gender justice. The evaluations on balance appear to have **been responsibly conducted, drawing reasonable, appropriately qualified conclusions based on the evidence generated.**

3.2.1 Do the evaluations make a case that Oxfam has made a difference?

Achievements Identified

Judging from the evaluations, **Oxfam is more conscious about funding the four dimensions of transformative change** (see Graphic 1, below). Taken as a whole, the evaluations **indicate a high degree of strategic sophistication both conceptually and in practical, operational terms**; in other words, they demonstrate a capacity to put theory into practice. Oxfam's global reach and capacity to work at multiple levels complements and often enriches partners' strategies, regardless of whether those strategies are quite local or include national, regional and/or global interventions.

Figure 4: Four Arenas of Women's Empowerment documenting outcomes from Women's Learning Partnership on the Gender at Work framework.



Source: Pittman [2013], p.20²⁴

Supporting partners to work with communities on individual empowerment and awareness raising remains important, as does Oxfam's long-standing commitment to develop women's leadership capacity. **Many of the evaluations** – drawing from interviews, focus groups, and surveys of program participants and stories of Most Significant Change – **highlight individual accounts of personal empowerment and sense of purpose.** Typical of such comments is one by a Women's Learning Partnership participant – *“When we are talking about leadership, it is a paradigm shift for women; they*

finish the workshop and have new thoughts, new concepts about themselves. They feel strong and are capable of managing and looking at their lives in different ways and not through the traditional definition of leadership” (Pittman, [2013], p. 12) **An interesting complement (and perhaps challenge) to some of these accounts are four quantitative Oxfam GB effectiveness reviews** that utilized detailed household level surveys conducted in Yemen, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria (Oxfam GB, 2012; Oxfam GB, 2014a and 2014b). In each of these studies, empowerment outcomes were considered along numerous dimensions, comparing women who participated in the project with women from comparison communities and households. **When differences were found, they were often only along a few dimensions** and while statistically significant (i.e. can be attributed to the intervention), **the magnitude of difference was often fairly modest**. In particular, a couple of evaluations found that there was no difference between participating and non-participating households on women’s empowerment in terms of decision-making at the household level, although there were some **modest differences in terms of empowerment in the public sphere**. On the one hand, these results might be viewed as somewhat disappointing. On the other, one can argue that they reinforce the knowledge that bringing about transformational change in women’s empowerment and status, particularly at the level of intimate relations that challenge cultural norms, is a long-term process that requires deep, sustained engagement, and an understanding of what contextual factors act as barriers or facilitate change.²⁵ In any event, the exercise of doing large-scale household studies generated granular data that has stimulated extensive conversations with program teams (Bishop and Bowman, 2014).

Several additional things stand out from this review. One is the **broad scale and ambitions of the efforts Oxfam is supporting**. Oxfam GB’s Raising Her Voice Portfolio consists of 17 national projects in 16 countries and two regional grants (Pan Africa and MERCOSUR) (Beardon and Otero, 2013). Oxfam Novib funded the Women’s Learning Partnership for Democracy and Women’s Leadership that supported partners in 17 countries (the vast majority Muslim countries), and involved participants from 27 countries (Pittman, [2013]) It also supports ambitious programs on sexual and reproductive health rights globally, with a strong focus in southern Africa (Singizi Consulting, 2013). Oxfam Intermón funded a regional program working with women’s organizations in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, supporting organizational development and member capacity to promote human rights in their local and national settings and collectively to build a shared agenda and promote peer learning. This program was interesting in that it worked extensively with the concept of the inter-sectionality of rights, explicitly dealing with women’s multiple identities (e.g. based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, rural vs. urban, etc.) (Aliad@s-Centro de Investigación y Promoción Social, 2013). Oxfam Canada’s entire program portfolio, Engendering Change, is women’s rights focused, of which it’s Guatemalan partner Association of Women in Solidarity (AMES), is one example (Amariles Erazo and Lindo Jerez, 2013). One of the things that was valued by partners is the cross-fertilization each of these initiatives allow.

A second characteristic is that **Oxfam’s support of women’s leadership** is not simply an end in itself, but is clearly directed toward **promoting women’s capacity to occupy political space to bring about policy and practice change**, which appears to focus efforts more than general empowerment or leadership development. Strategies include raising the awareness and expertise of women on a range of issues, strengthening the capacity of women’s organizations; fostering national, regional and international coalitions; and developing strategies so women can be active participants in policy spaces. For example, the evaluation of southern African sexual and reproductive rights program found that:

“The HeRWAI [Health Rights for Women Assessment Instrument] and BMET [Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking] processes, in particular, provided the coalitions with a set of processes and tools that allowed for the adoption of a focused and evidence based advocacy strategy in each country. The development of the evidence bases, moreover, considerably strengthened the credibility of the programme, and, as indicated, provided coalitions with an opportunity to engage and lobby government with an enhanced level of confidence” (Singizi Consultancy, 2013, p. 56).

Virtually all the evaluations document **extensive engagement by women with local authorities, ministries and/or elected representatives at the local and national level**. For example, Raising Her Voice in Chile sought to support women political candidates and the program was judged to be important for breaking their isolation, reinforcing their gender analysis, and connecting them with other candidates and supporters in the women’s movement (Oxfam GB, 2013a). In Zimbabwe, under the Combined Oxfam Gender and HIV Program (COGENHA), **a key focus was encouraging collaboration** amongst HIV/AIDS and women’s organizations within geographic clusters to strengthen their advocacy voice, although the evaluation found this was successful in only one of three clusters. In the case of the successful collaboration in Matabeleland, *“The cluster made immediate sense to them as they were institutionalizing what would have been taking place informally already in the field”* (Maposhere, August 2013, p. 11). In Cambodia, the Committee to Promote Women in Politics, **mobilized 562 women activists** (including 140 minority women – Oxfam Novib’s priority group), who helped **address issues of gender-sensitive budgeting, domestic violence, and maternal-child health** (Logarta and Marom, 2013). Oxfam Intermón’s program is an interesting example of developing **an explicit strategy building up from local to national change** – *“What was needed were local initiatives to position and strengthen the rights of women locally, and gradually project their claims to build a national agenda, since, without a local agenda it is very difficult to build and manage an agenda at the national level, much less at a regional level”* (Aliad@s-CIP, 2013, p. 35 [author’s translation]). Reversing the order from regional to local change, the Pan-Africa regional grant of RHV supported a coalition – Solidarity for African Women’s Rights (SOAWR) – **to ensure the ratification and domestication** (i.e. translation into national legislation) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women; Oxfam support was judged to have **increased the visibility, legitimacy and the effectiveness of the coalition**:

“Today the SOAWR Coalition comprises 43 members from 23 African countries. The Coalition has increased its membership by 42 per cent (from 25 to 43 members) since RHV started in 2008. These increases have given SOAWR a higher level of legitimacy as it has significantly amplified its social base and outreach in Africa. In this last regard, during the course of the review, we saw documented examples of Coalition members active in other national and regional networks, serving as spearheads and spokespeople among African civil society on issues pertaining to the ratification and domestication of the Protocol” (Oxfam GB, 2013b, p. 28).

These activities include testifying in favor of CEDAW ratification before the US Senate, pushing for the ratification of the Protocol at the national level in African countries, and mobilizing to address a range of laws (e.g. family, personal status, domestic violence, and/or nationality laws) that affect women’s status using a range of campaigning tools (training, social media, lobbying, etc.). Women have faced many challenges and an adverse context in many countries, but working in coalition has been a source of strength for many participants. This is a good example of the type of work Oxfam should be

supporting and engaging in as it **builds its identity as a worldwide influencing network**.

A third characteristic is that all but one of the projects and programs reviewed target men to some degree – that is, male community members, government and religious authorities and/or legal professionals and work to bring about changes in attitudes and practices (although not all the evaluations covered that aspect of the programming). This reflects the belief **that to be transformative, gender justice work also needs to focus on definitions and perceptions of masculinity** and the attitudes and behaviors associated those definitions. Oxfam India's VAW program included outreach to police and resulted in the establishment of 26 centers for domestic violence victims in police stations to signal police accountability for addressing VAW in Gujarat (Oxfam India, 2014). Oxfam GB supported two programs to address violence against women in the Middle East – Working with Men and Boys to End Violence Against Women (EVAW) (Taher, 2014) and its Access to Justice Program (Oxfam GB, 2014c). In Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territories *“the project succeeded in unveiling the silence by working men and boys in the Middle East to EVAW. All the partners expressed their surprise at the project's success and supported its approach in working with leaders in key institutions”* (Oxfam GB, 2014c, p. 30). Among the results of the program, over a thousand men in key institutions had been sensitized, 16 CSOs had taken positive steps to end VAW, and men's forums had been established and carried out over a hundred activities. The Access to Justice Program demonstrated a significant shift in knowledge on the part of lawyers and court officials (mostly men), but the evaluation noted that to get beyond individual change to systemic change that would lead to access to high quality legal services, is a much longer-term proposition. Additionally, Oxfam Novib's Sexual and Reproductive Rights efforts in Africa (Singizi Consultancy, 2013) and Cambodia (Logarta and Marom, 2013), Oxfam Hong Kong's Prevention of GBV in Vietnam (CSAGA, 2013), and the Rights in Crisis Campaign in Afghanistan (Sloot and Becker, 2013), and different efforts under Raising Her Voice have all targeted men to some degree through training, organizing and advocacy (Beardon and Otero, 2013). In other cases, work with men was quite limited, despite the recognition of the need to do so. This may be **an area of gender justice work where peer learning may be particularly useful**.

A fourth characteristic of gender justice programming is that these efforts have begun to deliver outcomes that have the potential for wide reaching impacts. These include:

- Seventy-three percent of African Union members signed the Protocol on Women's Rights and Uganda and Kenya ratified it, attributing ratification in part to civil society pressure;
- Increased political representation of women through elections, positions in government ministries, and participation on local councils (various countries and programs);
- The elimination of user fees for maternal services in Zimbabwe, a more open budgetary process in Nigeria, and the development of provincial strategic plans on HIV/AIDS, TB, and STDs in South Africa that have fed into national plans and policy;
- Seventy-three percent of target communes in Cambodia included funding for gender activities in their investment plans; domestic violence in some communes was reduced by half; and
- Changes in knowledge and attitudes related to domestic violence and the application of the law amongst respondents to surveys in Cambodia, the Middle East, India and Vietnam.

It should be noted, however, that it was **often difficult to understand the significance of policy outcomes** identified in evaluations without more detail and contextualization. For example, information about the size of the budget line items for “gender activities” and what they were allocated for; or not simply the number of women elected, but how that might affect the alignment of political forces and how they might use their elected positions to advance women’s right. Likewise, change in knowledge and attitudes, does not automatically lead to policy and practice changes, or changes might occur at the margins or be one-off, rather than systemic. **This all needs to be explored in more detail in evaluations.** A final point is that the evaluations highlighted **how hard fought each of these victories were**, however small, and that concerted and sustained efforts are needed not only to advance women’s rights agendas, but also to deal with backlash and the multiple ways patriarchal systems seek to reassert their dominance when confronted with successful efforts.

Challenges to achieving more

In its gender justice work, Oxfam supports the work of partners who confront many challenges in changing the unequal power relations between men and women and the structures that perpetuate them. There are a range of barriers that impede progress, but focusing on what Oxfam can directly address, the following were raised:

The issue of **participation** the evaluations most consistently addressed was women’s participation in public or community spaces. While many successes were noted, it was also evident that **reaching the most marginalized remains a challenge** and can only be addressed with great intentionality, such as Oxfam Novib’s funding targeting minority populations in Cambodia (Logarta and Marom, 2013) or recommendations related to reaching illiterate rural populations in Vietnam (CSAGA, 2013). It is evident from the few evaluations that look at the household level that **increasing women’s participation in public sphere does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with increasing women’s influence or decision-making at the household level.** Whether the latter is harder than the former, or whether programs haven’t been designed to account for different dynamics of change is something that needs further analysis, including more data generated by studies at the household level.

The **capacity of women’s rights organizations** was an issue in many evaluations. In numerous cases, Oxfam addresses this with high levels of intentionality (e.g. the Oxfam Canada AMES grant, Oxfam Australia’s work in Zimbabwe, and the Women’s Learning Partnership grant). Issues of capacity were **particularly pronounced in multi-country funding efforts**, with turnover, inadequate human resources, and lack of on going coordination. This **can play out in coalition work**, where some members are much more active and able to meet commitments than others. It can also affect coalition dynamics when there are disagreements about strategy and tactics and some members feel disadvantaged in debates.

Oxfam also needs to examine its roles and responsibilities in these collaborations as several evaluations noted **difficulties in partners’ engagement with Oxfam.** This appears to be a function of ambition of programs exceeding capacity, but also constraints or expectations placed on Oxfam by back donors that are not understood by partners, weaknesses in communication and consultation processes, and deficits in coordination, oversight, and other forms of accompaniment. For example, in the Raising Her Voice global evaluation it was felt that there could have been greater role clarity between Oxfam and partners and Oxfam could have played a stronger coordinating and convening role, but was hampered in doing so by the limited amount allowed in the budget for Oxfam’s operational costs vs. partners’ expenses (Beardon and Otero, 2013).

Almost every evaluation mentioned that bringing about gender justice is a long-term, complex process. On the one hand, Oxfam is appreciated for its long-term commitment to the issue and its willingness to fund institutional support and advocacy efforts. On the other, **concerns about resourcing** are an on going issue. For obvious reasons, this was most pronounced in end-of-program evaluations, where there was a **real question about the sustainability of efforts** without continued Oxfam funding. One stark example was the case of the 26 attention centers in Gujarat police stations for which there would no longer be dedicated funds once the Oxfam grant closed out. In contrast, in Zimbabwe, one focus of Oxfam's capacity building funding was to help CSOs diversify their funding base by being more entrepreneurial (e.g. buying an office and then renting out space; providing business services).

One repeated request was for **more exchange and learning opportunities**. This is particularly relevant, given the trail-blazing nature of much of the work and the frustrations found in a number of the evaluations around, for example, working with men and influencing male authorities or lack of progress in some locales vs. others. This was an area where much might be gained by more systematic exchange and reflection.

Despite comparatively robust discussions of theories of change, there were still instances where a **TOC was not formally articulated until well into the intervention** or was not shared or understood by collaborating partners. One example was a multi-partner, multi-country initiative, where there was some confusion as to whether this was an actual program or simply a collection of grants. One area where theory of change discussions would be most useful is **exploring the issue of how change at one level translates (or does not) to another level** – be it household, community, national, regional or global and what mechanisms and strategies are most effective.

3.2.2 Things to Consider about Oxfam's Ways of Working under the GJ Change Goal

Oxfam's added value

Only about a third of the evaluations explicitly discussed Oxfam's added value. This is not entirely surprising as Oxfam often supports mature partners with a long history of work on gender justice, who may truly be peer organizations in a strategic sense. Where Oxfam's role was discussed, it is recognized for the **competency of its staff, its strategic vision, its willingness to fund things other funders neglect, its willingness to share its expertise through trainings, and its experience and connections across countries and regions**. Oxfams in Guatemala and Zimbabwe were recognized for **the utility of their conceptual frameworks and tools and the close accompaniment** they provided to local CSOs to increase their capacity and effectiveness. In Afghanistan, partners valued **Oxfam's contacts** with those involved in the peace and reconciliation process and **its insistence that local NGOs be included**, even in meetings held abroad. Oxfam India, which was rated by respondents on a number of dimensions in one evaluation, was recognized for its expertise around the domestic violence law, the fact that all its staff is gender-competent, and its willingness to provide training on the law. It is worth considering including such rating questions in gender justice evaluation as a matter of course. Numerous evaluations point out how Oxfam could capitalize on its assets more, which is covered under Challenges to Achieving More (below).

Gender

Women's rights are central to gender justice, and the vast majority (although not all) of the programs covered in these evaluations demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge and capacity regarding gender transformative efforts driven by a rights framing. One area

where it may be deficient is in analysing how different programs/projects impact women's triple burden (household, economic activities, and community). Where the work is newer and the learning curve is higher is work to engage boys and men in the struggle for women's equality. In the more successful cases, there are encouraging bits of evidence that women are influencing men and male decision-makers in this regard, but the evidence is spotty and it is often not clear on what scale or how profoundly. Better up front M&E design and more systematic collection of evidence would help. It is also evident that some efforts are more successful than others and collectively understanding why this is so would benefit the gender justice work.

Participation and Accountability

The primary accountability issue addressed in these evaluations was the degree to which programs and projects could make progress in **holding local and national authorities accountable** as duty-bearers. **Participation was a central concern** of almost every evaluation reviewed, and the partners themselves used participatory processes that focused on empowerment and fostering horizontal linkages amongst women and their supporters and organizations. There is a **very strong commitment to participatory methods** in evaluation for this change goal that is, in many ways, very appropriate. However, this **sometimes translates into an aversion or distrust of numbers**, or a reluctance to set targets given the dynamics and uncertainties of this kind of work. However, several of the evaluations generated very interesting results based on survey data (even those with some design deficiencies) that is a useful complement to qualitative analysis.

An important aspect of accountability is **how well the funding is used**. About a third of evaluations addressed 'efficiency' or cost-effectiveness, **but each one treated the topic differently**, and often superficially. This ranged from whether project finances were well managed (i.e. timely disbursements, clear procedures); to whether, on balance, a project met its objectives on time and within budget (with and without judgments on the adequacy of the budget); to equating efficiency with leveraging more resources. Only one made an attempt to quantify the degree to which objectives were met, discussing budget management and financial flow in some detail (Oxfam GB, 2014c). In two of the cases the argument was that the programs were good value for money, because a lot happened despite very small grants or outright underfunding. This is significant because, as documented in a series of AWID publications²⁶ on "Where is the Money for Women's Rights?" a chronic and recurring issue is **the expectation that women's rights organizations will tackle harder problems and can deliver far more change for less money**, with **numerous negative implications** for gender justice activists' well being.

One Program Approach (OPA)

The one program approach as conceived by Oxfam **was not evaluated in these studies**.²⁷ In the three or four cases where this terminology was used at all, **it was understood to mean the extent to which a project or program had a number of well-integrated components**, such as the definition of OPA found in the Access to Justice Study – a one program approach "that integrates direct action, capacity building and advocacy initiatives," rather than programs that integrate advocacy, development and humanitarian work. There were a few exceptions. The Rights in Crisis (RIC) Campaign in Afghanistan on Women's Involvement in Peace and Reconciliation processes specifically examined collaboration between the RIC team and the national office program staff, noting that coordination was not always smooth, and there were some lost opportunities. COGENHA, in Zimbabwe, combined a focus on program delivery, advocacy, institutional development and sustainability, but didn't specifically address humanitarian issues, despite Zimbabwe's long political and economic crisis. On the whole, gender justice

work combined program work with some influencing or advocacy with supporting programming. Consideration of humanitarian issues was largely absent.

Gender Justice's contribution to Worldwide Influencing Network

The **women's movement has been a worldwide influencing network for decades** and women's organizations have used UN processes to bring together women's organizations, develop common platforms, and pressure governments to respect women's rights. Generally, according to these evaluations, there is capacity and the right mix of partners to work at more than one level, and sometimes at several, but their ability to do so effectively is often taxed by the slow pace of change and the multiple fronts on which gender discrimination needs to be addressed. **These evaluations demonstrate that partners and Oxfam are getting more strategic and consistent in finding points of leverage for policy change** from bolstering support for CEDAW on its 30th anniversary, to addressing a range of national policies, to supporting women political candidates at all levels, to engaging with local authorities. Because of its global perspective, its contact with grassroots partners, and the resources it has at its disposal, **Oxfam is particularly well positioned to identify opportunities and help fill-in influencing gaps.**

3.2.3 Conclusions

Based on the evaluations reviewed **Oxfam is clearly supporting programs that meet the first two commitments** under the strategic plan – 1) **providing core support for women's rights** organizations to strengthen organizational capacity, sustainability, and support new movements and 2) supporting women's rights organizations' and the women they represent to **access policy-makers and bring their influence to bear on duty-bearers.** To some extent, this set of evaluations in and of themselves demonstrates the commitment to meet the third objective (conduct research to generate models, pilot programs, and showcase gender justice strategies that better support survivors of GBV, reduce women's care burdens, and transform gender relations, including making men allies in promoting women's rights). However, it is **not clear** from the documents reviewed **if there is a coherent strategy behind this third commitment**, although it may well exist. In terms of the fourth objective – promotion of women's agency and transformative leadership across all of Oxfam's work – based on the review of the full set of evaluations, there has been progress, but much remains to be done (as discussed in the Overview chapter).

3.2.4 Recommendations

The recommendations for Oxfam emerging from the evaluations can be distilled down to – **continue what you are doing, but do more of it** – funding, capacity development, convening exchanges, engaging as a strategic partner, and more actively helping partners assess the efficacy of their strategies and theories of action. There was a general sense that partners needed **stronger MEL capacity** to better “utilize resources, identify gaps and track changes” (Oxfam GB, 2014c, p. 105). Virtually every evaluation noted that the type of transformative change Oxfam is supporting is a long-term process and commented on the entrenched barriers to systemic change. Returning to the four arenas of change (Graphic 1) and judging from the evaluations, more thought needs to go into **understanding how individual change in attitudes and beliefs (the upper left quadrant) translates to changes in power dynamics and the household level and/or more systemic change** (the two right hand quadrants). As much as partners want resources for themselves, they view Oxfam staff as valuable human resources and wanted adequate investment in Oxfam staff, as well, to allow for more hands-on support. If more resources are not available, evaluators made the obvious suggestion of

concentrating efforts and ensuring adequate follow through. Regardless, Oxfam should **examine its role as a collaborator**, especially in the context of coalitions and multi-country initiatives, and incorporate that into on going monitoring and evaluation processes

Oxfam should continue its strong learning practice by further strengthening the quality of its evaluations. This includes:

- Augment qualitative data with **more substantive quantitative data**, including that generated by well-designed and well-implemented **surveys**; conversely, quantitative evaluations are strengthened by participatory processes of information gathering and reflection.
- **Get beyond numbers reached**, or trained, or elected to more consistently identify what people did as a result of program interventions.
- **Do a better job contextualizing** outcomes using theory of change, documentation of baseline or initial conditions, and/or focused contextual analysis; and
- For multi-country programs, build in shared MEL frameworks and practices at the beginning, to **more consistently capture information across cases**, organizations and countries.

Oxfam should think about **the most effective way to use its GJ evaluation resources to go deep on some key questions**, while at the same time promoting systematic learning across cases **using shared conceptual frames, tools/instruments, and/or context specific but comparable indicators** – a topic explored in the paper “Women’s Economic Leadership in Asia: Review of WEL Programming for the Asia RLT [Regional Leadership Team]” (Bowman, 2014).

There seem to be at least **four particularly promising areas for learning**. Given the energy and growing success of women mobilizing and more actively claiming and effectively utilizing political space, one is to better understand factors of success in different contexts. A second is on the strategy of working with men and boys at the community and official levels to learn more from the successes and to co-strategize to overcome barriers. A third is better understanding of strategies that successfully reach and engage the most marginalized. The last is a better understanding of the interface between changes in the public and household spheres, especially when programs target both. All of these areas could effectively strengthen Oxfam’s programming and contribute to the sector.

3.3 Change Goal 3: Saving Lives

Preamble

Oxfam's expected impact by 2019

Fewer men, women and children will die or suffer illness, insecurity and deprivation by reducing the impact of natural disasters and conflict. Those most at risk will have exercised their right to have clean water, food and sanitation and other fundamental needs met, to be free from violence and coercion, and to take control of their own lives in dignity.

To achieve this impact Oxfam committed to:

- More effective crisis response, both through Oxfam's own capacity and increasingly through the capacity of other organizations, partners and communities.
- Increasing our work to reduce the risk of disasters and build the resilience of communities, drawing from experience and learning from existing programs with civil society.
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of states to respond to crises, working in a set of selected countries to drive transformative change at the global level.
- Influence others and campaign for the respect of the rights of communities who are at risk or affected by conflicts and disasters at the grassroots, national, regional and global levels.
- Support poor women and their organizations in emergency preparedness, risk reduction and response, through intensive capacity building and partnerships, by assisting women and men to safely voice their concerns and hold duty bearers accountable

Description of the evaluations reviewed

The following is based on a detailed review of 23 evaluations, commissioned by eight affiliates, Oxfam International, and the collectivity of Oxfams in Ethiopia and Nicaragua.²⁸ They cover 18 country-level responses²⁹ and five regional or global interventions or reviews. Sixteen deal with emergency response, and five deal with disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs, and one with conflict transformation. Two of the 23 evaluations focused primarily on advocacy.

Quality of the evidence

This set of evaluations demonstrates that affiliates have a **strong commitment to do more frequent and of more consistent quality evaluations**. Five were ratings of emergency responses based on the application of Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit (HIT), one used the Gender in Emergencies (GiE) index, and one retroactively applied the Quality Compass Index.³⁰ There were two desk reviews of affiliate humanitarian programs, and one desk review of Real Time Evaluations (RTEs) of various affiliates.

Evaluations generally are **thoughtfully designed and the conclusions drawn and recommendations emerging from the evaluations were reasonable**, based on the evidence at hand. Individual affiliate desk reviews and/or organized staff reflection assessing humanitarian work, despite issues around the uneven quality of documentation and limited input from the full range of key stakeholders, are an important first step at developing better MEL practice and promoting greater transparency and learning. Oxfam in general still relies very heavily on more qualitative methods, but the more consistent use of frameworks (such as OGB's resilience framework of five inter-related dimensions)

and indices (HIT, RTEs, and GIE) to assess project and programs is introducing some **useful quantification in the form of ratings** that allow for better cross-case comparison and identification of trends and more systematic analysis of strengths and weaknesses, as is captured in the systematization of experiences of Oxfam Solidarity's DRR programs and projects (Almansa, June 2013) and the most recent meta-review of RTEs (Oxfam International, 2013). While many evaluations do include numbers on reach, often disaggregated by gender (a positive step), there is **often little information of the quality of the experience for men and women** or anything beyond data for very short term outputs, with a few notable exceptions (i.e. the Oxfam GB's studies in Zambia, Ethiopia, Yemen and Nigeria, and a survey of households covered by Oxfam America's cholera response in Haiti). When key informant interviews are conducted, **partner organizations are frequently privileged as the primary stakeholders, rather than beneficiaries or a wider range of actors** who might take a more critical view of Oxfam or have a broader view of a humanitarian effort and can thereby compare Oxfam's performance to others'. As with the interventions themselves, gender is rarely treated in significant depth. Finally, there is rarely analysis of program costs linked to analysis of program outcomes. The question of **cost effectiveness is largely ignored** or treated in a very superficial manner (e.g. considering a program cost-effective if it is implemented within the program budget), although issues of financing and fund management are addressed. This seems to be a significant gap, given the cost of many humanitarian responses.

3.3.1 Do the evaluations make a case that Oxfam has made a difference?

Achievements Identified

Reach

Oxfam continues to reach many hundreds of thousands of people in their emergency responses, cumulatively reaching into the millions, most notably with WASH interventions, but also with EFSL, and through protection activities.³¹ Both the HIT assessments and RTEs specifically ask if numeric targets were hit. According to the meta-review of 13 RTEs there are significant shortfalls to provide relief "of a quality and scale appropriate to the context," including nine out of thirteen that showed gaps in gender mainstreaming (Oxfam International, 2013). In contrast, **the HIT assessments and other mid-term and final evaluations show that Oxfam generally meets and even exceeds its numeric targets** (Featherstone, 2012; Turnbull 2013; Turnbull, 2014; Oxfam GB, 2013). This isn't necessarily surprising since RTEs are conducted early in the response process and are meant to flag up implementation problems, while the HITs are conducted further into or at the closeout of an emergency response. The evaluations of the Syria refugee responses (Turnbull 2013 and 2014; Oxfam Italy 2014) and the efforts to address cholera outbreaks in both Haiti (Raymond, 2012) and DRC (Humanitas, 2013), where needs far exceeded initial assessments, show Oxfam in problem solving mode and its **capacity to execute and adjust in dynamic settings**. The reach of DRR projects is less clear as evaluations talk about number of communities reached and individuals trained or committees formed, but rarely speak in terms of population covered.

Improving the Capacity of Local Communities and Authorities

There is considerable evidence that Oxfam is strengthening the capacity of local organizations and authorities to deal with emergencies and disaster risk management. **Oxfam Italy has made working with local authorities a center piece of its strategy** and in Lebanon, among other things, organized technical trainings on "*issues such as child protection, filling of baseline surveys and questionnaires, management of cash transfer and voucher distribution activities...[and other] capacity building activities intended not only to fill in knowledge gaps for the sound implementation of humanitarian*

interventions, but also to create skills to be used in local development activities” (Oxfam Italy, 2014, p. 28). Despite many challenges – including competing priorities, turnover of government officials, and political dynamics that impede cooperation and coordination – it has developed functional methods to work with local authorities dealing with refugees dispersed among the general population, including more strongly linking development to relief efforts and identifying interventions that have broad benefits (e.g. WASH) vs. those that more narrowly serve refugees only (e.g. vouchers), given politicians’ concerns for their own constituencies. In Jordan, Oxfam helped capitalize on organizations’ distinctive competencies to improve the effectiveness of the overall response. The three Oxfam affiliates came together along with their partners to secure funding from the Australian government, allowing them to reach out to more beneficiaries than they could have individually. Among the benefits of this approach, was the ability to create a referral system of sorts by collaborating with other INGOs providing humanitarian aid and, for example, referring child protection issues to Save the Children and disability issues to Handicap International (Tonea, 2014).

After Oxfam Australia piloted DRR efforts in four countries to introduce the participatory capacities and vulnerabilities approach (PCVA) **local Sri Lankan and Indonesian authorities took up the model**, extending it to 19 more geographic regions from the original five in the case of Sri Lanka and saw replication to 11 additional villages in Western Sumatra. Both countries were hard-hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami and thus primed for effective DRR models (Chamberlain, 2014). Despite this, the program did not get far in integrating climate change adaptation and more advanced resilience measures into community action plans. **In Nicaragua**, where Oxfam was working with remote indigenous communities in two territories, **an early warning system (EWS) was fully established** in one and largely established in the second. **All 32 communities established communal prevention and response committees and local response brigades** (Acción Médica Cristiana, et al, 2013). Based on this and other evaluations, Oxfam is fairly successful in dealing with national processes and working with local authorities. The weakest link often is state/provincial/departmental authorities, who have a DRR mandate based on national policy, but lack resources, capacity and/or political will to engage in DRR planning.

Looking at the household level in Zambia, **Oxfam GB found that households engaged with Oxfam’s DRR program did 8-13 percentage points better on Oxfam’s Adaptation and Risk Reduction Index (ARR) and 4-6 percentage points better on the Alkire-Foster Resilience Index than non-participating families in comparison communities** (Oxfam GB, 2014).³² Performance tended to be higher on shorter-term indicators, such as adopting new practices, than longer-term ones (e.g. more diversified livelihoods). While the results are statistically significant, it is not clear from the analysis how much discernible difference the higher score made in the lives of program participants.³³ A similar and somewhat stronger finding was registered in Oxfam GB’s DRR program in the Somali region of Ethiopia, where households in project communities were found to be better able to withstand drought, outperforming comparison communities in both indices and, among other things, reducing livestock losses due to drought and disease (Oxfam GB, 2013a).

Influencing Policy

Only two of the evaluations looked at policy influencing at the supra-national level. It should be noted, however, that the **DRR projects have a strong influencing** component at the national level. It is evident from multiple evaluations that Oxfam’s expertise is sought out **by government authorities and local organizations**. For example, based on its DRR work in Sri Lanka, Oxfam Australia was invited to be on the National Disaster

Management Committee (Chamberlain, 2014) and Oxfam is a key technical advisor in Nicaragua (Acción Médica Cristiana et al, 2013). In the case of **regional advocacy, Oxfam was instrumental in supporting the voice of regional NGOs and governments**, in the effort to develop an early response to the slow-onset emergency caused by the Sahel drought. Stakeholders identified Oxfam's policy advocacy papers as a key in influencing the discussions at the 2013 Sahel Summit to mobilize more resources, as was preparatory work done with government delegations (RIC Internal Evaluation Team, 2013). In addressing the drought at the country level, Oxfam was described as instrumental in pushing for a commonly owned Humanitarian Charter among organizations in Northern Mali and shaping UN discourse on the Mali crisis (OGB, 2013b). In the global effort that resulted in an arms trade treaty, stakeholders said that Oxfam was instrumental in helping Pacific Island governments develop a common position going into the ATT meetings and supporting their presence at negotiations (funding and accompaniment, such as access to a pro bono lawyer) (Dinh, 2013).

Mainstreaming Gender

The strongest gender-focused evaluation was that of the Ethiopia Drought response using the Gender in Emergencies framework. It is instructive both for the results it generated and what was garnered using internal evaluation resources and a rapid evaluation process. While Oxfam and its partners met or at least partly met seven out of 10 standards, only an Oxfam America partner met the standard of having workplace policies and procedures in place that ensure gender equality; all projects only partially met the standard of including gender analysis in contingency planning; and three out of six projects did not meet the standard regarding gender capacity on the part of development staff, partners and senior management. This should not detract from some of the more positive findings such as the standards on participation and empowerment where *“visible participation and confidence of women was apparent even in many mixed groups. There was also a high level of active participation of women in various management committees and staff were very conscious about advocating with both men and women on the importance of gender-balanced groups and of women being able to play a leadership role.”* (Oxfam affiliates in Ethiopia, 2013, p. 4). A program with strong gender mainstreaming and strong monitoring practice was Oxfam GB's program to address food insecurity in Mali. Oxfam *“followed recognized good practice in cash transfer programming by distributing cash and vouchers to adult female household representatives, both as a means to promote gender equity and to increase the likelihood of funds being used for household food security needs”* (Oxfam GB, 2013b, p. 17) and, when it became aware that cash was frequently not being managed by women directly, it *“took steps to address this through public awareness-raising session on gender equity and the practical benefits of women receiving and controlling the aid provided,”* along with other follow-up measures to enhance women's participation and decision-making power (p.17).

Despite these positive points, **the actual quality of Oxfam's focus on gender in Saving Lives needs more attention.** While programs/projects demonstrate some gender awareness and sensitivity (e.g. presenting gender disaggregated data, care of small livestock as part of DRR preparation, more appealing cash-for-work opportunities for women, supporting women's self-help groups, making sure women are on local DRR committees) **there is generally not evidence of serious, consistent gender analysis either in the responses themselves or in the evaluations.** Where present the focus tends to be on reaching women and to some degree ensuring their participation in humanitarian efforts, but very rarely are power differentials or issues of women's rights addressed in a proactive way.

Challenges to Achieving More

A key challenge for Oxfam (and other humanitarian agencies) is **simply the number and scale of emergencies**. This is further complicated when governments are slow to give permission to operate (e.g. Lebanon), although the RTE meta-review found that there were general “*improvements regarding [UN thematic] clusters and other external fora, and strong relationships with government in [a] large majority of RTEs*” (Oxfam International, 2013, p. 3). While noting that Oxfam had improved from previous meta-reviews, there are continuing weaknesses that potentially inhibit the quality of Oxfam response that were found both in the HIT assessments and the RTE meta review. These include **inadequate contingency planning; limited community consultation; weak M&E systems; and inadequacies in gender mainstreaming**. A number of internal logistical challenges were identified in the RTEs related to human resources, financial flows and procurement, and 7 of 13 RTEs identified problems with coordination amongst the affiliates. In only one of the five HITs (Sierra Leone cholera response), was staff capacity deemed as being fully adequate. These challenges are not new and have been documented in previous meta-reviews. Humanitarian interventions are, almost by definition, delivered in situations of flux, including staff turnover, which can impede acting on monitoring and evaluation findings, as noted in a Yemen food voucher program (Hall, 2013). This may be one reason integrating gender is such a challenge. Even with training, staff may default to old practices under the stress and urgency of early emergency response. As mentioned above, the **systemic nature of developing DRR capacity presents challenges** when Oxfam is dealing with different levels of government, most of which are struggling with limited resources and competing priorities. Partner capacity was also an issue, in some cases calling for more and better training and accompaniment, and in others calling for **better partner selection at the outset**.

3.3.2 Things to Consider about Oxfam’s Ways of Working under Saving Lives

Oxfam’s added value

Only about half of the evaluations specifically talked about Oxfam’s value-added, although it was implicit in most of the documents. Among the most important were:

- **Advocacy capacity**, including convening and brokering roles for the Sahel campaign (RIC Internal Evaluation Team, 2013) and the ATT work in Asia-Pacific (Dinh, 2013)
- **Technical expertise** in emergency response; training and accompaniment of partners, particularly on Oxfam GB’s part in Lebanon where they initially worked exclusively through partners and provided training in MEAL, GiE, WASH, Project Management, Protection, etc. (Turnbull, 2013).
- **Modeling good practice**, such as Oxfam Hong Kong’s visible efforts to apply SPHERE standards, reach the most vulnerable and implement gender-sensitive responses as they worked with local organizations and officials (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2014); Oxfam GB’s being the first to establish social accountability measures, that other implementing organizations replicated in dealing with Syrian refugees (Turnbull, 2014); and Oxfam Novib’s early response to a cholera outbreak in the DRC (Humanitas, 2013).
- **Oxfam development and application of tools** (HIT, RTEs, GiE and PVCA) and its efforts to employ them with partners and communities to improve overall practice, although some frustrations were expressed about Oxfam’s failure to meet its high standards and one evaluation found participants critiquing the PVCA as being cumbersome and redundant (Acción Médica, et al, 2013).

Gender

As noted above, some progress has been made, but it is very uneven. Setting specific goals regarding women's participation, representation, and protection may help keep a stronger focus on gender mainstreaming. Oxfam should also examine the tools and mechanisms it is using – from assessment and planning, to vulnerability and resiliency measures, to complaint mechanisms – to ensure that they look at gender differentials and differentiated responses and impacts.

Participation and Accountability

Many of the programs and projects were focused on promoting participation, particularly of communities and local authorities in DRR efforts to, among other things, enhance the accountability of local authorities to local populations. **Good progress was demonstrated in establishing local DRR committees** and community generated action plans. **Community/beneficiary participation tends to be patchier in emergency response**, often improving during the implementation phase, but largely absent in the planning stage of responses.

The HIT, RTE desk review, and the cholera responses in Haiti and DRC evaluations demonstrate that **Oxfam is making progress in holding itself accountable**. An impression the Saving Lives evaluation give is that they are more critical than the norm for Oxfam documents, not because these interventions are worse than average, but because **Oxfam is holding itself up to higher and clearer standards** in this work. Oxfam tends to rate well against technical aspects of the SPHERE standards and is also quite consistent about setting up complaint mechanisms in emergency settings and is advancing with the use of social accountability practices in camps, which others have then replicated (Jordan). In Lebanon, Oxfam worked with partners who set up complaint boxes and a hotline for six distribution points it established. It ended up ending relations with one partner due to the volume of complaints. In contrast, several partners that were well embedded in the community were quite responsive to complaints; however, a majority of the beneficiaries were not aware of the complaint mechanism (Tonea, 2014). In terms of partners holding Oxfam accountable, while evaluations generally ask partners and allies what Oxfam could improve, it appears to be much rarer that it does so in depth or asks target populations to rate Oxfam's performance.

One Program Approach (OPA)

Under this change goal, the work on **DRR lends itself to the OPA** and this is evident in all the DRR evaluations, where programs worked on preparedness, more resilient livelihood strategies, and influencing efforts with local and national authorities.³⁴ One purpose of the Oxfam Australia review was to ensure that program staff understood the importance and had basic mastery of DRR strategies and concludes, *“DRR is now well understood by regional and country programs and there is a cadre of staff and partners familiar with the approach”* (Chamberlain, 2014, p. 4). **On the emergency side, the attention to the OPA is less consistent**. The HIT assessments conducted for 2012 interventions (Sierra Leone and South Sudan) ask if there is an advocacy strategy in place (standard 10) and whether countries have an integrated approach of reducing risk through longer-term development interventions to build resilience (Standard 11). The latter standard seems to have been dropped, at least for the evaluations of Oxfam GB's response to the Syria crisis in Lebanon and Jordan. In contrast, the place where the OPA is most evident and most explicitly analyzed is Oxfam Italy's evaluation of its work in Lebanon with local authorities – that involves both humanitarian and increasingly development interventions – part of a larger study making the case for international agencies to work with local authorities. While work in the realm of DRR has the potential

for breaking down the silos between humanitarian, development and influencing work, **a couple of the evaluations identify siloed thinking on the part of partners and government officials as impeding progress toward a more integrated approach.**

Saving Lives contribution to the worldwide influencing network

Oxfam generally is strong in its contextual analysis and strategic in its influencing interventions. It continues to support national governments in international settings (Sahel Summit, ATT negotiations) and has had reasonable success in working with local authorities and their interface with local communities. However, it has had much less success preparing local communities and leaders to engage at the national or intermediate level, often stepping in to do advocacy itself or rely on its national level partners (e.g. Centro Humboldt in Nicaragua). There was some evidence of Oxfam influencing the behavior of peer organizations and/or government authorities (e.g. China, Jordan, DRC), but none of the programs evaluated tackled broader reforms in the humanitarian system. WIN as a concept implies a whole systems approach (international, national, subnational, and local), but influencing experience related to humanitarian response illustrates the complexity of taking on a systemic approach and the many constraints in the system that inhibit duty-bearers from meeting their obligations.

3.3.3 Conclusions

Based on the sample of evaluations reviewed, Oxfam appears to be meeting four out of the five commitments under the plan:

1. Through application of the Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit, continued use of RTEs, and the Participatory Capacities and Vulnerabilities Approach Framework **Oxfam is more systematically addressing program quality issues** for itself. While results are often mixed, the discipline of examining its work against agreed upon standards demonstrates greater accountability to aid recipients and the broader humanitarian community. Improving the capacity of others is more consistently evident in the DRR and advocacy work, but there are instances of Oxfam leading by example or supporting partners with training.

2. **Oxfam is expanding and deepening its DRR expertise**, testing the PCVA Framework, working with communities and local authorities on DRR plans and reflecting on the process. Oxfams America, Australia and Oxfam in Belgium appear to be most invested in this, based on the evaluations submitted.

3. Over half the projects and programs reviewed focus on **increasing the capacity of state actors as advocates in the international arena and/or as more effective service delivery agents at the local and national level.** This was true for both advocacy projects – on the Sahel food crisis and Control Arms in the Pacific – and in Oxfam’s approach to DRR at the national level. It is encouraging to see that Oxfam is seeking to better manage the tension between its own operational role and capacity to execute in the short term with a longer-term vision of building local capacity and reinforcing the responsibility of local authorities to respond.

4. **Influencing is an important part of Oxfam’s humanitarian strategy** and takes many forms from challenging international actors to mobilize resources to working with very local authorities on DRR. However, based on the sample of evaluations, advocacy related to emergencies appears to be driven more by practical considerations of aid delivery and uneven in the extent it focuses on rights.

5. Although women are targeted beneficiaries and measures have been taken to ensure their representation on committees and in groups dealing with emergencies or potential emergencies, **there is almost no evidence that Oxfam is making a particular effort to work with women's organizations to improve the DRR and emergency response capacities.** Only the internal evaluation of the Ethiopia drought response applied a gender framework and most evaluations limit themselves to very piecemeal analysis, that reflect the piece meal approach some of the projects take to gender.

3.3.4 Recommendations

- A number of affiliates are gaining significant experience in DRR and a cross affiliate, cross-regional analysis of successful strategies in engaging at the community level and with national and subnational authorities potentially could advance this work.
- The evaluation using the Gender in Emergencies framework should be replicated and results widely discussed throughout the Oxfam system. Oxfam needs to become more consistent and sophisticated in mainstreaming gender in this change goal.
- Oxfam should focus on 3-5 weaknesses/deficits that recur based on assessments using the HIT and RTE assessment frameworks, deeply analyze facilitating and inhibiting factors, and develop explicit strategies to address them.

3.4 Change Goal 4: Sustainable Food

Preamble

Oxfam's expected impact by 2019

More people who live in rural poverty will enjoy greater food security, income, prosperity and resilience through significantly more equitable sustainable food systems.

To achieve this impact Oxfam committed to:

- Promote **scalable agricultural production systems** that **sustainably** increase yield, resilience and adaptation to climate change, from subsistence farmers to market-based small-scale producers
- Enable **communities** to **manage land and water resources sustainably** and strengthen the livelihoods of those most chronically at risk of crisis in priority countries
- Promote **increased investment in female smallholders**, support **rural women's organizations** and advocate for positive **changes in policies and beliefs** about women's roles
- **Influence states** to attract investment and support development of domestic markets and challenge the private sector to develop inclusive business models
- **Empower small-scale producers** to **improve trade regulation**, to enter and influence Fair Trade value chains
- Facilitate the **development of innovative rural finance models** and consumer and fair trade movements, particularly in the BRICSAMs and major cities
- Influence governments, business and multilateral organizations to **increase financial flows to smallholder agriculture** and promote policies to benefit the poor by rebalancing investment and services between small and large scale production
- **Promote policies** that **strengthen resilience** through risk analysis, reducing price volatility for basic food commodities and providing protection for the most vulnerable
- **Improve donor food policies**, especially in fragile states

Description of the evaluations reviewed

This analysis has entailed the review of 28 evaluations commissioned by 10 affiliates and by the Oxfam International Secretariat.³⁵ Evaluations reviewed cover Oxfam programs and campaigns in 16 countries,³⁶ 1 region (Central and Latin America) and at the global level.

Quality of the evidence

Evaluations consist of impact evaluations or effectiveness reviews; cross-country reviews; process and implementation analysis; analysis of the applicability of specific technology³⁷ and even a Joint Country Analysis and Strategy (JCAS) review. Most evaluations used a **combination of qualitative and quantitative methods**, namely literature review, surveys, focus group discussions, individual interviews and observation. A few adopt only qualitative or only quantitative methods, which resulted in a weaker analysis. Unlike the other change goals, most evaluations had some **baseline data** available or it was reconstructed through recall by participants. Strangely, very few of the evaluations put forward data on the **number of beneficiaries** targeted or reached. Over a third of evaluations reviewed explicitly analyze the intervention's **theory of change** or logic. One fifth analyze programs' **cost-effectiveness**, and most of them deem it reasonable.³⁸

In 2012, the majority of evidence collected for Oxfam's sense making exercise on livelihoods was described as anecdotal. Nowadays, almost half of the evaluations

reviewed use techniques that allow us to draw conclusions on **causality and impact**, with some form of **comparison group** being used (randomized or purposive sampling of non-participants).

3.4.1 Do the evaluations make a case that Oxfam has made a difference?

Achievements identified

Evaluations are telling us that Oxfam's support is contributing to **livelihoods becoming more resilient**, reducing producers' exposure to risks (droughts or failed crops) and helping vulnerable communities, particularly **women-headed households, maintain their assets** (pay off their loans and attend to their needs without having to sell their animals or agricultural inputs), access **food**, have **better savings, better access to credit**, and access **knowledge**.

Programs are encouraging the adoption of improved agricultural techniques (water-saving, seed-testing, multi-cropping) and helping households **increase their investments in production** (through more use of fertilizer, of compost or of improved seeds). **Training** is playing a critical role in production improvement, and success is related to **group-based practical** training approaches delivered through extension support, often in collaboration with **government** institutions (agricultural extension services, agricultural research institutes and veterinary services), through an extended enough period. **Adoption of new cultivation techniques** seemed to occur when various critical elements come together: (a) **opportunity** or easily identifiable advantages for farmers, requiring little increased expenditure or labor; (b) **interest**: a number of actors – sometimes model farmers – willing to try out new unproven technology and share it with others; and (c) **capacity**: the availability of capacity building support in the field, delivered through a solid methodology and with intensive follow-up.

As for new technology trials, evaluations point out that there were hidden costs and difficulties. One recommended that introducing unproven technology in food insecure environments should only be done if compensation is offered to farmers (Oxfam Australia, [2013]). Another that looked at the use of ICT in food insecurity early warning systems pointed out that, despite positive aspects, women data collectors using Android tablets (who weren't consulted prior to implementation about technology preferences) found their data collection duties time consuming, they were often stymied by lack of electricity to recharge the devices, and would have preferred phones to tablets for convenience, cost and security reasons (Chan, 2014).

While evaluations confirm that changes in agricultural practices are becoming more generalized, there is **mixed evidence that this is translating to better yields and even less evidence that it is leading to better incomes**, among other things, because such an increase depends on other significant factors, often outside project control (Lunga, 2013; Oxfam GB, 2012a and 2014a; Sisilowati, 2013). As one beneficiary noted, *"I wouldn't expect the livelihood of the community to change much if the rainfall is not improved"* (Madajewicz and Tsegay, 2013, p. 45). There are some successes. For example, in Ethiopia a program using a citizen-driven and asset-based approach to community economic development, reported increased income and/or assets in six out of seven project groups, resulting in more disposable income for families, among other benefits (Oxfam Canada, 2013).

Evaluations, from settings as diverse as Laos, Guatemala and South Sudan, point out that the **scale** of interventions is often not given enough consideration. For instance, **provision of agricultural inputs** is a costly approach, and makes sense only if done at a scale to make a difference (Jones, 2013; Oxfam GB, 2012; and Zijlstra, 2013). *"Even*

model farmers reported that the provision of inputs, particularly the more expensive breeding stock, was not of substantial assistance. Fruit trees, amounting to several trees per each model farmer, were hardly substantial enough to present an alternative income source” (Jones, 2013, p. 7). With regard to livestock provision, some interventions fail to adequately address critical success factors such as the need for veterinary services and the availability of fodder crops.

According to evaluations, programs are engaging more and more often in domestic **markets and value chains**, with mildly promising results so far. Intensive skill-building and follow-up are reported as key factors in making production more efficient and bringing down costs:

“...in Abine, the cost of production of onion decreased from 15,975 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) to 9,000 ETB per 0.25 hectare as a result of agronomy training. Producers now apply 3kg of fertilizer and pesticide as opposed to 8-10kg previously. They also apply chemicals 2-3 times as opposed to seven, and spend 50 per cent less on fuel for irrigation as a result of purchasing plastic tubing, reducing water seepage into the soil” (Oxfam Canada, 2013, Executive Summary).

While evaluations in Ethiopia and Nicaragua found evidence of **diversified sales and increased access to local and regional markets** (Oxfam Canada, 2013; Oxfam GB 2012 respectively), this is still not the norm.

Oxfam’s **campaigns** such as GROW and Behind the Brands (BtB) have yielded significant results in terms of making the role of small-scale farming more prominent and influencing policy changes in favor of small and medium scale agriculture. According to evaluations (OwlRe, 2013a and 2013b), both campaigns were most successful at **influencing company policies and commitments** (Nestlé, Unilever and Coca-Cola adopted new policies, introduced new processes or adjusted existing ones); **influencing government agriculture and food security policies** (in at least 5 countries); **and influencing multilateral bodies**, such as the World Bank – for instance changes to its policies as a result of the Land Freeze initiative. GROW was particularly successful at building **effective national networks** or cross-country initiatives in the **South**, even if these have not constituted a global movement on food. The evaluations analyzed do not report **increased financial** flows to smallholder agriculture as a result of Oxfam’s work.

Over two thirds of programs reviewed targeted women farmers or women-headed rural households, **putting women at the center of Oxfam’s work for this change goal**. In addition, almost two thirds of evaluations noted **some progress on women’s participation, engagement, and sense of empowerment**. In one program in Malawi participating women *“were more likely to play the main role in household cash management, and displayed more positive attitudes towards women’s economic and domestic roles”* (Oxfam GB, 2014a, p. 1). Again, training seems to have been a key enabling factor, leading to significant changes in **women’s self-perception and agency** (Oxfam Canada, [2013]; Oxfam GB, 2012; and Zijlstra, 2013). For example, in Ethiopia, *“women feel comfortable speaking and presenting their ideas in front of men (and) numeracy and literacy training has improved women’s bargaining power with buyers and eligibility for formal leadership positions ”* (Oxfam Canada, 2013, p. 4). Communities’ perceptions and practice have also changed through awareness raising. For example in a livelihoods improvement project in Laos, *“villagers, government staff and project staff indicated that cultural norms and practices have changed. Villagers reported that girls are now more likely to attend school and do so for longer. Social life is reported to be more open in Mune district, where women and girls are given more freedom to socialize and join cultural celebrations”* (Oxfam Australia, [2013], p.11).³⁹ Women’s participation in community life has increased, and with it their access to information and their ability to

influence decisions: “*One village in Samoui district elected a woman as deputy village head, a first in the nearby villages*” (p.11). Through Oxfam’s campaigns, women’s role in agriculture and livelihoods has become much more **visible** and women farmers have been better positioned to assert their claims in the public arena. Overall, in most programs reviewed **women are playing key roles** and expressing **personal change** that is recognized by their communities, although progress is uneven and it is often **difficult to judge the breadth and depth of change** from the evaluations. Moreover, a significant 30 percent of evaluations fail to mention how programs are contributing to advancing women’s right.

Challenges to achieving more

Evaluators found the strategies, which were generally determined in participatory processes and matched local priorities and needs, to be **relevant**. Perhaps only one strategic domain is under-represented: **access to and use of land and water**, which is a critical area for food security.⁴⁰ Although these have been campaign issues, they do not feature prominently among the sample of programs this analysis reviewed. An evaluation of the GROW campaign states that one challenge around influencing national policies was that: “*in many countries the topic of land rights was very sensitive given the involvement of local elites in appropriating land. In addition, Oxfam did not always have the necessary resources and local level experience (notably legal) and worked only to a limited extent with those who did*” (OwlRe, 2013b, p. 28). In terms of Oxfam’s approach to supporting market access for small producers, significant steps have been taken to articulate a ‘model’ intervention, but this has not been achieved yet.⁴¹ Additionally, Oxfam does not appear to be tapping into private sector actors – small entrepreneurs, traders or investors – nor forging relationships among these actors and its target communities, at least not beyond its campaign work.

If programs are largely deemed to be strategically on focus, failure often occurs at **implementation level**. In Laos, “[u]nfortunately, implementation did not go well, with little benefit delivered to a majority of villagers. The review identified three primary causes for the breakdown in delivery: (a) poorly designed intervention methodology, (b) M&E system that failed to integrate learning and program improvement and (c) insufficient methodological or program quality support” (Jones, 2013, p. 6). This statement also pertains to projects in South Sudan (Lunga, 2013), Papua New Guinea (Sisilowati, 2013) and Bangladesh (Zijlstra, 2013). In other words, a significant number of projects failed to achieve their intended degree of change, often due to poorly thought out operational plans and/or limited resources.

In **campaigns**, two key challenges are the **rapid shifts** from one theme to another, which left insufficient time to allow for an appropriate adoption by audiences, and **lack of long-term follow-up** to build on initial achievements. This created some sustainability and credibility risks. For instance, “*local campaigns changed frequently; usually last[ing] for one year, which was not enough for bringing conclusive result[s] or success. Such campaign[s] stop after [a] short duration, which may create an image and credibility crisis for the local NGOs [with their] stakeholders; especially, to the MPs, civil servants and media; it may affect the image of the campaign as a whole*” (Tripura and Hasan, 2013, p. 39). Also, in campaigning there seem to have been **fewer opportunities** than expected to make the **local to global link**, either scaling national issues to the global level or making global initiatives relevant to the national level.

In **campaigns** specifically, **coalition building** has been quite limited with organizations of equal or similar status to Oxfam. Consequently, the issue of how Oxfam manages its relationships with coalition partners, who do not have its resources or profile, surfaces at times. One challenge is negotiating partners’ and Oxfam’s **visibility**. At times, Oxfam

has engaged in rather instrumental relationships with allies and partners, as in the Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh (*Tripura and Hasan, 2013*). Another example is offered by the BtB campaign:

“An advisory board of NGOs/civil society was established...While this allowed Oxfam to extend the campaign beyond its own audiences, there was no evidence that allies played a significant role in the co-creation of messages/strategies or active campaigning such as meeting and briefing companies or their contacts. This had the advantage of positioning Oxfam as the clear lead in the initiative...The disadvantage was that little ownership was developed among allies and any continued action from their side would rely largely on Oxfam’s coercion” (OwlRe, 2013a, p. 5).

These are not new criticisms and will be familiar to anyone who was involved in Oxfam’s trade campaign (2002-2005). Perhaps these criticisms are not as widespread now, to some degree they may be unavoidable, but there does appear to be a bit of a learning deficiency here. However, there are positive counter-examples of Oxfam’s partnerships in campaigns, and a contrasting experience is found in the ‘Reaping justice for women farmers’ campaign in Honduras that was developed in participatory ways, allowing increased ownership of all stakeholders (Plataforma Agraria, 2014). Interestingly, the GROW evaluation found that where coalition building had **added real value** in terms of **reach and impact** it was at the cost of a reduced visibility for Oxfam.

Overall, Oxfam may have **underestimated** the amount of **effort, time** and **skills** it takes to deliver results in challenging environments. A few evaluations point out that Oxfam has sometimes impeded its own role by failing to understand and adapt to changes in the local context. Evaluations suggest that Oxfam staff is often not able to provide the technical, managerial or hands on support partners and projects require. One notes that Oxfam has simply failed to properly “*monitor implementation and assist in making connections and ensuring good technical support is provided where appropriate*” (Jones, 2013), a comment that also applies to interventions in Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and South Sudan. Furthermore, Oxfam does not seem to be engaging enough in learning, either with partners or from others. Therefore interventions are sometimes not **built on best practices** nor implemented with strong attention to **applying learning** from program experience. Inadequate staffing, highly demanding internal procedures and high turn over rates are offered as explanations for Oxfam’s limited capacity (Jones, 2013; Oxfam Australia, [2013]; Susilowati, 2013; Zijlstra, 2013).

3.4.2 Things to Consider about Oxfam’s Ways of Working under Sustainable Food Systems

Oxfam’s added value

Fewer than half of evaluations speak about Oxfam’s role and only a few explicitly elaborate on its added value. Oxfam’s main contribution is seen as **capacity building** and **technical support** in **managerial** and **thematic** issues, but also on **gender awareness** and mainstreaming. One affiliate’s active engagement with its partners, Oxfam Canada, is specifically singled out as a success factor (Oxfam Canada, 2013). As noted above, however, Oxfam is, at times, falling short on program management.

It appears that in **campaigns**, Oxfam’s perceived added value can be more clearly articulated (OwlRe 2013a and 2013b; Plataforma Agraria, 2014, Kapyepye, 2014). Evaluations mention Oxfam’s ability to act as **facilitator and convener**, bringing together different organizations: “*Oxfam was key for some actors outside the alliance to support the campaign politically*” (Plataforma Agraria, 2014, p. 9). Several refer to Oxfam’s **traction or influence**, with one noting that Oxfam was “*seen as an organization with a*

status that required a response and could not be ignored (OwlRe, 2013a, p. 3). Another recognizes Oxfam's **influencing expertise**: *'Oxfam was seen as one of the best organizations to understand policy processes and recognize when to apply pressure'* (OwlRe, 2013b, p. 30). The evaluation on GROW in Honduras states that partners welcome Oxfam's transition from a heavily Oxfam-center campaigning approach to one in which allies were more visible, women farmers had agency in the campaign and the approaches were participatory (Plataforma Agraria, 2014). Having said this, Oxfam's role in campaigns is not without challenges, as noted above.

Gender

Oxfam has played a significant role in mainstreaming gender in its sustainable food programs and in building gender awareness among its partners, but a lot remains to be done. Basics such as the provision of disaggregated data are still not universally applied. When data is available on women's participation and leadership, there is little information that analyzes the degree of effectiveness of the participation (e.g. if the women make proposals are they taken under consideration?). Gender analysis of the economic alternatives in Oxfam-supported programs tends to be weak. For example, one evaluation noted that small holders who adopted the system of rice intensification (SRI) experienced significant positive impacts on food security and income, but lamented the *"unsophisticated approach to gender"* (Pommier, 2014, p. 11), concluding that the appropriateness of SRI as a livelihood option that increases women's empowerment remained to be proven. There seems to be little examination of women's specific challenges associated with the caring economy and the triple burden of managing their family role, their economic role, and their community responsibilities. And while women farmers were meant to be key actors in and beneficiaries of the GROW campaign, gender integration was *"inconsistent from country to country and issue to issue"* (OwlRe, 2013b, p 30). As noted, one third of evaluations reviewed simply do not comment on the impact of Oxfam's work on women's rights, one way or another.

Participation and Accountability

Unlike other change goals, holding government authorities accountable may be one aspect of programs (e.g. in terms of getting agricultural extension services), but is not central to or a driver of the majority of projects and programs, aside from the advocacy campaigns. Fostering community participation and individual agency is central to programs, although not an issue deeply considered in most evaluations.

Two thirds of the evaluations addressed issues of partnership and of Oxfam's role. Oxfam works mostly through and with **partners**, although it is increasingly engaging local, district and provincial **authorities** or **government service providers** also (extensions services, agricultural research institutions, etc.)⁴² Most evaluations argue that effectiveness of implementation has depended on the quality of partnership and of coordination. While Oxfam's approach is described as **inclusive and participatory** overall, leading to appropriation and local capacity building, some challenges facing partnerships are **regular follow up and support** from Oxfam, and **cross learning** among partners.

One Program Approach (OPA)

Evaluations reviewed did not directly refer to the one program approach, although there is evidence of partial embrace of this concept with combined program-advocacy efforts in some cases and consideration of disaster risk reduction in agriculture programs in others.⁴³ About a fifth of the evaluations – mostly campaign evaluations – do underline the value of a combined program, advocacy and campaigning approach. This multi-pronged approach however is either underutilized or still is not fully mastered. For

example, in evaluating GROW at the country level in Honduras, the evaluators found that the program-campaign link only worked one way: the campaign used the space generated by the program for awareness raising but the program could not get a space within the campaign (Plataforma Agraria, 2014). Yet there are signs of progress. While the GROW and the Rights in Crisis campaigns (RiC) had mixed results addressing the earlier food crises in the Horn of Africa, at least from the program perspective, *“the second experience with the Sahel crises was generally seen as positive and the analysis, content and campaigning of the joint GROW/RiC effort was crucial in building support for action”* (OwlRe, 2013b, p. 35).

Sustainable Food System’s contribution to Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN)

Oxfam’s role and its influencing is present in just under a third of evaluations, mostly those of campaign work. It should be noted that the GROW campaign set out to focus on national level change and campaigning that would be most likely to have impacts at the national level. The campaign evaluations stress the **pertinence** of Oxfam’s **influencing strategy**, particularly as it addressed government policies, companies and multilateral bodies. The Behind the Brands campaign, for example, *“targeted issues that were in line with most company policies... ‘asks’ were reasonable and realistic...and were core to the business areas of companies, not peripheral to them; and the combined tactics, scorecard and the “race to the top” motivated companies to act”* (OwlRe, 2013a, p. 3). In addition, the ‘asks’, if met, would have concrete impacts on workers, women and the environment that would be felt at country level.

Interestingly, another evaluation recognized the value of the undercurrent of influencing work at the heart of Oxfam and partners’ daily practice, which may not be tagged as such. In some cases, this relates to the establishment of successful strategic relationships – with unions, private sector actors and local authorities – to influence changes in their ideas and behavior that may benefit their engagement with small producers (Oxfam Canada, 2013). A few evaluations do note a need for clearer and stronger links between **local and global** agendas.

3.4.3 Conclusions

Based on the sample of evaluations reviewed, Oxfam appears to be meeting at least seven out of the nine commitments under the OSP:

- Promoting **improved agriculture production** techniques that are increasing yields somewhat, but not yet delivering increased incomes, in many cases.
- **Strengthening the resilience** of communities at risk and helping them manage their land and water resources more sustainably.
- Putting women at the heart of Oxfam’s work on livelihoods by supporting **mostly female headed rural households**, increasing investment in them and transforming ideas on the roles of women.
- **Influencing states** to support small-scale agriculture and the development of domestic markets, through GROW. Also influencing the private sector to develop more inclusive business models, through the Behind the brands campaign.
- Developing **innovative rural insurance** (weather indexed) and **rural savings** initiatives more fitting for smallholder producers.

It is unclear whether Oxfam is meeting its commitment to promote **policies that strengthen resilience** and reduce price volatility while improving **donor food policies**, although GROW and other Rights in Crisis campaigns (i.e. the Sahel food crisis) may have addressed both.

We have not seen any evaluations of projects engaging in the empowerment of small-scale producers to improve trade regulation or enter Fair Trade value chains.

3.4.4 Recommendations

Going forward, Oxfam could enhance its work under this change goal by:

- Progressing towards more **focused** interventions at country level – less dispersed – so that **scale** of investment is enough to make a significant difference.
- **Matching ambition with suitable time frames** and commensurate staffing and resourcing.
- Continuing to develop **multi-pronged** approaches for both influencing and increasing the income and assets of producers.
- Continue **improving and deepening the focus** on women and **women's rights** with more specialized gender support for campaigns and livelihood programs, including the **use of relevant global indexes** (such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index-WEAI)⁴⁴ when appropriate, to assess change. This would facilitate comparative and summative analysis at a global scale.
- Looking for more exchanges and **linkages amongst programs and between campaigns and programs**, finding synergies the OPA is meant to promote.
- Paying more attention to **implementation** of program strategies by ensuring adequate **human and technical support** to partners. This includes specialized gender support.
- **Connecting more with others**, bringing in outside expertise and good practice.
- **Embedding learning** in its program cycle.

3.5 Change Goal 5: Fair Sharing of Natural Resources

Preamble

Oxfam's expected impact by 2019

The world's most marginalized people will be significantly more prosperous and resilient, despite rising competition for land, water, food and energy sources and stress on climate

To achieve the goal Oxfam committed to (summarized):

- Monitor investments in natural resource exploitation and enable communities including indigenous peoples to secure rights to land, water, energy, and natural resources, including their right to free, prior and informed consent.
- Build capacity of campaigning partners and help to mitigate conflicts over natural resources.
- Support women to benefit from proper management of natural resources
- Ensure financing for adaptation for most vulnerable
- Support urban dwellers living in poverty to gain recognition of their rights to natural resources, housing, WASH and adapt to climate change
- Support urban workers, cooperatives and entrepreneurs to improve their livelihoods.
- Global Advocacy
 - Bring voices of poor to debates about development, prioritizing 'fair green development'
 - Raise awareness of women's unpaid role in the care economy drives inequality and should influence corporate and national policy
 - Build alliances in high and middle income countries to cut excessive resource consumption and protect low-income consumers
 - Advocate for climate change mitigation with agreements on absolute reductions for rich and middle-income
 - Influence corporations to recognize their responsibility for inclusive and sustainable development
 - Engage governments and business to build the resilience of those living in poverty

Description of the Evaluations Reviewed

Twelve evaluations were selected for review. Reflecting the breadth of this change goal, evaluations covered:

- Three water provision and management programs (Ethiopia, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan)
- Two natural resource/biodiversity management project/programs (Mali India)
- Two programs with a strong livelihoods focus (drought management in Kenya and strengthening peasant federations and the provincial level in Mozambique)
- Two urban programs – one on solid waste disposal (and employment) in multiple countries and one on workers rights and employment in Cambodia, and
- Three campaigning/advocacy evaluations, one in the Russian Federation on climate change and another in the US on legislation in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mississippi, and a third on extractive industries in Cambodia.

Affiliates that commissioned the evaluations included Oxfam America (3), Oxfam in Belgium (2), Oxfam GB (4), Oxfam Germany (1), Oxfam India (1), and Oxfam Italy (1). Unlike other Change Goals, where there is a mix of country level, regional and cross-regional/cross-country evaluations, in this case all but one program (Oxfam Italy's waste management program) is country level.

3.5.1 Do the Evaluations Make a Case that Oxfam Has Made a Difference?

While the quality of the evaluations was similar to that of other change goals, it is the opinion of the review team that there is not sufficient material to make a solid, informed judgment regarding Oxfam's performance related to this change goal. One issue is its breadth – ranging from forest and biodiversity management to support for urban workers to global advocacy on a range of issues (climate change adaptation financing, consumerism, corporate responsibility, etc.) A second issue is the limited number of evaluations from this change goal that we have available. We suspect that, at best, they give a very partial view of the work. As noted, there are only two or three evaluations for each of the topics above, and even on “shared” topics, the actual programs within them are very distinct from each other and take place in very different geographies and contexts.

What can be said, based on the evaluations?

The evaluations do document interesting program efforts and as stand-alone evaluations several are quite interesting. Additionally there are a couple observations can be made based on two sets of evaluations – **those dealing with advocacy/campaigning** and those dealing with water systems. The former may be of more general interest, as they **are instructive about national level campaigning**. Both the Cambodian (Ranking, 2013) and Russian evaluations (Kozlova and Paltsyn, 2014) are interesting case examples that document the processes and challenges of building up local campaigning and advocacy capacity in countries that lack that tradition. The Cambodia evaluation makes good use of the theory of change and examines it in critical detail, including its underlying assumptions (many of which did not hold up). Both evaluations highlight that **building campaigning capacity is a long-term investment that includes a commitment to dealing with contextual complexities**. A related finding from the US advocacy campaign (Roper, 2013) was that Oxfam America's learning experience from doing advocacy after Hurricane Katrina (five years before in the Southeastern part of the US) left Oxfam and its partners much better positioned for advocacy to advance legislation promoting reparation and recovery payments and programs after the disastrous oil spill from Deepwater Horizon company in the gulf of Mississippi (Roper, 2010).

Another **long-term investment appears to be the process of developing local water systems**. In all three evaluations on that topic (in Ethiopia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan), while progress was made, they all fell short of ambitious goals (HEDBEZ, 2014; Krylova and Nigora, 2013; Morley, 2013). A common finding was that the **time and investment required** to build a sense of local ownership and management capacity on the part of local government, NGOs and communities, along with the need to secure financing from under-resourced governments, **was substantially more than anticipated**. Evaluators felt that **each project had made reasonable progress given the circumstances**.

3.5.2 Conclusions

It is quite possible that by 2019 there will be a body of documentation that allows for some judgment on Oxfam's progress in supporting Fair Sharing of Natural Resources. However, the external evaluators don't feel this change goal is very coherent, not only because of its breadth, but also because there is considerable overlap with other change goals (especially the DRR piece of Saving Lives and Sustainable Food Systems). Oxfam might benefit from making a decision to **focus evaluation efforts on a limited number of sub-themes** under this change goal, such as extractive industries (as a mature effort) and water management systems (as a newer effort where there may be a higher learning curve), and intentionally build a body of cross-country/cross-regional learning.

3.6 Change Goal 6: Financing for Development and Universal Essential Services

Preamble

Oxfam's expected impact by 2019

There will be **higher** quality and quantity of **financial flows** that target poverty and inequality, and empower citizens, especially women, to hold governments, donors and private sector to account for how revenue is raised and spent.

More women and men, girls and boys will **exercise their right to universal quality health and education services**, making them full participants in their communities and strengthening the economic, social and democratic fabric of their societies

To achieve this impact Oxfam committed to:

- Advocate for new forms of global financing for development and poverty reduction and persuade aid donors to make governments more accountable to civil society.
- Invest in work on tax justice and domestic resources mobilization and advocate fairer, pro-poor taxation policies.
- Support communities and civil society to monitor public finance and to engage with poverty reduction policymaking processes.
- Influence international financial institutions to enhance public transparency, anti-corruption measures and citizen engagement on International Financial Institution's financial flows and transactions and to enable people to benefit from revenue flows from extractive industries.
- Keep quality services at the heart of the development agenda by defining essential services as a right; and reject policies that promote systemic inequality.
- Support civil society to hold governments accountable for delivery of quality services which are free at the point of use and which ensure access for women and girls and other marginalized groups.
- Support campaigns for health (including sexual and reproductive health) and education and support organizations that work with governments on innovative ways to reach women and girls.
- Influence donors to support community-driven development by transferring more control to communities.

Description of the evaluations reviewed

This analysis covers seven evaluations commissioned by five affiliates and the OI Secretariat⁴⁵. Four were reviewed by the core evaluation team and three were reviewed in sufficient detail by volunteer reviewers to usefully inform this section. Evaluations reviewed cover five programs and two campaigns in six countries⁴⁶ and one region: Europe. All of them are reviews of project achievements and all are external evaluations.

Quality of the evidence

Most evaluations stress their use of **participatory** methodologies. At least half of them use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Most use standard methodological tools – literature review (including content from social media and the internet), interviews, focus group discussions, workshops and surveys. Three employed one of the following: Outcome Mapping (Joshi, 2014) Process Tracing (Stedman-Bryce, 2013) or Most Significant Change methodologies (Oxfam Australia, [2013]). None refer to the use of control groups and only one mentions having **baseline data**. Two attempt to determine Oxfam's specific contribution (Joshi, 2014 and Stedman-Bryce, 2013).

Only one evaluation elaborated on the **number of beneficiaries** targeted or reached. The little disaggregated data that is available refers only to participants in the evaluative process. Only one evaluation explicitly analyzed the intervention's **theory of change**. None reviewed **cost-effectiveness**, although one reviewer does mention that cost-effectiveness was a criteria used for determining the relevance of project activities and led to deferring some (Stalker and Visser, 2013).

3.6.1 Do the evaluations make a case that Oxfam has made a difference?

Achievements identified

While this evaluation sample is the smallest of all change goals, there is enough commonality of scope among programs reviewed to allow for some degree of joint analysis.

The programs reviewed are clearly contributing towards a **better-informed citizenry**. Programs have equipped civil society with powerful information on the legal frameworks for ensuring their rights to health, education and water. Communities and civil society organizations now have a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities and also of the policy-making process.

In some cases, **research** to inform campaigns and advocacy strategies has helped expose government misinformation and malpractice, as in Ghana, where the Health for All campaign report found that “contrary to *official reports of 67 per cent coverage by the health insurance scheme, as few as 18 per cent of Ghanaians were enrolled*” and that “*access to health care under the insurance scheme was inequitable and did not favour the most vulnerable members of society*” (Stedman-Bryce, 2013, p. 3).

Oxfam's programs have also managed to **mobilize** a significant number of **civil society organizations** around a common goal of free access to universal health, education or water. Overall organizations have worked in a coordinated manner and become reinforced and legitimized in the eyes of their constituencies by these processes of collective action. El Salvador seems a particularly interesting example with local to regional to national representation.

In general, evaluations do not mention the extent to which coalitions have managed to mobilize **public opinion** too. The exception is the European Community's aid awareness campaign, which does mention its reach to over 4.8 millions European citizens with messages on aid and the Millennium development Goals as well as an additional “*2 million who were mobilised to actively engage in campaigns, exceeding the planned figures four times*” (Stalker and Wouk, 2013, p. 16), concluding that “*Oxfam has considerable experience and competence in recruiting, retaining and mobilising the public, and its supporter base*” (p.12). ” .

As a result of being better informed, communities are **increasing both their access to services** (in India, for instance, where tribal communities' access to health has doubled) and their **demands for quality services**. They are also becoming **watchdogs** for government service delivery, targeting government **authorities**. In Mali, positive engagement has led to change in that local authorities are recognizing and hearing the interests of local community groups, an improvement from the beginning of the project (*INAGEF, 2012, translation by reviewer*). Functionaries in India are also reportedly opening up to working in partnership with communities (Joshi, 2014), as in El Salvador (Landa, 2013).

Civil society groups are more **aware of the political process** and how to influence it and some are becoming more **engaged in policy formulation**. In the case of El Salvador, community groups, organized in a national platform, are participating as observers on the weekly sessions of the Legislative Assembly's Environmental Commission, where the text of law on access to water is being revised:

“Grassroots organizations highly value these activities, for they have helped them understand what the legislative task is about; the role of the Legislative Commission and each faction or party's political-ideological analysis. Apparently, legislators themselves are now aware of public scrutiny and are beginning to be more cautious in their public statements (often extremely insensitive). In addition, partner's political mentoring role is being facilitated since organizations are (now) informed first hand” (Landa, 2013, p. 22) (author's translation).

This increased vigilance and demand has in some cases born fruit, with the **quality of service delivery improving**. In Mali, conditions in both schools and community health centers have improved visibly as a result of improved community participation in the context of decentralization (INAGEF, 2012). In another case however, it simply resulted in **worsening standards** for a growing demand has not been met with increased investments or capacity. *“There has been no change on the supply side and (in) some cases the situation has worsened especially where the demand has continued to increase thus putting more pressure on already inadequate resources. (i.e., the number of teachers has remained the same but number of children have increased so that student teacher ratios have further increased)”* (Joshi, 2014, p. 29).

In terms of **buy in by politicians, achievements have been more moderate**. While the campaign for free universal health in Ghana intensified its activities in the lead up to the elections, it missed key opportunities to influence the main parties' manifestos. Disputes over Oxfam's role in the campaign and a tepid engagement from a number of local organizations are likely to have taken their toll. In India, project efforts have concentrated on the community level so that demand for more and better services has not reached the appropriate decision-making forums. Only in El Salvador and Mali has there been political will to promote changes in accordance with civil society demands.

Challenges to achieving more

According to evaluations, solid and credible civil society **alliances** are a critical success factor in projects under this change goal. These need to be continuously nurtured, strengthened and carefully monitored, with preventive measures applied, particularly in heated times (pre-election times or policy-formulation times) where opportunistic openings can happen but where tension can also arise around tactics, disputes over visibility, roles, etc.

Links with **government functionaries** can play a significant role also but are demanding –they often need to be renewed every electoral term and may require stronger, repeated capacity building efforts (INAGEF, 2013).

Campaigns on the other hand must recognize the importance of a well thought-through advocacy plan which carefully considers the **role played by organizations such as Oxfam vis-a-vis national civil society**. In only one evaluation were issues raised about Oxfam's role:

“During the first phase, Oxfam's role was basically supporting the local [level]. [Oxfam] provided technical support and help[ed] to fill capacity gaps and encourage local partners. But I think this sort of changed. [After] that stage the

local partners started withdrawing. [In the second phase] everything started to be sort of micromanaged within Oxfam and partners [were] no longer in the lead...It was a gradual thing that happened...but it built up to a point. Though the campaign was successful it could have been much more successful had some of these things been managed properly” (Stedman-Bryce, 2013, p. 22).

The evaluation recommended “*campaigns that place national civil society organizations in the lead will not only help to build capacity, but ensure that the actions of campaigns are seen by government as home-grown*” (p. 3). This in fact supports findings from the GROW campaign evaluation highlighted in the Sustainable Food change goal chapter.

Lastly, the trend towards **privatization** of essential services delivery and of access to public goods (water, for instance) is only marginally addressed in the projects reviewed. The evaluation in El Salvador rightly points to the need to do more to address the power struggle between commercial private interests and the provision of rights (in this case, to water):

“The weakness of public institutions, the lack of regulations and the power asymmetry between municipalities and corporations, prevents the former from acting against businesses or institutions that violate the human right to water. Increased efforts must go into convening a diverse range of actors as well as selecting a few emblematic cases to inform advocacy plans, small campaigns or other joint actions to expose them publicly” (Landa, 2013, p. 26).

3.6.2 Things to Consider about Oxfam’s Ways of Working Under Financing for Development

Oxfam’s added value

Only two of the evaluations speak about Oxfam’s added value, which is a bit unusual for evaluations focused primarily on advocacy. These however present a strong portrait of Oxfam, with affiliates’ staff being commended for their technical expertise, capacity and their ways of working (in relation to the EC campaign on Aid awareness). **Oxfam in Belgium** in El Salvador is commended by partners for its political **and technical mentoring**, long-term support, for **promoting exchange and synergy** among partners, including training, and especially for its **convening role** (promoting dialogue and seeking consensus among organizations to overcome differences and emerging tensions). A few other evaluations speak of Oxfam mainly as a **donor**.

Gender

Although some degree of focus on women’s rights is present in almost half of projects reviewed, women do not appear to be key targets of the work under this change goal. While women are described in a number of evaluations as vocal and active in groups and communities, generally programs did not go much beyond ensuring more balanced participation of women and men. A positive example of a stronger focus on women’s right is the campaign for the right to water in El Salvador, where partners were making clear progress towards incorporating gender into their institutional frameworks, but this is the exception. Given that health, education and water, or lack thereof, impact women’s lives on a daily basis, the absence of a strong gender analysis and women’s rights focus seems a particular shortcoming in these evaluations.⁴⁷

Participation and Accountability

All evaluations reviewed address issues of participation, and most describe projects as being **strongly participatory**. All in all, local organizations and communities have been

actively engaged in designing programs as well as in implementation. One evaluation in India however points out that **low literacy levels** have been an obstacle towards meaningful community participation and ownership. While this is not commonplace, it has come up in a few other evaluations across change goals, particularly among highly disadvantaged communities.

Regarding partnership, as one evaluator suggested: *“partner’s pulse and vital signs must be checked regularly”* (Landa, 2013, p. 32). The results of the Ghana evaluation suggest that Oxfam still has work to do regarding shared decision-making and positioning organizations and issues at the national level. Calls for a more careful analysis of power relationships and decision-making within and between partners and/or between partners and Oxfam are made, with suggestions for on-going institutional strengthening that can help address such matters.

A couple of evaluations note that a strong focus towards upward accountability has meant overburdening partners and staff alike, but it has not been at the cost of horizontal and downward accountability. Only one evaluation in Myanmar recommends stronger downward accountability and feedback mechanisms towards project beneficiaries be established.

One Program Approach (OPA)

Oxfam’s OPA is not explicitly address in any of the evaluations. It is worth examining if interventions could be strengthened taking a more multi-dimensional approach.

Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN)

Influencing is present in a majority of evaluations. In a few cases, Oxfam is shown to have a very good understanding of influencing techniques and an effective strategy (as in Mali, Europe and El Salvador). In Ghana’s campaign for universal health, the evaluator noted polemic differences of opinion among key campaign stakeholders in how advocacy should be done. Media was thoroughly engaged but not used to its full potential and the campaign lacked a slogan that clearly communicated what it was about. In India’s project to support civil society movement towards the right to free health and education, a true influencing strategy is yet to be defined.

Finally, Oxfam’s multi-affiliate effort in the EC aid awareness campaign shows the confederation making the best of affiliate’s capacities and skills:

“The ways of working across and within affiliates has been widely commended, for example, the sharing of human resources, such as the availability in 2010 and 2011 of an economist working with Oxfam GB for technical support to ODE [Oxfam Germany]; the meetings seem to have been well organised, there were good brainstorm sessions; a strong exchange of tools and products; and an important and helpful role of the Brussels office with a number of stakeholders commenting that the intelligence at EU level was very good” (Stalker and Wouk, 2013, p. 14).

3.6.3 Conclusions

In short, based on the small sample of evaluations reviewed, Oxfam appears to be making progress towards four of its eight stated commitments under the OSP:

- Advocating for new forms of **global financing for development** and poverty reduction. Through its EC Aid awareness campaign: *“Oxfam has made a significant contribution to the purposeful, and continued, efforts to reframe the discourse on aid among public, media and political audiences”*.

- Supporting communities and **civil society** to engage with **poverty reduction policymaking** processes, in at least Ghana, El Salvador and Mali.
- Keeping quality services at the heart of the development agenda by **defining essential services as a right** and rejecting policies that promote systemic **inequality**. Again, this has been the case in Ghana, El Salvador, India and Mali.
- Supporting civil society to **hold governments accountable** for delivery of **quality services** which are **free** at the point of use.

While we have seen no examples of projects aiming to **influence International Financial Institutions** (IFI) to enhance public transparency, anti-corruption measures and citizen engagement in *this* change goal, some such initiatives were reviewed under the Right to be Heard change goal.⁴⁸ In fact only the evaluation in El Salvador mentions the role IFIs are playing, blocking the way for a right to water legislation that serves the public interest. However the project strategy does not appear to be engaging IFIs specifically.

Among the sample of evaluations reviewed, we found no examples of work **influencing donors** to support community-driven development. The same can be said for work on **tax justice and/or domestic resources mobilization**, with only one national effort (in Ghana) and the EC campaign touching on the issues. And while campaigns on health an education are among those reviewed, none specifically supported organizations that work with governments on innovative ways to **reach women and girls**.

Overall no specific efforts have apparently gone into addressing **women's rights** or ensuring access for women and girls and other marginalized groups. One of the evaluations reviewed –in India- in fact highlights the need for a much stronger **child rights based approach**:

“A major point of concern across the project area...is the organization of Bal Sansads [Children's Parliament]. The child ministers are being assigned tasks which actually put them to work in school [cleaning classrooms, fetching water]...However, this is not getting identified as an issue as probably in the project communities children begin to help with household chores when they are very young, hence, doing these tasks in schools are not considered objectionable. (Ideally, the Government should be making budgetary provisions to ensure these tasks are undertaken by schools to ensure children have a clean and functional school). This understanding of child participation needs to be critically reviewed as it raises child protection issues too” (Joshi 2014, p. 20).

3.6.4 Recommendations

As in other change goals, **scale** is a matter of concern and a few projects are not judged to have a critical mass to be sustainable: *“From the point of view of ensuring sustainability, the project villages are too few and too scattered to ensure lasting changes. The project will need to scale up to achieve the critical mass. Also its geographical coverage will need to be strategic, i.e. overlap with administrative units of NRHM and SSA (National Rural Health Mission and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan-Education for all [government programs for health and education respectively]” (Joshi, 2014, p. 30).*

As in most change goals, most evaluations suggest Oxfam could achieve more by encouraging further **exchanges and networking with others**. There is tremendous untapped potential and more importantly a need to bring together experiences and actors, both thematically and geographically. This is already being done to some degree but needs to step up.

A few of the projects reviewed do not show Oxfam engaging in influencing for better quality in government service delivery but rather **helping provide alternative care**

systems to specific target populations. This is the case of healing circles for Aboriginal communities in Australia (Oxfam Australia, 2013) and people living with HIV-AIDS in Myanmar (Phuah et al, 2012). Both seek to empower communities to take the reins of their own development. Nonetheless, a link with government service providers, as ultimate duty bearers, would ensure the sustainability of the approach and its coherence with Oxfam's influencing vision.

Going forward Oxfam could enhance its work under this change goal by:

- Ensuring a stronger **focus on women and girls** as rights holders with gender-specific analyses, approaches, strategies and outcomes.
- Ensuring **capacity for engagement** is built into projects, at community, partner and affiliate level. And also significantly at **government** level.
- **Embedding MEL** into project planning, so as to move towards a solid capacity to evidence change and Oxfam's contribution. One evaluation showed that discrepancies between community perceptions and facts cannot be underestimated, particularly when financial support is at play: *"In the CINI and NBJK villages visited, there was a general perception amongst the CBOs that there has been improvement in education and health goals and only a few (children) are getting excluded. The quantitative data, however, shows that many more people are still being excluded than the perception of CBOs"* (Joshi, 2014, p. 20).
- **Engaging more with others** –within and outside Oxfam – and encouraging partner exchanges.

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End Notes

- 1 The documents were collected by contacting affiliate MEL colleagues (at affiliate headquarters, with some follow up with MEL colleagues in countries and regions) with a simple request to send completed evaluations from that time frame to the Secretariat.
- 2 There are no evaluations available from Oxfam France, Oxfam Japan, nor Oxfam Mexico.
- 3 The overview of the sample (below) provides more details about the documentation that was collected.
- 4 Volunteer reviewers reviewed a maximum of three evaluations following two rules: s/he had to choose evaluations that were from a different affiliate, and s/he had to choose evaluations either within the same change goal or the same region.
- 5 As a priority, the evaluations assigned to the consultants covered multi-year programs or projects, and a range of change goals, affiliates and regions.
- 6 The written analysis of the evaluations was generally thoughtful and detailed, although in a few cases consultants did not have enough content from the reviewers to be able to include any specifics about those evaluations in the following chapters. Where lack of a common training presented more of an issue was on assessing evaluation quality. We had no way of knowing if reviewers judged quality by academic standards; in comparison to what they'd seen in the past or what they were exposed to in their region, or through their affiliate; or based on the evaluators making the best of sometimes difficult circumstances (e.g. lack of documentation, short time frame, program weaknesses they had to sort out in the process of doing the evaluation). This was a useful realization, as we prepare for broad implementation of this tool.
- 7 The nine elements assess issues ranging from the clarity of the report through to the presence of gender disaggregated information and experiences of participants in the analysis of evidence. More details about this assessment can be found by examining Oxfam's Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool.
- 8 Inadequate documentation (by both Oxfam staff as well as partners) is problematic but quite widespread in the field of evaluation, and the evaluations offered for this review were no exception. When faced with that situation, Oxfam determined to include or not an evaluation based on how the evaluator dealt with any insufficiencies that were discovered.
- 9 The one exception, based on the evaluations on hand, appears to be CG 5 (Fair Sharing of Natural Resources). While the individual projects and programs reviewed were of comparable quality to other change goals, they were too few and too diffuse in terms of focus to be able to draw general conclusions. See p. 57-59 for more detailed discussion.
- 10 WIN was not an Oxfam concept until 2013 when it was introduced in the strategic plan, so this terminology obviously wasn't present in projects and programs designed before 2013. However, Oxfam has aspired to an integrated campaigning model linking different levels of action and has been increasing its national-level advocacy efforts for several years.
- 11 Even in Oxfam GB's quantitative effectiveness reviews, much of the baseline information has to be reconstructed.
- 12 Fourteen from Oxfam Novib, 2 from Oxfam GB, 2 from Oxfam Australia and 1 from Oxfam Italy.
- 13 Five from Zimbabwe, 2 from Cambodia and 1 for each of the following countries: Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, Lao, Myanmar, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Tanzania.
- 14 All 3 evaluations in Zimbabwe are by the same consultant.
- 15 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly.
- 16 LANGO is the draft Law on Associations and NGOs in Cambodia.
- 17 OAU's International Youth partnership developed highly successful and appreciated global meetings, known as Kaleidoscope or Youth Parliaments, in which hundreds of young people from around the world would gather to learn about their cultures and beliefs, as well as the political and civil environment in their countries, as part of the process of developing new skills in project management, community development, gender and development.
- 18 The Gender Justice change goal chapter shows, in fact, that Oxfam supported programs are increasingly engaging men and boys.
- 19 Tokenism is described as a perfunctory gesture towards the inclusion of members of minority groups, with the intention of creating the 'appearance' of social inclusiveness and diversity and so deflecting accusations of social discrimination. In Sherry R Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (<http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>), rungs 3 to 5 are described as tokenism, 'that allow have-nots to hear and to have a voice', even 'to advise' but without giving them the right to decide.
- 20 See p. 11 for how OPA is discussed in the Oxfam Program Standards (Standard 5).
- 21 Oxfam Australia (2), Oxfam Canada (2), Oxfam Great Britain (9), Oxfam Hong Kong (1), Oxfam India (2), Oxfam Intermón (1) and Oxfam Novib (4). The total is more than 20 because OAU and OCA collaborated on one.

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- 22 Afghanistan, Cambodia, Chile, Guatemala, India (2), Nigeria (2), Sierra Leone, South Africa, Vietnam (2), Zimbabwe
- 23 Problems include small sample size, unclear or biased sampling criteria, low response rate or unclear presentation of the data.
- 24 See the Gender at Work framework found at: <http://www.genderatwork.org/OurWork/OurApproach/GWFramework.aspx>, accessed on 27/1/15.
- 25 In two of the studies – in Yemen and Sierra Leone, where the interventions were carried out in two distinct districts – outcomes were much better in one district than the other.
- 26 To access the AWID's publications on this issue go to <http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights>, accessed 09 Feb 2015
- 27 See p. 11 for how OPA is discussed in the Oxfam Program Standards (Standard 5).
- 28 Oxfam America (1), Oxfam Australia (2), Oxfam in Belgium (1), Oxfam GB (9), Oxfam Hong Kong (1), Oxfam International (3), Oxfam Italy (1), Oxfam Intermón (1) Oxfam Novib (2), Oxfam affiliates in Ethiopia (1), Oxfam affiliates in Nicaragua (1)
- 29 China, DRC, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Haiti, Jordan, Mali, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- 30 See <http://www.compasqualite.org/en/index/index.php> for more information on the Quality Compas initiative
- 31 For example, Oxfam Hong Kong estimates it reached several million people through 181 emergency responses in a six-year period; In Jordan, where refugees were dispersed in communities, Oxfam Italy reached nearly 15,000 households and 75,000 individuals (42% women and girls); Oxfam GB, on its own and working in coordination with UN entities, frequently meets or exceeds its goal of reaching between 10 and 25 percent of the affected population.
- 32 The ARR collects indicators on five dimensions – Livelihood viability, innovation potential, access to contingency resources and support, integrity of the natural and build environment and social and institutional capability – and generates a composite score. The Alkire-Foster Resilience Index is a similar composite index.
- 33 A statistically significant results means that there is a high level of confidence that the difference captured is the result of the intervention. However, the difference itself might not be huge. For example, women in a micro-finance program might have \$15 more income per year than non-participants, something that can confidently be attributed to the program, but makes little difference in day-to-day well-being.
- 34 See p. 11 in the Overview Chapter for a description of OPA from Oxfam Program Standards.
- 35 Nine from Oxfam GB, 2 from Oxfam Australia, 2 from Oxfam New Zealand, 3 from Oxfam Novib, 2 from Oxfam International, 2 from Oxfam America, 2 from Oxfam Canada, 2 from Oxfam Hong Kong, 2 from Oxfam Intermón and one each from Oxfam in Belgium, and Oxfam Québec.
- 36 Three from Ethiopia, 2 from Malawi, 2 from Bangladesh, 2 from Lao, and 1 for each of the following countries: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, and Tonga
- 37 Such as the 'KoBoToolbox' for digital data collection in Drought Early Warning Systems, in Ethiopia.
- 38 An evaluation in Ethiopia applies an interesting combination of value for money and cost-effectiveness approach (Chan, 2014). It also suggests possible indicators for future use in doing cost-effectiveness metrics.
- 39 This was also true in Bangladesh (Zijlstra, 2013) and Nicaragua (Oxfam GB, 2012).
- 40 Only one project (in Cambodia) in our sample addresses the issue of land access (Diokno and Virak, 2013)
- 41 This is the case for Oxfam GB's Enterprise Development Programme .
- 42 Evaluations of work in Laos, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Bangladesh highlighted this point.
- 43 See p. 11 in the Overview Chapter for the definition of OPA found in the Oxfam Program Standards.
- 44 Developed by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
- 45 2 from Oxfam in Belgium, 1 from Oxfam GB, 1 from Oxfam India, 1 from Oxfam Australia, 1 from Oxfam International, and 1 from Oxfam Novib.
- 46 1 from Ghana, 1 from El Salvador, 1 from India, 1 from Australia, 1 from Mali and 1 from Myanmar.
- 47 It should be noted that several water projects reviewed under gender justice and fair share of natural resources had a stronger gender focus, so looked at in their entirety might be somewhat stronger on gender than this subset indicates.
- 48 Specifically, Oxfam Australia's Free, Prior and Informed Consent regional program (Kelly, 2014).

Bibliographic Information

© Oxfam International July 2015

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78077-891-4 in July 2015
Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

This paper was written by Laura Roper, Mónica Sánchez de Ocaña, Mary Sue Smiaroski and Jasmin Rocha. It is part of a series of papers written to inform the policy and practice of development and humanitarian issues.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

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