



Evaluation of Stories of Change Project 'Haiti - Let Agogo'

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the globe, Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) has a long tradition of creating sustainable impact in the communities it serves. However, time and resource constraints often mean that programme results are not fully assessed, documented and shared with staff or the general public. Recognising the power of good data dissemination, OGB embarked on a new initiative in early 2009. Called “Stories of Change”, this effort aims to combine quantitative results and ‘first-person’ narratives to develop strong communications materials that are backed up by rigorous programme data. Overall, “Stories of Change” profiles OGB project achievements and challenges in four key country sites: Malawi, Haiti, India, and Sri Lanka. This particular document focuses on Oxfam’s work in Haiti—and specifically, on the “Let Agogo” dairy network project. Established in 1999 by leading Haitian animal health NGO Veterimed and supported by OGB since its start¹, Let Agogo has built a robust national network of 13 dairies that turn local producers’ milk into yoghurt, sterilised/pasteurised milk, and cheese, and which then sell these finished goods for profit in various sites across Haiti.

To date, Let Agogo has followed a simple, straightforward process to build its dairy network. The project constructs a dairy and supplies initial equipment, then hires local staff to run processing operations and recruits area dairy farmers to form a producer association which coordinates milk production and delivery (and ideally oversees dairy management in the long term). The project may also give local farmers supplies like water wells or cows, and give associations capacity building support and technical training. Farmers subsequently produce and sell their milk to the dairy, which then processes the raw milk into long-life sterilised bottled milk, pasteurized milk, flavoured yoghurt, and/or artisanal cheese. Finally, a Veterimed-funded marketing and purchasing “hub” called the Central Purchasing and Commercialisation Unit (or the “Central Unit”) coordinates marketing and sales for all dairies, finding clients to purchase the products, negotiating contracts and helping the dairies restock packaging supplies/equipment—a service for which it takes a small margin to cover its own costs. Dairies then deliver the products to clients, claim a small margin to cover their own expenses, and pass on an annual per-bottle premium to producers.

Building on the success of this initial model, Veterimed opted in mid-2008 to expand the dairy network from 13 to 25 processing units in a second phase of the project, with support from OGB and other key donors. In doubling the number of processing sites, Veterimed and OGB aims to increase Let Agogo’s domestic market share from 0.4% to 5%, while benefitting 2,000 rural producer families across Haiti. Target beneficiaries are small-scale dairy farmers who own between 4-5 cows on small plots of land—but who are not leveraging their animals’ full production potential because of a lack of good market access for milk sales. Officially launched in 2008 and running through 2011, this second phase of Let Agogo consists of five core components which build on the project’s first-phase activities. Each component has its own set of anticipated outcomes and areas of OGB support (although Oxfam also contributes unrestricted funding to Veterimed, for general expenses related to the project)²:

- 1) **Support to producers:** Includes technical training on improved husbandry, provision of animals (especially to female producers)/supplies, and other activities. Here, Oxfam contributes funding for the distribution of cows to female producers. Anticipated outcomes for this component include 2,000 new breeders familiar with new production

¹ Source: Interview with Veterimed Technical Coordinator Cimé Schilet, Mar. 2009.

² Source: Interview with Luc St. Vil, OGB Haiti Programme Co-ordinator, Mar. 2009.

techniques, a 50% increase in milk production among participating producers, and new access to factors of production for 4,000 farmers.

- 2) **Strengthening producer associations:** Capacity-building training for new and current producer associations. Oxfam contributes general funding to support these activities with the aim of integrating 2,000 new milk-producing families into dairy association, of whom 30% will be women. The project team also anticipates that by the end of the project the associations will be capable of managing all aspects of milk processing and production.
- 3) **Support to dairies:** Creation of new dairy facilities that can manufacture a range of dairy products; strengthening of current dairies' production capacities. Oxfam provides funding for new dairy equipment, and anticipates that 13 existing dairies will ultimately have an increased production capacity of 100 additional litres of milk per day, while 12 new dairies will process at least 200 litres of milk each day. Overall, the project team hopes the network will process approximately two million litres of milk per year, with higher milk quality and increased storage capacity to meet new client demand.
- 4) **Enhancement of dairy marketing:** Strengthening of the Central Unit's marketing and outreach capacity. Here, Oxfam gives funding and strategic advising to help the Central Unit transition from a Veterimed-supported entity to an independent marketing and supply corporation. Ultimately, the project aims to have the independent Central Unit oversee the marketing and sale of close to one million litres of additional milk after three years, through a more diversified product line and client base.
- 5) **Strengthening of dairy sector advocacy:** Lobbying of government to enshrine pasture land rights of producers and improve producers' access to state credit. Here, Oxfam gives funding and resource support, in order to achieve anticipated national policy changes that increase credit access and promote land provision for small dairy farmers.

While not explicitly stated as a project component,³ Phase 2 of Let Agogo also committed to improving gender equality in local communities by giving women access to cows, by engaging more women as local producers, and by creating women's producer associations in some communities and integrating women into mixed associations in others.

To inform planning for the new phase of Let Agogo growth—and to support the multi-country “Stories of Change” campaign to document and promote results more effectively, in March 2009 OGB and Veterimed carried out an evaluation of Let Agogo's progress to date. A mixed team of OGB and external evaluators aimed to determine whether Let Agogo has in fact been moving toward the successful achievement of anticipated outcomes/impact in communities served by some of the 13 current dairies, in the time since its start. OGB also wished to ascertain which, if any, of the project's Phase 1 accomplishments might be clearly attributable to Oxfam support. Given the similarities between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Let Agogo project, evaluators used the outcomes described above as the basis for their assessment (with the exception of advocacy, which was not assessed due to time and resource constraints).

For its evaluation, the OGB team targeted a sample of the Let Agogo beneficiary population and compared this cohort against a non-beneficiary sample of dairy producers, (where possible) located in the same communities and with largely similar characteristics, namely (typically) married household heads aged 18 – 60, with 6+ dependents, 1 – 3 cows, and some primary education. Evaluators sought to determine whether clear differences existed between the two groups in the project areas described above—and if so, whether these differences may be attributable to OGB/Veterimed activities. The team used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a quantitative household survey, administered to 60 beneficiary households and 60 non-beneficiary households, qualitative focus group discussions, and semi-structured

³ Source: *Project Plan: VETERIMED Dairy Franchise Business - Let Agogo - Consolidation and Growth*.

interviews with selected stakeholders. These methods are described in detail in the full-length report that follows.

While the evaluation team was, in general, able to carry out a meaningful assessment of the Let Agogo project, several key limitations affected the quality and rigour of data collected. Given the partnership-based model of project implementation (wherein OGB gives Haitian NGO Veterimed largely unrestricted funding to implement Let Agogo through local dairies) the “Oxfam contribution” was often not explicitly recognised by local communities. In many cases, this lack of clear OGB brand recognition made it difficult for evaluators to clearly attribute project outcomes/impact to Oxfam specifically. Where the household survey and focus groups were concerned, sample size, selection methods, and site choice were dictated by programme constraints. Several of the dairies targeted for evaluation were, in fact, not operating at the time of the evaluation or inaccessible due to transport and time constraints. As a result, the overall survey sample was small—and potentially not an accurate representation of the entire beneficiary/local non-beneficiary population.

Yet despite these challenges, evaluators found promising results which suggest that the Let Agogo project is, in many respects, making good progress toward its stated aims. In the area of **support to producers**, evaluators found that 90% of surveyed project beneficiaries receive some form of project assistance, and that 97% of beneficiaries who have received training feel this help has enabled them to improve their milk production. Indeed, since the start of project, beneficiaries’ annual milk production has risen by over 100% to an average of 282 Gal/year. In contrast, non-beneficiary milk production has declined during the same time period to approximately 265 Gal/year. Evaluators believe these production increases may be linked to project support, in combination with parallel project efforts to boost market access. However, evaluators did note that project support to producers is geographically uneven: producers in some locations only receive limited assistance.

Where **strengthening of producer associations** is concerned, the team found that 70% of polled beneficiaries feel their local association gives them support that has better equipped them to produce milk--by enabling them to build stronger producer networks and gain access to higher milk sale prices. For many, the associations’ key value is the “strength in numbers” that they provide: by bringing producers together in cohesive groups, the associations help boost producers’ access to resources and training. Women particularly value this opportunity to come together and gain support from each other. However, evaluators also noted that many members feel their participation in the management and decision-making structures of their associations is currently limited. On a related note, most associations presently appear to lack the capacity to take over dairy management duties from Let Agogo.

Support to dairies, meanwhile, has yielded several promising results, with the construction of dairy facilities providing farmers in many communities with new (or first-ever) opportunities to sell their milk. In some communities, support to dairies has enabled local processing sites to provide added services to area producers, like animal vaccinations. Dairy expansion has also created key local jobs, with 150+ employees working in the current dairy network. Project training of these staff in milk quality control has also likely helped raise quality standards. Unlike other local buyers, Let Agogo dairy staff are trained to test farmers’ milk rigorously for dilution and impurities. However, the team noted that all dairies visited find it difficult to balance peaks and troughs of supply and demand throughout the year, and many operate below capacity—particularly during the country’s dry season.

In the area of **market access**, it appears that project efforts have enabled good progress toward key outcomes. The opening of dairies and the acquisition of a large-scale school supply contract

have boosted demand for local producers' milk, likely raising incomes: 89% of beneficiaries report higher annual earnings after joining the Let Agogo network. In 2008, beneficiary income from milk sales was three times higher than non-Let Agogo producers' milk earnings. With their added earnings, many beneficiary producers can now pay school fees, invest in new assets, and provide start-up capital for women-owned businesses. Project support has also helped increase capacity for new market penetration: the Oxfam-funded purchase of 80,000 glass bottles has helped Let Agogo provide sterilised milk for state schools—a large-scale supply contract. However, the marketing model is somewhat vulnerable. The sale of yoghurt faces stiff competition and shrinking profit margins, and the reliance on the state school system as a single large client for sterilised milk sales, with no contract guarantees, is a risk to stability.

Finally, where **women's empowerment** is concerned, evaluators found that project activities have provided key benefits for certain female producers, including Oxfam-funded distribution of over 120 cows, and support for efforts to increase female membership in producer associations. New cow ownership has given some local women a new income stream, likely increasing their economic status and boosting their social standing as a result. Indeed, in surveyed communities, 65% of all beneficiaries believe that women have a greater role in household decision-making since Let Agogo's start, while only 44% of non-beneficiaries feel the same. However, not all communities are currently benefiting from key activities like cow distribution. Project support for women is still somewhat uneven and inconsistent across project sites.

Drawing on these findings, evaluators have made several recommendations as the Let Agogo team begins Phase 2 of its activities. Overall, the evaluators suggest that Oxfam GB and Veterimed staff carry out more regular, in-depth project monitoring and evaluation (M&E). A strong, systematised M&E system can help staff identify project strengths and weaknesses, and do much to propel the project toward success. In the area of producer support, imported high-yield cattle, better year-round water supplies, and more credit/loan provision may warrant further investigation as strategies to help producers improve their output and well-being. Among the producer associations, stronger recruitment campaigns, streamlining of meetings, and clearer incentive structures may help boost membership and participation. At the dairies themselves, more on-site storage capacity, plus a bottle return scheme, could enhance dairy production processes and insulate against fluctuating supply and demand. In the open market, stronger mentorship from national business leaders and a private-sector advisory board could facilitate acquisition of new large-scale clients. And where women's empowerment is concerned, scaling up current initiatives like cow distribution into all dairy communities can help the project achieve its gender equality targets. Indeed, the same can be said for the project as a whole: if efforts are made to expand access to the project's successful elements, and if challenges are thoughtfully addressed, then Let Agogo has strong prospects for growth.

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