



# Mid Term Evaluation of Food Security and Livelihoods Programme in Kitgum district, Uganda

Full Report

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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Evaluators: Vivien Walden

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## **1.0 Background**

### **1.1 General**

Since 1986, Northern Uganda has suffered from a protracted, low-level civil war between the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), and The Lords Resistance Army (LRA). The civilian population of Northern Uganda have suffered from direct attacks and abductions, while also being caught in the middle of fighting between the UPDF and LRA. This situation led the majority of people living in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader to seek refuge in a system of highly crowded internally displaced (IDP) settlements (also known as "protected villages").

The re-entry of the LRA into Uganda from South Sudan in June 2002 saw an escalation in the levels of violence and insecurity, resulting in a worsening of the humanitarian situation for the civilian population. IDP numbers increased; urban centres and protected villages suffered even worse levels of overcrowding. Insecurity also meant that access to most areas in Northern Uganda was restricted for both NGOs and commercial traders, leading to a large-scale deficit in essential goods and services reaching the displaced communities<sup>1</sup>.

In 2005, five humanitarian workers were killed in Northern Uganda making it even more dangerous for aid agency cars to be seen on the roads. There were threats from the LRA that they would deliberately target aid workers.

### **1.2 Programme**

The North Uganda Emergency programme aims to save lives and protect livelihoods of people affected by conflict and natural disasters in Northern Uganda. Of the estimated 2,000,000 displaced by conflict, more than 500,000 were located in camps in Kitgum and Pader districts (PIP 2005) in the years 2003 -2005.

The Kitgum programme has been running since 1997 providing water, sanitation, public health promotion and livelihoods support to 150,000 people displaced by the conflict into IDP camps in Kitgum and Pader districts. The impact at the time of planning was "to improve food, income, health, and security status for IDPs in Northern Uganda." Due to the insecure environment and the risk of attack from members of the LRA, access to the camps for project staff became increasingly difficult and for the years of 2003-2005, no travel by staff to camps took place. It was in response to this lack of access that the remote implementation and remote monitoring system was established, based on a "cascade system" of paid and unpaid members of the affected community and their ability to travel to Kitgum town for meetings with Oxfam staff. Other independent monitors such as Church of Uganda staff or later, older women from the church were employed to give a more "independent" view of what was happening and to verify information from other sources.

## **2.0 Evaluation methodology**

The evaluation of the remote monitoring aims to cover the years between 2003 and March 2006 when access to the camps was re-gained. Attempts have been made to look at reports from this time, both electronic as well as the handwritten notes from members of the community cascade structure. Discussions were had with those staff who were part of this remote monitoring system: both those who were paid Oxfam staff at the time and those who were extension workers based in the camps. A focus group was held in Lokung camp with the commander, leaders, members of the water user committee, CEF and leaders from the community managed projects – around 22 people in all at various times during the meeting.

Unfortunately much of the information has either never been documented or has been misplaced. Recall is always difficult after five years so there will be some discrepancies in what is reported. Any misinterpretations are solely the responsibility of the evaluator.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from advisory review 2005

### 3.0 Assumptions made

At the time there was no alternative to remote programming and monitoring: it was either do not respond or settle for “anything is better than nothing.” It was an unusual situation needing untraditional methods for information channels. This fact shown be considered when making a judgment on the effectiveness of the system.

Great confidence was placed in this method by programme management who felt that there were added values of community empowerment and control of activities and a much higher level of beneficiary involvement. According to the PIP, “monitoring is through a process of remote management that involves a community based cascading structure that allows us to accurately assess what our impacts are within the community.”

The narrative final report to ECHO June 2004 stated, “because of the remote implementation method, Oxfam invested significant time and resources into the development and mobilisation of a sophisticated, comprehensive and participatory monitoring structure. This structure is designed to monitor a range of issues including changing beneficiary needs, progress of activities against objectives and the impact of activities on beneficiary populations.” The same report stated that: “health promotion and community mobilisation in the camps appears to be more successful.” The ECHO review 2005 appears to support this view.

During adviser visits in December 2003, it was felt “the fact that the programme has been implemented without an Oxfam presence in the camps has not adversely affected its quality to date in comparison with other Oxfam programmes and the accountability mechanisms put in place seem to have been effective.” This observation was based on conversations with selected beneficiary representatives who came into town especially to meet the advisers. It was also pointed out that not much had been done in the way of technical installations up to that point in time.

### 4.0 Planned approach

The cascade structure involved a great many groups of people who all had to be trained in monitoring systems. There were basically three levels:

- Oxfam facilitators (public health and livelihoods) based in the camps and paid a monthly stipend
- Independent trained monitors – paid a monthly stipend
- Technical monitoring by district officials and NGO peer professionals

As staff could not travel to the camps, community members were asked to come out to the Oxfam office in Kitgum. Travel was by local transport that at times was targeted by the LRA and was therefore not without risks<sup>2</sup>. Bicycles were considered to be the safest means of transport although these were also occasionally stolen.

The independent monitors were originally Church of Uganda members (often the priests) and their diocesan supervisors who were trained to provide “periodic and detailed reports on activities and progress in the camps” (SIDA no-cost extension request). In early 2005 the priests stopped monitoring and new monitors (older women) were chosen from among church groups.

### Monitoring components

Title	Paid/volunteer	Trained in	Principle monitoring duties	Frequency of meeting with Oxfam staff
Public health facilitators (PHF)	Paid a small monthly stipend	Community mobilisation Project monitoring participatory assessment	Implementation of PHP activities Informing OGB of problems Supervising	Two weekly and then monthly

<sup>2</sup> For example, May 2005 one PHF reported being ambushed and robbed. In June 2005, the taxi taking PHFs back to camp was attacked and one person was shot in the foot. In November 2003, a CEF was ambushed on the road from Kitgum, was abducted but was released without her belongings.

		reporting	CHFs and pump mechanics Correct targeting	
Community extension facilitators (CEF)	Paid a small monthly stipend	Community mobilisation Agricultural extension Project monitoring	Targeting Registration and distribution Seed germination rates Impact at harvest time	Monthly reporting
CMP facilitators	Paid a small monthly stipend	Mobilisation Project management	Monitoring of the CMPs	Monthly reporting
Community health facilitators (CHF)	Incentives such as boots and soap	Basic health and hygiene Community mobilisation Reporting	Village level activities against the objectives	Quarterly but also fed into the PHF reports
Women's groups	Volunteer		Gender specific information Ensuring activities meet women's needs	Regularly – not specified
Church of Uganda 16 people mainly parish priests	Transport and field expenses paid	Monitoring and reporting on activities	Weekly monitoring of specific activities	Every month Diocesan office representatives visited camps monthly to supervise monitors
Independent monitors	Paid a small monthly stipend	Monitoring	Verification of information from other sources	Monthly
Sub-county officers – not living in camps		None		Ad hoc
Community leaders and other selected members – 400 in all over four days	Travel and living expenses		Accountability and impact	Once a year for programme review

Triangulation was supposed to be through crosschecked information from the various reporting from groups. In June 2004 (ECHO Report), it was reported that information was mostly consistent, although there is little documentation to support this.

In November 2003, discussions were held around the use of disposable cameras. This was mentioned again by advisers during their visit in December 2003. The discussion continued right up until 2006 but was apparently only implemented a few times.

Adviser reports in December 2003 highlighted the need for “clearer programme objectives, a clearer understanding and more systematic approach to monitoring by implementers at all levels.” It was recommended that the Church of Uganda monitors verify the data from other sources rather than collecting separate information. It was also recommended that clinical data be utilised for monitoring trends. More direct feedback from beneficiaries was suggested with the caution to weigh the advantages against the risks for people travelling into Kitgum town. The next advisory review in November 2005, reported that measuring impact was not possible with the current monitoring system. The recommendations were to improve the systems and especially the data analysis and to link the analysis to better planning. Beneficiary feedback meetings were again suggested.

## 5.0 Actual approach

### 5.1 Indicators

The indicators on the earlier LogFrames did not really support a clear monitoring framework in that they were often not SMART. They ranged from vague (reduced reliance from Oxfam), to

requiring a certain degree of technical expertise (quality of water is good) to simply unrealistic (95% of IDPs do not get diarrhoea, dysentery or scabies between X period and X). These indicators were seldom reflected in any of the monitoring formats or reporting formats. Much of the information gathered is on outputs with little on actual impact and almost nothing on beneficiary involvement or satisfaction. This was not a unique concern for the Kitgum programme as indicators generally at that time were poor in many Oxfam programmes.

## **5.2 Public health**

### **5.2.1 *The cascade system***

The PHFs at the top of the cascade were the group reporting directly to Oxfam. The CHF's saw their role as training and supervision of volunteers only (2006 M&E visit). The volunteer health promoters (VHPs) at the bottom of the cascade were expected to feed information up the line but there is no documentation of this ever happening.

The efficiency of such a large network of volunteers was questioned by HD advisers in December 2003 but does not appear to have been reviewed or changed in any way. In 2003, there were 1022 VHPs and 56 CHF's in four camps alone. Supervision of all these people who only received incentives in kind is almost impossible even when there is access. Getting monthly monitoring reports from the 250 or so volunteers in one camp would also have been unwieldy. There are no reports from meetings held with either CHF's or volunteers although lists of names appear with thumbprints for incentives received.

The PHFs were asked to supervise the constructors using detailed instructions including the composition of the cement. An example of this is the rainwater harvest tanks where PHFs were expected to verify the quality and sign before the contractors were paid. Even with instructions, it is difficult for a layperson to assess quality. Pictures would have been better. Borehole rehabilitation was signed for by the camp commander, the WUC chairperson and the PHF, which spread the responsibility among more people.

There were discussions about doing more technical trainings for PHFs and employing more of them to cover this supervisory role. There was little evidence of this happening and the PHF interviewed had not received this training.

In March 2006, limited access was possible to the camps using a UN "heavy-plated" vehicle and armed escort. The staff were thus able to finally triangulate the information they had been receiving from the different groups. The first visit to Patonga for example, showed a discord between what was reported on environmental health and what was actually visible in the camp; the houses were clean but the state of the common areas and many of the latrines was abysmal<sup>3</sup>. There were construction problems with some of the water installations as well; in one place the connection between the pipe and the tank was missing. Patonga was the worst example it has to be said and other camps were apparently better.

### **5.2.2 *The reporting formats***

Lists of pictures taken once are recorded but there are no records of usage or whether they were ever repeated. Apparently there were often technical problems with cameras jamming and all pictures had to go to Kampala for developing. Sometimes this took up to two months by which time, most people had forgotten what the problem was or why the picture was taken. The PHFs were told what to take and from which angle but some pictures such as distribution lines would not have been proof of anything in particular and could easily have been "staged."

The formats used by the priests and other monitors from the Church of Uganda had only headings with which to guide the monitor, answers tended to be generalised statements with no figures<sup>4</sup>. It would be impossible for a layman to judge "workmanship" of water points and latrines but this was included in a checklist. According to the MOU with the Church, the

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<sup>3</sup> Monitoring advisory visit, March 2006

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes there were misunderstandings: under the heading Practices of Open Defecation, one priest wrote: "yes please!"

monitors would also take pictures and collect life stories. None of this was done. At the same time as the monitors were using these formats, the PHFs were writing reports in a format of their own choice. There was no crosschecking and the two groups only met occasionally in the Oxfam office but not in the camps. The 2005 independent monitors were apparently given pictorial latrine-monitoring forms but there is no record as to how these were used. A PHF interviewed thought that the volunteers might have used the forms “infrequently.”

The revised public health formats (2004 circa) were better but still had very general statements<sup>5</sup> and little quantitative data. Some of these data were useful such as queuing times and distances to water points. Some efforts were made to instruct monitors on how to collect the information (ask 20 people, visit 20 homes) but information required was not precise (were people using nets instead of looking at who was using it, holes, frequency of washing) There was also a question for the “poorest” households as to whether they had received any assistance but nothing on what to do if the answer was negative. Later there were latrine-monitoring forms for each block but although the PHF knew which latrines needed repair there was no number for crosschecking. Other reports have general headings: overview, activities done, challenges, proposed solutions and activities planned. The quality of these reports varies. Reading them it is almost impossible to get an idea as to what the health and hygiene situation was in the camp during the non-access years.

### **5.2.3 The meetings**

The public health meetings attended by the evaluator in March 2006 were very one-way in communication. The PHFs reported and the team listened. There was little discussion or noting of areas for follow-up. In previous years according to one interviewee, problems *were* resolved or issues addressed but often “after a long time.”

Meeting reports are generally just bullet points of comments from the field with no follow-up on action taken. The same meeting format seemed to have been used every month for the three years with no attempt for any innovation. It is no wonder that everyone became bored.

## **5.3 Livelihoods**

### **5.3.1 The CEFs and CMPFs**

The livelihoods team had an advantage in that output livelihoods indicators are easier to measure than behaviour change for example. Indicators for success in some of their projects such as pig rearing are fairly straightforward; pigs are alive, producing, well or dead. Quantitative data such as seed distribution and germination were collected using standard formats; again, something that is fairly easy to do. Seeds and tool distribution was a blanket one so verification was only on who lived in the parish; this was crosschecked with leaders and WFP registration. The goat distribution forms showed clearly who had received and why they had been chosen: there was, however, no record of verification by the independent monitors. One concern that arose once there was access to the camps was that procurement of animals was done by the community or through a supplier, without any veterinary advice. Some animals were unhealthy, underweight or otherwise not suitable. If cameras had been used, these mistakes might have been spotted.

The Community-managed project facilitators (CMPF) sometimes gave out mixed-messages ending in one case with more beneficiaries selected than budgeted for. It turned out that some of the CMPFs did not actually live in the camps and therefore did not have a close relationship with the communities. The independent monitors do not appear to have reported on this weakness and the team had to discover it for themselves.

It is possible to train enumerators to carry out quantitative data collection without direct supervision as was shown by the food basket monitoring where quantitative data were entered into a database and discussed among the team and during enumerator meetings.

When access was finally possible, discrepancies between what was reported and what was actually happening were found in some of the community-managed projects. In one camp the

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<sup>5</sup> “We have confirmed that water in the shallow wells is clean” when no testing was done was one example.

community centre was found to have been built on private land and the owner the chairman of the group. In other projects the beneficiaries were found not to be the most vulnerable. Fraud was discovered in a brick-making group. This does not appear to have been widespread but enough to realise that the remote monitoring system was not watertight and that the independent monitors could not be relied upon for all information.

### ***5.3.2 The reporting formats***

The livelihoods formats are more detailed than the public health with specific areas for investigation such as prices of commodities in the market and yields. Livestock distribution reported on sickness and deaths but not on reproduction. The extent to which verification of information from other sources was used in meetings was very dependent on the skills and interest of the Oxfam team facilitator. An example of this is the distribution of seeds, cattle and goats; there is no record of crosschecking as to whether these were given to the most needy. There was also little information as to what different the various components were making to people's lives or whether it was meeting their needs. This was discussed in meetings but no specific quantitative data were collected.

### ***5.3.3 The meetings***

Good facilitation of groups by Oxfam staff clearly showed in the different reports. Where there was an interested and motivated facilitator, the information was more on quality and what impact the assistance had had on people's lives. In some livelihoods meetings, gender issues were specifically addressed: not just on the ubiquitous "how many women in a committee" but more on interpersonal relationships within the home and changes to women's decision-making powers. The reports from meetings vary in quality depending on who was facilitating but as always, there is no documentation as to how problems were solved or what action the team took.

## **5.4 Independent monitors**

The original Church of Uganda monitors (both men and women but often priests) were selected as it was assumed that by being members of the Catholic Church they would be trustworthy and more motivated to report the truth. Later a second group of only older women were chosen. In the TOR it is stated that they would be able to "easily and secretly hear and see what is taking place." They were not supposed to tell the community who they were. The TOR included a list of activities including monitoring the work of the volunteers (PHFs, CEFs and others), activities and community participation, investigate rumours of corruption and report on impact. There was no specific mechanism for crosschecking information. Several of the interviewees said that monitors were often seen as "Oxfam spies." During the focus group in the camp, it was found that Oxfam had not informed the camp commander or the leaders of the appointment of monitors. There are several reports of disharmony between the monitors and other members of the cascade structure. One PHF comment was: "the monitors are interfering too much in our work."

Oxfam relied heavily on this group of so-called "old ladies" to provide accurate and unbiased information (Kitgum learning 2005) as it was thought they would "gather more information from a greater variety of sources, probe and enquire more deeply to find out exactly what is happening and why." There was little apparent crosschecking of information with other groups; only the livelihoods team mentioned using them to verify some but not all beneficiary selections. The independent monitors had no systematic reporting mechanism. They wrote a report together as a group in each camp but again it was very much on security and distribution with general statements around cleanliness or lack of it but with little assessment of the extent of the problem. Occasionally there were attempts to look at impact of projects on for example the elderly but these were rare.

According to one interviewee, monitors were not trained to probe and to ask questions in order to get good information. What were needed were clear instructions on what and how to report: how to determine if the environment was clean for example. During meetings, the presence of an experienced facilitator to challenge and to probe would have made a



difference; for example with the community centre project where no one thought to ask the independent monitors to check as to whose land it was.

### **5.5 Ethical issues**

Oxfam staff were prevented from travelling from Kitgum out to the camps but community members were asked to travel to and from town by public transport (sometimes even transporting Oxfam cash). Materials for construction were sent to camps by private trucks with armed escorts. There was of course normally a great deal of traffic between camps and town as people came in to bank, go to the hospital or to trade. During the 2003 review, people did report that they felt these meetings were also a social opportunity.

However, not everyone was so positive. One leader from a camp told how he would lie awake the night before he had to travel thinking about the next day whilst women reported travelling in groups so that there was a greater possibility of some of them escaping. People were given the option to travel or not and sometimes groups did not attend meetings if they felt the road was unsafe. Why so many people still came could be due to a number of things: loyalty to Oxfam for the help received, fear of losing the monthly stipend, fear of missing out on project incentives. It is impossible to tell.

The MOU signed with the Church of Uganda had no mention of Oxfam's responsibility if anyone was killed or injured whilst undertaking a monitoring visit. The PHFs were told clearly when they were employed that Oxfam had no responsibility for their safety as they had chosen to work on a voluntary basis. Those who were robbed were not compensated although one person who had an Oxfam bicycle stolen, had it replaced. In the focus group, one person reported having been told by Oxfam that if he were killed, the community would have to pay compensation to his family as he was their leader and "it was their responsibility."

When there was an accident in Pader not associated with rebel forces, Oxfam did compensate the families of the deceased but the point is really that there were no clear guidelines that could be disseminated to all volunteers and staff. Oxfam's volunteer policy now has very clear guidelines as to what kind of compensation volunteers can expect in cases of death or injury.

In summary, nobody was forced to attend meetings, people came to town anyway but there was an incentive to be part of the cascade system and Oxfam did expect large numbers of volunteers to travel to Kitgum. In hindsight, Oxfam was fortunate that no one was ever killed when travelling to/from meetings that the organisation had requested.

### **5.6 Accountability**

A positive spin-off from the remote implementation has been a greater involvement of the community and greater transparency. Targeting was done by communities themselves with criteria set by Oxfam but it appears to have been an open community discussion<sup>6</sup>. Information on distribution had to be communicated ahead of time due to the insecurity so by default, the programme was more accountable. When goods were about to be distributed, the camp commander informed the PHFs or CEFs who informed leaders. A meeting was held where community members having been told the criteria and how many people in each village would benefit, chose the households. In the community focus group, an example was given where beneficiary feedback did change the vulnerability criteria and where discussions were had around selection of community projects until a compromise was reached.

The informal complaints mechanism was via the camp leaders to the PHFs and CEFs to Oxfam. There are a few examples of complaints about Oxfam staff being passed on by the independent monitors. The PHF reports often contain complaints by community members but how much these were ever followed up is not documented. There was no dedicated person to handle or document complaints and the outcomes.

There was a plan to get feedback from communities and to assess impact by inviting selected people (up to 40 per camp) to come into Kitgum to meet the Oxfam staff. Selection was done

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<sup>6</sup> Although there were definite examples of nepotism

by criteria such as leaders, health staff, women group leaders, disabled, widows and “just ordinary people.” The PHF interviewed thought this had happened a couple of times a year; the advisor review report (2005) mentions four times in two years and the livelihoods team felt it had happened twice at the end of 2004 and 2005. There are no written minutes from any meetings although staff felt that these “were around somewhere.”

### 5.7 Constraints

The “spy” system set up by Oxfam with the Catholic Church was probably not the best example of openness and transparency. The independent monitors clearly saw themselves as being representatives of their community and the link with the Oxfam staff. They did report on discrepancies around distribution and on fraud but as older women it is questionable as to how far they were prepared to go in denouncing leaders of a community in which they would continue to live. They also appeared to be fiercely loyal to Oxfam so the question remains how many complaints against the organisation they were prepared to carry forward<sup>7</sup>. The majority of focus group participants felt that information passed on by independent monitors was not always correct, especially if they had not attended the community meetings. There was a distinct lack of trust between monitors and the cascade system. The independent monitors also received a monthly stipend from Oxfam, which does not make them completely objective.

Complacency seems to have been a constraint at times. The quality of information recorded differs from team to team and the amount of information collected is reduced in the later years for some components. It is maybe difficult to remain motivated if it is not possible to see the progress for oneself. By March 2006, meetings with PHFs had become little more than information around the number of latrines built and the distribution of non-food items. There may also have been a feeling among PHFs that failure to motivate communities on environmental health would lead to dismissal making it easier to keep reporting progress. Livelihoods meetings were more animated but then again, it is easier to talk about crops and animals with a farming community.

### 6.0 Lessons identified for future programmes

Indicators need to be simple and understood by all those who will collect the data	If impact cannot be truly assessed due to lack of access, it is better to be realistic and go for outcomes or outputs only
Clear means of verification with quantitative tools and timing clearly defined	If formats are used they should have clear instructions and definitions for ambiguous words Formats should be tested out with volunteers to ensure they are able to collect information without support Tick boxes are easier if a list of possible choices is given and enumerators are trained
Qualitative data tools instead of sweeping generalised statements	If qualitative data are required on satisfaction or a feel for improvements, then a graded system with clear instructions as to what is meant by “good” or “poor” may be a better way of doing it for people who are not experienced in focus groups or other PRA tools A transect walk could, for example, list things that the monitor needed to check with a grading system for each area Tools need to be tested and discussed with

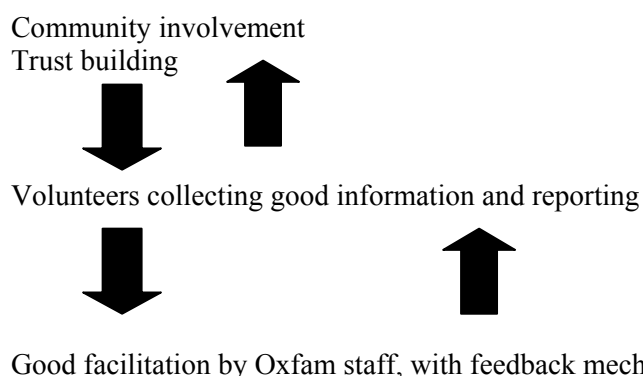
<sup>7</sup> An example of this loyalty was given in the advisory review report from November 2005

	volunteers – this should be done in all programmes but is even more important when there is remote monitoring
Clear guidelines as to what information is needed	Clarifying what is important and what is nice to know. It might be better to collect information at specific seasonal times such as just after the rains for malaria than doing it on a regular basis when people get bored or complacent
Technical structural monitoring should use photographs or diagrams that can be crosschecked	It is unfair to expect someone with no technical skills to verify construction work and approve payment. It can also bring volunteers into difficulties if contractors feel that it is them who are stopping payment These days there is better technology both for digital cameras and phone cameras <sup>8</sup> although security issues may prevent this usage
Look for new and innovative means for data collection	Using the same format for three years is tedious for all concerned. It is hard to keep anyone motivated and keen to report if there is never any change Try methods such as community mapping and colour coding
Proper verification of information with trust building and mutual respect	Having a group secretly monitoring the work of others in the community is not a good way to build up trust. Monitoring is an integral part of everyone's work. The ideal would have been for both groups to monitor and for the Oxfam staff to compare reports and challenge where necessary
Ensure that the monitoring system is not creating more tension in the community	Be honest and open with community leaders when setting up a system. This means that if alternative monitors are to be employed, everyone is aware of their presence and their duties. Checks should be made that there are not undue tensions between the various groups who monitor
The staff receiving the information need good facilitation skills and the ability to ask probing questions; not to just accept whatever is being reported	Not everyone is a good facilitator. Time needs to be taken during meetings with extension workers or community members to challenge and to get a feel for what is happening. Possibly a more structured meeting with smaller groups and specific questions may be better. Innovative approaches such as mapping of facilities and colour coding could be done prior to a meeting and then discussed It is important to make monitors feel that what they are collecting is important to the programme and not just a routine exercise that has been imposed on them

<sup>8</sup> During this evaluation, photographs were taken in a camp and immediately e-mailed back to the Oxfam office. If it had been a technical issue, the person responsible could have immediately called or sent a text message with a solution to the problem

Documentation by Oxfam staff on meetings held that include follow-up and problem-solving solutions with dates and the person responsible as well as verification of information received	Monitors need to feel that the information and especially community feedback is taken seriously
Complaints should not only be recorded but the resulting investigation and solution should also be documented	This is especially important in a remote implementation programme where the rapport with the community is missing and trust has to be built up from a distance
Draw up clear guidelines on compensation for volunteers travelling between home-base and the Oxfam meeting point and make sure these are included in all volunteer contracts	Do not wait until an accident happens. Seek professional advice within the organisation and make sure everyone is informed. There are now clear guidelines <sup>9</sup> to be found on the intranet.
Be realistic at all stages and make sure this realism is reflected in proposals and reports	Monitoring is difficult in all projects let alone when there is no access. Sometimes we have to accept that we will never get the true picture. We need to make our donors aware of this. "Good enough" should be the goal

Some of these lessons learnt could apply to any Oxfam programme. However, the point to make here is that these lessons are doubly important in a remote monitoring system and that all these points need to be in place. It is a circle:



## 7.0 Conclusions

Given the situation, Oxfam had little alternative in the choice of programming. It was a case of give up any attempts to even try (as other agencies did) or find ways of trying to ensure minimum standards for programmes that definitely did make an impact on the lives of the IDPs. This evaluation is in no way meant to play down the important role Oxfam played in these years of conflict.

Considering that Oxfam had not attempted this kind of programming before and that there is little published information around this methodology, the results were very positive. Certainly a good relationship was established over the years between communities and Oxfam staff and the programme has attracted a great deal of publicity. Even the "spy" system did not appear to have had a deleterious effect on the relationship but was more an irritation for the cascade structure.

The claims in the PIP and reports that we could "accurately assess what our impacts are within the community"<sup>10</sup> and that we had established a "sophisticated, comprehensive and

<sup>9</sup> [http://intranet.oxfam.org.uk/support/hr/pay\\_benefits/insurance/personal\\_accident.htm](http://intranet.oxfam.org.uk/support/hr/pay_benefits/insurance/personal_accident.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Compare this to reports from Iraq recently where it was felt that outputs rather than outcomes or impact were the only feasible measure in many instances.<sup>10</sup>

participatory monitoring structure” are a little exaggerated and probably lulled everyone into a false sense of security that all was well in the camps. This was not just applicable to Oxfam but was a widespread view even among donors. Certainly a structure was in place, information was flowing and the teams had an idea of what was happening but to call it sophisticated, accurate and comprehensive is overly optimistic. Monitoring in accessible Oxfam programmes tends to be flawed so to assume that remote monitoring would be better is simply not realistic. Nevertheless praise should be given for a brave attempt and tenacity both on the part of employed staff but especially on the part of the many volunteers and other community members who continued for three years to brave the dangers on the road to keep Oxfam informed. There are lessons to be learnt and to be shared with similar programmes; without the Kitgum programme’s vision these lessons would not now be available for others to take forward.

### **8.0 Acknowledgements**

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