



Evaluation of Oxfam's advocacy work for June 2007 G8 Meeting

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Cambridge Policy Consultants were commissioned by Oxfam Great Britain to undertake an impact assessment of Oxfam's advocacy work in the run-up and during the June 2007 meeting of the G8 in Heiligendamm, Germany. Oxfam's strategic objectives for this meeting were to ensure that:

- G8 leaders were held accountable for their aid promises;
- African voices were heard;
- There was demonstrable public concern;
- A G8 initiative on strengthening health systems was established.

This report presents the findings of the impact assessment.

2. Chapter 1 (Introduction) gives a brief overview of the research methodology and discusses some of the methodological challenges of the assignment. The assignment mainly built on telephone interviews with policy-makers (16 interviews) and journalists (15 interviews) involved in the G8 process. Assessing impacts, in particular the impacts of advocacy work on decision-making processes, is difficult. This evaluation offers the personal perceptions of 16 policy-makers about the impact of Oxfam's advocacy work on the G8 decision-making process. These perceptions can largely be considered as *informed* opinions of people on the inside of the G8 process, but it is important to remember throughout that they remain perceptions rather than factual information. The journalist interviews are less problematic in that discussions focused on the impact of Oxfam's press work on the journalists themselves; the main challenge for the journalist interviews was the fact that individuals often did not remember much detail about Oxfam's inputs or even their own G8 coverage.

3. Chapter 2 (Impact on selected G8 policy outcomes) discusses the impact of Oxfam's advocacy work on a limited number of specific policy outcomes of the G8 process, in particular the question whether or not Oxfam contributed to placing Africa on the agenda of the G8, to the German Government's €750 million ODA (official development assistance) top-up and to setting the direction in the G8 health systems debate. The main conclusions appear to be as follows:

- Oxfam was generally seen as not having been decisive in placing Africa on the agenda of the G8 but was recognised as having been one of a number of different influences on the agenda-setting process, on the one hand through the 2005 Gleneagles campaign and on the other hand by 'influencing the influencers' and by creating opportunities for others to put pressure on the German Chancellor (for example, enabling Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu to write to the German Chancellor).
- The general impression was that civil society pressure and press coverage (in particular the constant references to keeping the Gleneagles promises in the media) in the run-up to the G8 contributed to creating a general atmosphere which allowed the German Development Ministry to capitalise on existing plans for ODA increases. Oxfam was seen as an element in the overall civil society pressure;

- Oxfam’s main contribution in the health systems debate appears to have been that they put this debate higher on the political agenda and acted as a counterweight against the lack of interest from the G8 sherpas on the issue. Their influence on the actual direction of the health systems debate appears to have been smaller; they were however described as “*part of a group of avant-garde thinkers*” on the issue. Oxfam’s paper on health systems was considered to have been “*state of the art*”.

4. Chapter 3 (Impact on G8 press coverage) discusses the impact of Oxfam’s advocacy work on the media. Oxfam appears to have succeeded in generating a significant amount of press coverage: a rough but probably conservative estimate puts the number of examples of press coverage with direct reference to or involvement of Oxfam at 1,000 in the months before and during the G8 summit. This included wide coverage in the German and international media of the 4 ‘big head’ stunts which showed the G8 leaders in Pinocchio outfits, sunbathing on the beach, dressed as health workers and ‘gambling’ on the future of Africa. Journalists tended to stress that they do not need civil society to realise that G8 leaders are trying to put a spin on outcomes and were mainly interested in “*hard facts and good quotes*” – two areas where Oxfam was seen to score well. Journalists were generally very positive about Oxfam’s press work, in particular the speed and coherence of press releases and, importantly, the nuance of Oxfam’s messaging. They stressed the importance of a personalised and targeted offer and suggested that there was some scope for more proactive press work in the months prior to and following the summit. The area where Oxfam appears to have had the biggest impact on the G8 press coverage seems to have been Oxfam’s “*number crunching*”: Oxfam’s analysis of aid figures prior to the summit and of the \$60 billion ODA figure in the final Africa communiqué.

5. Chapter 4 (Impact on German public opinion) looks at the impact of Oxfam’s G8 popular mobilisation activities on the German public’s views on the one hand about Oxfam and on the other hand about development issues. In terms of people’s views about Oxfam, there is an indication that Oxfam Germany’s brand recognition may have gone up from 2.9% to at least 16%; Oxfam Germany’s supporters base increased with 10% and this new supporters’ base appears to be fairly solid (with more than 90% individuals indicating that they would possibly sign an Oxfam petition) and to include a significant number of individuals (41%) who had not heard about Oxfam prior to 2007. Most new supporters signed up during the White Band activities in Oxfam World Shops and through the Oxfam G8 website. The Internet was how most new supporters first learnt about Oxfam (in most cases through other sites than the Oxfam homepage); few new supporters first learnt about Oxfam through the press. However, this 10% increase is significantly lower than Oxfam’s objective of a five-fold increase of the Oxfam Germany supporters’ base. There does not appear to have been any shift in German public opinion about the importance of poverty in developing countries, but Oxfam’s G8 advocacy work does appear to have influenced people’s views about the G8 itself: almost half of respondents to a Germany-wide opinion poll commented that the *Deine Stimme gegen Armut* campaign¹ had influenced their views about the G8; 16% of all respondents to this

¹ *Deine Stimme gegen Armut*, translated as *Your Voice against Poverty*, is the German version of the *Global Call for Action against Poverty (GCAP)* and the equivalent of *Make Poverty History* in the UK in 2005.

poll explicitly credited Oxfam Germany with having influenced their views about the G8. Among Oxfam supporters, the main impact of Oxfam's G8 advocacy work appears to have been to strengthen or confirm individuals' existing views about the importance of development issues. The vast majority of Oxfam Germany's supporter base agrees with Oxfam's analysis of the G8 outcomes: 78% completely or rather agreed with the statement that G8 leaders had failed to deliver on their promise. Among existing Oxfam supporters, awareness of the *Deine Stimme* campaign appears to be high (more than 75%, *based on a small sample size*), but given the nature of the target group (Oxfam supporters) the fact that one in five of respondents had not heard about the campaign is perhaps surprising – although not everyone is necessarily coming to Oxfam from a campaigning perspective. The fact that 80% (*based on a small sample size*) of respondents did not participate in the *Deine Stimme* campaign suggests that there might be an untapped potential for use in future campaigns.

6. Chapter 5 (Cost-benefit analysis) attempts to compare the human resource and other financial costs of Oxfam's G8 advocacy work with the outcomes and impacts of Oxfam's G8 activities. A rough estimate puts the total cost of Oxfam's G8 advocacy work at £300,000, including a human resource input of just over 2,000 days. Calculations suggest that Oxfam's contribution to intermediary G8 outputs can be costed at just over 15p for each 'voice' against poverty, £75 for each article referring to Oxfam and £2,000 for a series of direct contacts with one policy-maker. About 55% of the total budget can be allocated to Oxfam's popular mobilisation activities compared to around 20% to Oxfam's G8 policy work and 25% to Oxfam's G8 press work. The question on the relative importance of direct policy contacts, public opinion and media work on influencing the G8 outcomes is a very difficult one to call. Unsurprisingly, there appears to be little doubt about the importance of media work. Policy work may be slightly more complex because few if any policy-makers admitted to having been influenced personally in the context of the G8, but on balance its value seems confirmed in the stakeholder interviews and through the case study on the health systems debate (which did not involve any media work or popular mobilisation activities). The most difficult to call is the role of popular mobilisation in the context of the G8. It is clear that the popular mobilisation activities led to impressive intermediary outcomes including for example 42,000 individuals signing the open letter to the G8 Finance ministers online and about 550 individuals per day accessing G8 material on the Oxfam Great Britain website (between 31st of May and 6th of June). It is harder to assess to what extent these intermediary outcomes translated into actual impacts on the G8 policy process: interviews seem to suggest that popular mobilisation can play a crucial role in influencing outcomes if a certain critical mass can be achieved, as was the case in 2005, but that this critical mass may not have been achieved in 2007. Oxfam's popular mobilisation activities did, however, contribute to Oxfam's strategic objective of ensuring demonstrable public concern and in particular to a 10% increase in the Oxfam Germany's supporters' base – this increase is significantly lower than the five-fold increase Oxfam was aiming for, but can be considered as a long-term investment. A stronger focus on strategic planning may have significantly increased the cost-effectiveness of popular mobilisation activities: had the expected five-fold increase in the supporters' base been achieved, each additional supporter would have costed Oxfam only £4 (compared to £165 now). Just less than one third of the total budget was spent during the actual G8 summit; two thirds were spent during the preceding months. The main outcome of Oxfam's G8 presence appears to be that Oxfam managed to counter the

G8 leaders' claim that they were keeping their ODA promises, which arguably represents roughly a third of Oxfam's impact on the G8 process. However, one can wonder whether a smaller delegation would not have achieved the same results. It is difficult to undertake a cost-effectiveness analysis of specific activities, but the March 2007 TNS opinion poll appears to score high in terms of cost-benefit analysis. Finally, it is possible to calculate a 'bottom line' for Oxfam's G8 advocacy work on the basis of the German Government's decision to increase its ODA with €750 million. Oxfam's total G8 investment of £300,000 (or €450,000) represents 0.06% of this German ODA increase. For Oxfam to break even, one needs to assume that Oxfam had at least 0.06% influence over the German Government's decision to increase its ODA. This is a reasonable assumption given that stakeholder interviews suggest that the constant references in the media to keeping the Gleneagles promises in the run-up to the G8 (which can at least partially be attributed to Oxfam) contributed to creating the general atmosphere which allowed the ODA increase to take place. This suggests that Oxfam's G8 investment presents value for money.

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