



# Evaluation of Stories of Change: Cotton Textile Supply Chain Project in India

Full Report

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

August 2009

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB

Evaluators: Jacob Korenblum

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW .....	8
2.1 BACKGROUND – STORIES OF CHANGE .....	8
2.2 CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED INTERVENTIONS .....	9
2.2.1 CONTEXT OF INTERVENTIONS .....	9
2.2.3 INTERVENTION LOGIC MODELS .....	13
2.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY .....	16
2.3.1 OVERVIEW .....	16
2.3.2 METHODS .....	18
2.3.3 LIMITATIONS .....	20
3.0 KEY FINDINGS .....	21
3.1 FARMING INTERVENTION OUTCOMES .....	21
3.1.1 REDUCED CULTIVATION COSTS .....	21
3.1.2 INCREASED INCOME THROUGH BETTER MARKET ACCESS .....	24
3.1.3 INCREASED WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT .....	30
3.2 WEAVING INTERVENTION OUTCOMES .....	34
3.2.1 INCREASED HANDLOOM PRODUCTION .....	34
3.2.2 INCREASED INCOME THROUGH BETTER MARKET ACCESS .....	37
3.2.3 INCREASED WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT .....	42
3.2.4 INCREASED SUPPORT FOR WEAVERS’ RIGHTS, THROUGH BETTER ADVOCACY... ..	44
4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	48
4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS – FARMING INTERVENTION .....	49
4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS – WEAVING INTERVENTION .....	51
<b>5.0 APPENDIX: TOOLS AND RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>53</b>
6.0 REFERENCES .....	54

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the globe, Oxfam has a long tradition of creating sustainable impact in the communities it serves. However, time and resource constraints often mean that project results are not fully assessed, documented and shared with staff or the general public. Recognising the power of good data dissemination, Oxfam 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 rigorous programme data. Overall, “Stories of Change” profile project achievements and challenges in four key country sites: Malawi, Haiti, India, and Sri Lanka. This particular document focuses on Oxfam’s work in India, and specifically on the Cotton Textile Supply Chain (CTSC) project initiated by Oxfam Great Britain and now implemented by Oxfam India staff and partners. The CTSC project aims to increase the income, bargaining power and control over markets for both male and female workers engaged in cotton farming, traditional handloom weaving, and factory-based garment manufacturing in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The project was designed in response to increased economic hardship and rising debt levels among cotton sector workers—which have, in recent years, been linked to the suicides of over 100,000 cotton farmers across India. Initially launched in 2002, the project now forms part of the larger India Agricultural Scale-Up programme and will be implemented through 2011.

In the area of support to cotton farmers—the first of three target demographics—Oxfam has focused mainly on supporting the training of local cotton producers to adopt more low-cost, high-value (and sustainable) organic farming practices. Working through local NGO partners in the Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh state, Oxfam aims to empower 8,000 smallholder cotton producers and their families by the end of the project through a simple implementation process. First, Oxfam and partners raise awareness about the benefits of organic farming in local communities, secure local buy-in, and identify beneficiaries. Criteria for participation in the project are few: beneficiaries must be cotton farmers. Then, Oxfam partners facilitate training on organic farming techniques, which include creation of natural pesticides (or “biocides”) from ingredients like chilli powder and neem leaf paste, and also the use of “vermicompost” (organic waste catalysed by worms into compost). Partners also provide selected inputs, like neem powder for organic pesticide preparation.

Next, partners help beneficiaries establish Organic Farming Groups (OFGs) which hold meetings where members share technical expertise and solve farming-related problems. The groups also work to obtain international organic certification for members’ cotton. In parallel, partners facilitate the training of beneficiaries on value addition and effective marketing. Techniques include “clean picking” (the use of hair nets to ensure picked cotton is free of hair) and improved packaging in cotton bags which protect against unwanted moisture and dust/dirt. Partners also organise market visits so farmers can gain a first-hand understanding of the cotton retail process. In addition, partners establish *mandal*-level marketing cooperatives—which serve groupings of village-level OFGs—and a larger umbrella trading company which oversees all coops, provides access to cotton storage and marketing/packaging materials, and negotiates bulk sales of organic cotton with commercial buyers on the farmers’ behalf—thus securing better terms of trade than the farmers would be able to obtain as individuals. Finally, partners and Oxfam consultants deliver periodic training on gender issues, in an effort to raise beneficiaries’ awareness on topics ranging from domestic violence to women’s leadership—and thereby promote local social change. Following this process, by the end of the project’s lifespan Oxfam and partners aim to achieve several key outcomes among farmer beneficiaries; this evaluation focused on three outcomes in particular: Reduced cotton cultivation costs for farmers (after training in new organic techniques that are

cheaper and more efficient than conventional methods), increased income from cotton sales (through enhanced market access and training), and an increased number of women active in farming activities and farming sector leadership, after project-supported gender trainings.

In the area of support to cotton weavers, Oxfam partners CHIP and Chethana Society have focused on delivering training and creating institutional support structures for handloom weavers in the Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh. By 2011, the project team aims to reach 1,000 local weaver families through a process similar to the farming intervention. First, Oxfam and partners raise awareness about the project among local weavers, and identify beneficiaries (enrolment criteria are minimal, but participation is limited to community members who are already handloom weavers). Then, partner Chethana Society trains beneficiaries on new weaving techniques, which include the use of organic dyes and leading-edge market designs. Chethana Society also helps beneficiaries self-organise into Handloom Production Groups (HPGs) which offer financial support (in the form of low-interest loans and emergency funds) as well as technical assistance; the groups also serve as a focal point for advocacy activities. In addition to production support, Chethana Society also gives beneficiaries training on value addition and effective marketing—through market visits and awareness raising about consumer preferences and design trends, among other activities.

In parallel, the project-established weavers' trading company, Chenetha Colour Weaves Private Limited Company (CCW) provides low-cost inputs, secures buyer orders, and purchases finished products from local weavers at above-market rates (for resale to commercial buyers). Finally, partner NGO CHIP provides training and resources relating to weavers' rights and advocacy—equipping beneficiaries to lobby the government for better working conditions, social benefits, and terms of trade. Chethana Society also delivers gender trainings in an effort to promote gender equality at the household and community levels. Here too, Oxfam and partners aim to achieve several key outcomes by the end of the project. This evaluation focused on four outcomes: Increased handloom textile production (through use of new weaving techniques, dyes, and designs), increased income from textile sales, (through enhanced market access and training), an increased number of women active in weaving activities and weaving sector leadership (following project-supported gender trainings) and an increased number of state government policy decisions that recognise/support weavers' rights, following project-backed advocacy efforts.

In June 2009, Oxfam staff and an external evaluator carried out an assessment of the farmers' and weavers' interventions described above (additional activities to support garment workers have not been described here as they were not evaluated, due to time constraints). For each of the first two project components, the team aimed to measure progress toward stated outcomes, ascertaining which (if any) of the interventions' accomplishments might be attributable to Oxfam support—and in the case of clear attribution, highlighting key “Stories of Change” that document and promote these linkages effectively. Given the project's presence in beneficiary communities since 2002-03, evaluators used the longer-term outcome goals described above as ‘yardsticks’ to measure progress to date toward longer-term project success. To carry out its evaluation, the Oxfam team targeted samples of each intervention's beneficiary population and compared these cohorts against non-beneficiary samples located in the same communities and with largely similar characteristics. The team used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including—for the cotton farming intervention only—a quantitative household survey administered to 80 beneficiary households and 80 non-beneficiary households, and for both interventions qualitative focus group discussions. 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 farmer and weaver support interventions, some limitations affected the quality and rigour of data collected. First, evaluation sites had varying characteristics: beneficiaries in some villages joined the project earlier than beneficiaries at other locations; implementation approaches also differed by partner NGO. These differences made it difficult for evaluators to draw conclusions that might be applicable at the beneficiary population level. Second, a lack of quantitative background data for the evaluation sites made *ex ante/ex post* comparative analysis difficult. For both project components, evaluators were forced to rely on Oxfam staff, partners and respondents' *ex post* recollections of their prior livelihood status—a somewhat unreliable process. Finally, given the short time-frame of the evaluation, evaluators' access to local communities was limited—allowing them to assess only a small sample of the overall project beneficiary population (and non-beneficiary population within the same communities).

Yet despite these challenges, evaluators found promising results which suggest that both projects are, in many respects, making good progress toward its stated aims. For the **farmers' interventions**, in the outcome area of **reduced cultivation costs through new organic practices**, evaluators found that Oxfam partners' introduction of organic farming practices among beneficiaries has likely helped these producers to reduce their annual cultivation costs by a mean 33% in communities surveyed. Project training on organic farming has also likely helped beneficiaries lower their outstanding debt levels and new loan burdens, as cost reductions from the switch-over to non-organic pesticides and other inputs have enabled farmers to spend less on production and save more household funds. This increased ability to save has enhanced farmers' longer-term income stability, by enabling them to contribute more to emergency loan funds set up by project-supported Organic Farmers Groups—such that a greater pool of low-interest loan funds is now available in times of need.

In the outcome area of **increased income through better market access**, the team found that CTSC project efforts to create marketing cooperatives and deliver value-addition training are likely linked to the higher cotton profit growth rates reported by beneficiaries after switching from conventional to organic cotton farming. Since the start of the project, beneficiaries' mean net profits from cotton sales have risen by a robust 112%, with new earnings used to pay for children's education and household asset purchases like new livestock—among other items. (In contrast, non-beneficiary cotton sale earnings have only grown by 13 percent). Market support initiatives may also underlie the dramatic reductions in beneficiary marketing costs—from over Rs. 100 per quintal before the project to only Rs. 40 per quintal—and the claim by 93% of beneficiaries that their ability to sell cotton in markets has improved since they joined the project.

Gender is addressed as a cross cutting issue in all of the CTSC project components. However, for the purposes of this evaluation and to ensure that the work being done to address gender inequality and increase women's empowerment was evaluated, it was looked at as a separate outcome in both the farming and weaving project components. In the outcome area of **increased women's empowerment**, evaluators noted that 94% of male and female project beneficiaries have taken part in Oxfam-supported gender trainings (compared with only 16% of non-beneficiaries reporting participation in similar trainings from other organizations). More importantly, these trainings are likely linked to concrete improvements in the status of women within beneficiary communities: 93% of beneficiaries reported that the number of women holding leadership positions in farmers' groups has increased since the project's start; 96% felt that women's participation in general community decision-making has also increased during the same time period.

Beneficiaries also reported that more female beneficiaries are taking part in cotton farming and marketing activities—with many earning their own income and savings for the first time—following

Oxfam-supported trainings. Finally, male and female project farmers also reported a general decrease in incidences of violence against women since the start of project-backed gender initiatives.

Oxfam-backed interventions to support **handloom weavers** have also likely created key “Stories of Change” in the lives of beneficiaries. In the outcome area of **increased handloom production** evaluators found that weaver beneficiaries’ mean monthly cotton output has grown by close to 20%, and silk output has risen by close to 15%, since the start of project-backed trainings on new weaving techniques. Most project-linked producers can now produce close to 10 additional meters of woven cotton per month; in contrast, non-beneficiary output of cotton and silk has remained unchanged over time. Training on methods that enable faster, more efficient weaving was cited by beneficiaries as a key advantage of project support: now that beneficiaries can weave high-quality textiles more quickly, they’re able to produce more finished goods per month.

Results were similarly promising in the outcome area of **increased income through better market access**. Here, 89% of beneficiaries reported that their ability to sell woven cotton at market has increased since they joined the project—while almost all non-beneficiaries felt their market access has declined over time. Evaluators observed that project-founded trading company CCW has helped beneficiaries secure reliable sales contracts, avoid market commission (by building direct ties with buyers), obtain free inputs, and receive premiums of up to Rs. 200 per woven item. Evaluators also noted that 77% of beneficiaries cited an increase in their net profits from cotton weaving since joining the project, with some reporting profit increases of 17% to a mean Rs. 3,500 per month (in contrast, most non-beneficiaries reported lower net profits of Rs. 2,000 – Rs. 3,000). Beneficiaries have used new additional earnings to pay for their children’s education and food, boost their household savings and pay down outstanding debts.

In the outcome area of **increased women’s empowerment**, the team found that close to 100% of beneficiaries reported improvements in the status of local women since the start of the project—while less than half of non-beneficiaries felt the same. In some beneficiary communities, 50% of leadership roles in local weavers groups have come to be filled by women, more female beneficiaries are managing household affairs outside the home, and more women are making more joint decisions with their husbands. In contrast, most non-beneficiaries reported that men still dominate household decision-making processes and exercise sole control over family finances. Finally, where the outcome of **increased support for weavers’ rights** is concerned, evaluators found that since the start of the project, state officials in Andhra Pradesh have introduced pension packages for weavers, enshrined weavers’ rights in party election manifestoes, and helped protect handloom products from imitators through better labelling—achievements which MPs and state officials attested were linked, in part, to Oxfam-backed advocacy. At the grassroots level, beneficiaries reported that project Handloom Production Groups (HPGs), whose role includes advocacy and mobilisation, have become increasingly effective in their work since the start of the project—and that for many beneficiaries, HPG advocacy represents the first time an organised group has ever defended their rights as weavers at the state level.

However, despite these positive achievements both the farmers’ and weavers’ interventions also face certain implementation challenges. Where market access and income growth is concerned, it is clear that weaver beneficiaries (and potentially farmers as well) have not been immune to the wider economic crisis affecting most global sectors of economic activity. As a result, exogenous factors like rising input and daily living costs (such as food prices) risk reversing the wage and market access gains that the project has likely created. In the area of cotton farming, the team also noted that income gains and cost

reductions are often slow to materialise—with several cultivation cycles often needed before organic crops produce marketable cotton—and that the prospect of poor initial yields (plus the high initial costs of the switch-over from conventional crops) may deter farmers from adopting organic practices. In the area of gender training, the team found that Oxfam initiatives for farmers and weavers “compete” with a host of other NGOs’ efforts for the attention of local farmer and weaver beneficiaries—with mandates occasionally overlapping and coordination of efforts unclear. This reality may have led to duplication of project activities and inefficient resource use.

Where advocacy is concerned, despite the affirmations of state officials and lobbyists that Oxfam-backed efforts have contributed to real policy change, many weaver beneficiaries reported a lack of tangible improvement in their socio-economic status. Evaluators noted that these contrasting views may point to gaps in information-sharing about the positive results of advocacy campaigning—and that resources devoted to informing local communities about policy achievements from project lobbying may not be sufficient. Finally, the sustainability of project marketing mechanisms (like the farmers’ marketing cooperatives and the farmers’/weavers’ trading companies) is unclear. Currently, both the farmers’ cooperatives and the weavers’ trading company rely on project funds—rather than self-generated revenue—in order to provide the marketing subsidies and purchase premiums they offer to beneficiaries. The farmers’ trading company is still at a nascent stage, with little current activity in the marketing sphere. With the current project cycle slated to end in two years’ time and the self-sufficiency of both companies unproven, beneficiaries’ increasing wage and price expectations may be unsustainable in the future if these companies are not strengthened to a point where they become fully self-sufficient in the project’s timeframe.

To help project staff and partners reflect on and address these challenges—while building further on the project’s strengths—evaluators have made several **recommendations**. Overall, Oxfam and partner staff may wish to carry out more regular project monitoring and evaluation (M&E), particularly in the area of advocacy. Stronger M&E will help staff demonstrate clearer linkages between Oxfam’s work and positive ground-level outcomes. **For the farming intervention**, the team recommended that a private-sector advisory board, marketing mentors, and community marketing managers could help the project’s Farmers Trading Company OORVI to build a larger buyer base for local cotton—strengthening its ability to operate sustainably once project funding ends. Creation of gender working groups and knowledge-sharing workshops could help project staff coordinate activities more effectively with other NGOs that deliver gender training in project communities—thereby avoiding duplication.

**For the weaving intervention**, evaluators suggested that more efforts to share advocacy information with beneficiaries could boost their awareness of project lobbying successes—and address current concerns that advocacy has yet to create local impact. Travelling theatre productions and mobile phone content delivery are two strategies (among many) that project staff could use to spread information widely at low cost. To mitigate beneficiary-reported input price increases and perceived risks of declining profits, the team suggested that fast-tracking planned linkages between project farmers and weavers could facilitate the sale of price-controlled raw cotton to weavers. Other strategies could include commission incentives for local purchasing agents to find good pricing deals, increased policy advocacy, and diversified skill-building training that teaches handloom weavers to operate power looms or work in other livelihood fields. If some or all of these suggestions are implemented in order to address key challenges, and if future project efforts build on both interventions’ current successes, then the farmers’ and weavers’ initiatives have strong prospects for sustainability and growth.

## 2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 2.1 BACKGROUND – STORIES OF CHANGE

Oxfam has a long tradition of creating lasting impact in the communities it serves. However, tight timelines and limited budgets often mean that project results are not fully assessed, documented and shared with staff or the general public. Given that Oxfam depends on large numbers of individuals and institutional funders for resources to carry out its work, better storytelling about “what works” in Oxfam programming can be a powerful motivation for these donors to continue their support. Better storytelling may also draw in new donors and raise more awareness about Oxfam projects among the public at large. In addition, good narrative documentation can help Oxfam country staff identify areas of project strength and weakness, in order to make changes where needed.

Recognising the power of good storytelling, Oxfam GB embarked on a new initiative in early 2009 called “Stories of Change. This initiative aims to combine quantitative data and ‘first-person’ narratives with the goal of developing strong communications materials (for use locally and in the UK) that are backed up rigorous project data. The initiative focuses on livelihood projects in particular, at four country sites: Malawi, Haiti, India and Sri Lanka. In carrying out this activity, Oxfam GB’s aim is to meet both external and internal needs. For outside stakeholders, Oxfam hopes to collect, analyse and present data that demonstrates key results which can be clearly attributed to Oxfam interventions. Within the organisation, Oxfam aims to build its own capacity to collect data effectively, analyse it meaningfully, and communicate it powerfully to others. Each of the four Stories of Change follows a common structure and process:

- ***A research/planning phase***, where Oxfam and country staff identify key themes, projects and geographic locations for evaluation and documentation.
- ***A logic model phase***, where the team works together to create a clear, concise logic model for selected projects, in collaboration with local stakeholders.
- ***An evaluation phase***, where the team tests the logic model’s hypotheses through field work that involves the collection and analysis of data from selected project activities. This phase includes ‘story gathering’, where country staff and UK-based communications staff document compelling individual case studies together.
- ***A product development phase***, where the team summarizes findings and transforms them into a) an internal evaluation report and b) powerful communications products for key audiences.

For its India Stories of Change, Oxfam chose to focus on the Cotton Textile Supply Chain (CTSC) project—a series of activities initiated by Oxfam GB, but now transitioning to local oversight by the newly-created Oxfam India and local partners in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, located in the south of the country. The project aims to improve the livelihoods and enhance the power of three distinct groups involved in the cotton textile supply chain: cotton farmers, weavers creating cotton products on traditional handlooms, and factory-based garment workers. Because of the large size of the project, the evaluators specifically focused on the work that Oxfam and partners are carrying out with cotton farmers and handloom weavers.

The CTSC project was chosen for inclusion in Stories of Change for two main reasons. First, since its inception, the project has attracted substantial interest from donors; an evaluation of the project’s results to date would help Oxfam to be accountable to these donors and attract additional funds for

its overall work on livelihoods. Second, the project has been operating in key local communities since 2002. With several years having elapsed since the start of implementation, Oxfam believed that strong potential existed for finding Stories of Change that might show a link between Oxfam’s work and better local livelihoods outcomes over time.

## **2.2 CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED INTERVENTIONS**

### **2.2.1 CONTEXT OF INTERVENTIONS<sup>1</sup>**

While IT and outsourcing may have thrust India into the global commercial limelight in recent years, natural resources remain the country’s main economic drivers—and cotton is a leader among them. Accounting for 38% of India’s total exports, the cotton textile sector generates over Rs. 420 billion in revenue each year, and employs close to 60 million people across the country. India ranks third in global cotton production after the USA and China, and the amount of land it devotes to cultivation—about 22 million hectares—is the greatest in the world.

Yet despite the cotton sector’s massive output and growing revenue base, the millions of people who work as farmers, traditional handloom weavers, and factory-based garment workers struggle daily to earn a basic livelihood. Close to 85% of India’s cotton farmers are smallholders with few resources and limited support networks. Faced with erratic market prices, poor market access, and rising costs for inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, many have seen their incomes shrink—while incurring snowballing debts on loans from private money lenders who charge exorbitant interest rates of up to 36 percent. A lack of organised collective marketing mechanisms has forced many farmers to shoulder high shipping and marketing costs themselves—and has limited these small producers’ marketplace leverage and access to larger bulk buyers. Repeated crop failures in the past decade (the product of increasingly erratic weather patterns) have further constrained farmers’ ability to cultivate a healthy and abundant cotton crop and earn a decent income. Finally, the widespread use of potent chemical pesticides (and a lack of proper training on their handling) has led many farmers to inadvertently destroy their remaining crop yields: over-spraying has completely wiped out “farmer-friendly” predators which help fight pests, while allowing the insects themselves to develop a resistance to local chemicals. Taken together, these realities have driven many cotton farmers into bankruptcy and, ultimately, suicide. Nationally, more than 100,000 farmers have killed themselves over the past decade—often because they were unable to repay mounting loans and see few prospects for economic survival.

For India’s cotton weavers, the picture is similarly bleak—particularly for those who work in the traditional “handloom” weaving sector. A traditional art form for generations, weaving on wooden handlooms is still practiced by more than 320,000 individuals in the state of Andhra Pradesh alone. However, growing private sector and government focus on large-scale power loom-based textile production for export has hit the handloom trade hard. While factory-based cotton garment manufacturing has boomed, handloom production output, product prices and wages have remained stagnant over time, even as daily living costs have risen substantially. With average incomes from

---

<sup>1</sup> Sources: *Study of Cotton Textile Supply Chain Programme and Potential for Scale-Up; Baseline Assessment for Cotton Textile Supply Chain Programme.*

handloom weaving as low as Rs. 820 per month in some communities surveyed by Oxfam partners—but average household costs close to Rs. 1,360 per month—many weavers have been forced into ‘vicious cycles’ of high-interest loans and debt, with few affordable options for borrowing.

Limited government support and a lack of access to resources and knowledge about market trends have further exacerbated most weavers’ dire situations. At the village level, the activities of many handloom producers are controlled by “Master Weavers” who oversee all design, input purchasing, production, and sales/marketing—leaving many weavers with little voice in the weaving process, or little understanding of larger supply chains. At the state and national level, policies (like the Handloom Reservation Act and Hank Yarn Obligation Act) introduced in the mid-1980s to protect the sector from factory competition by earmarking certain goods for production by “handloom only” have been scaled back in recent years—with a 50% reduction, since the year 2000, in the number of handloom products protected by law. At the same time, subsidies and incentives for factory-based textile production have increased. Poorly organized at the institutional level and generally unaware of their rights, handloom weavers have been largely powerless to reverse these trends—but have nonetheless remained in what many have termed a “sunset industry” due to a lack of skills or training applicable to other livelihoods fields. Ultimately, many weavers also succumb to market forces and enter acute poverty. During the last decade in India approximately 1,000,000 handloom weavers have been made redundant or have abandoned the profession, losing their livelihoods.

In response to these large-scale challenges facing cotton farmers and handloom weavers, Oxfam and partners conducted research in 2002 to identify strategies that could help producers in both sectors to establish sustainable livelihoods—while also helping stabilize and strengthen the cotton farming and handloom weaving industries themselves. Where farming is concerned, preliminary investigations revealed that organic cotton cultivation and market access training could serve as a viable solution. Organic inputs cost far less than conventional inputs and organic produce is growing in popularity, fetching higher market prices—thereby helping farmers increase their income and reduce their debts. For weavers, organic dyes were also shown to hold strong market potential, as a distinct value-add that could distinguish hand-woven products from factory-made competitors; collective production would reduce input costs and also increase bargaining power in the markets. In both cases, Oxfam and partners felt that proactive training on better packaging, marketing, and value addition could further strengthen the commercial viability of these products—as would the creation of Oxfam-backed trading companies to promote their sale.

This notion of using organic supplies and processes, coupled with proactive efforts to improve market access—and policy advocacy—formed the basis of the Oxfam Cotton Textile Supply Chain (CTSC) project launched later that same year. With its focus on practical skills training, gender awareness-raising, government advocacy and agricultural market linkages, the project soon became a core component of the larger Oxfam-supported India Agricultural Scale-Up Programme, which delivered a wide range of interventions to support smallholder agriculture across the country following its own launch in 2005. Oxfam GB’s project literature notes that overall “the [CTSC] project envisioned increasing the income, bargaining power and control over markets for both male and female workers engaged in the production process and in handloom business. By enhancing their scale of operation in the markets, the project aimed at socio-political empowerment of these

producer communities”. (The CTSC project also included a range of support for garment workers, which has not been described here--given this evaluation’s focus on farmers and weavers alone).

In 2007/2008, Oxfam extended the implementation of the CTSC project and its component activities through 2011, in funding partnership with the European Commission. Local implementing partners for the farming component are the Centre for Rural Operation Projects Society (CROPS), Modern Architects for Rural India (MARI), Pragathi Seva Samithi (PSS) and the Sarvodaya Youth Organisation (SYO). The current weaving component partners are the Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy (CHIP) and the Chethana Society. As in the first cycle of CTSC programming, the second round of farmers’ and weavers’ support has also aimed to strengthen these groups’ access to and enhance their power in the cotton production value chain, and in two states of the country—offering beneficiaries new opportunities to create and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

## **2.2.2 DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTIONS**

### **Support for Cotton Farmers**

In the second round of the CTSC project Oxfam’s support to cotton farmers has focused mainly on training, input provision, and institution building. Working through local NGOs in the Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh state, Oxfam aims to empower 8,000 smallholder cotton producers and their families by 2011 through a simple process:

- 1) Oxfam and partners raise awareness about the project and the benefits of organic farming in local communities, secure local buy-in for implementation, and identify beneficiaries. Criteria for participation in the project are few: while beneficiaries must be farmers, they need not be cotton farmers per se.
- 2) Partners organise training on organic farming techniques for beneficiaries, which include creation of natural pesticides (or “biocides”) from ingredients like chilli powder and neem leaf paste, and also the use of “vermicompost” (organic waste catalysed by worms into compost). Partners also provide selected inputs, like neem powder for organic pesticide preparation. This training is given by Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies (see point 5).
- 3) Partners empower beneficiaries to self-organise into Organic Farming Groups which hold regular meetings in which members share technical expertise and work jointly to solve farming-related problems. The Organic Farming Groups (OFGs) also have ongoing access to partner extension workers, who can be reached by phone for support/consultation on organic farming issues, and help facilitate international organic certification for participants’ cotton produce.
- 4) In parallel, partners facilitate training for beneficiaries on value addition and effective marketing. Techniques include “clean picking” (ie., use of hair nets and protective clothing to ensure picked cotton is free of hair) and improved packaging in cotton bags which protect against unwanted moisture and dust/dirt. Partners also organise market visits so farmers can gain a first-hand understanding of the cotton retail process.

- 5) Partners also establish *mandal*-level marketing cooperatives (called “Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies”, or MACS)—which serve groupings of village-level OFGs--and a larger umbrella trading company, OORVI, which oversees all MACS coops, provides access to cotton storage and marketing/packaging materials, and negotiates bulk sales of organic cotton with commercial buyers on the farmers’ behalf—thus securing better terms of trade than the farmers would be able to obtain as individuals (At the time of the evaluators’ visit, OORVI had only recently been established, and most marketing functions were being managed directly at the MACS level).
- 6) Partners and Oxfam consultants deliver periodic training on gender issues, in an effort to raise beneficiaries’ awareness on topics ranging from domestic violence to women’s leadership--and thereby promote local social change.

Following this process, by the end of the project’s lifespan Oxfam and partners aim to achieve several key livelihoods outcomes among farmer beneficiaries. This evaluation focused on three outcomes, which were:

- **Outcome 1:** Reduced cotton cultivation costs, after the introduction of and training in new organic farming inputs techniques that are cheaper and more efficient than conventional methods.
- **Outcome 2:** Increased income from cotton sales, through enhanced market access and training.
- **Outcome 3:** Increased number of women active in farming activities and farming sector leadership, after project-supported gender trainings.

Additional project “results areas” include advocacy (in which farmers are trained to lobby local government more effectively), and institution-building (in which farmers’ organizations are strengthened to ensure sustainable operation). These areas were not examined during the Stories of Change field visits, and so related outcomes have not been included.

### Support for Cotton Weavers

In the Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh, Oxfam partner Chethana Society has been delivering training and creating institutional support structures for handloom weavers. By 2011, the project team aims to reach 1,000 local weaver families through a similar implementation process:

- 1) Oxfam and partners raise awareness about the project among local weavers, and identify beneficiaries. Project enrolment criteria are minimal, but participation is limited to community members who are already handloom weavers.
- 2) Partner Chethana Society provides beneficiaries with training on new weaving production techniques, which include the use of organic dyes and leading-edge market designs.
- 3) Chethana Society also encourages beneficiaries to self-organise into Handloom Production Groups (HPGs) which offer financial support (in the form of low-interest loans and

emergency funds made available through member saving schemes) and technical assistance, and also serve as a focal point for advocacy activities. HPGs typically charge a small monthly fee, which covers costs related to this service provision and helps fund the group saving schemes.

- 4) In addition to production support, Chethana Society also gives beneficiaries training on value addition and effective marketing. Market visits and awareness raising about consumer preferences and design trends help weavers gain a more nuanced understanding of the textile market, their role within it, and the leverage they can exert in production and marketing processes.
- 5) The Chenetha Colour Weaves Private Limited Company (CCW), a handloom trading company established by Chethana Society, provides low-cost inputs, secures buyer orders, and purchases finished products from local weavers at above-market rates (for resale to commercial buyers).
- 6) Oxfam partner CHIP delivers periodic training and provides resources relating to weavers' rights and advocacy, in an effort to raise beneficiary and government awareness on key topics—and equip beneficiaries to lobby the government for better working conditions, social benefits, and terms of trade. Chethana Society also delivers gender trainings in an effort to promote gender equality at the household and community levels.

Following this process, Oxfam and partners aim to achieve several key livelihoods outcomes among weavers by the end of the project. This evaluation focused on four outcomes, which were:

- **Outcome 1:** Increased handloom textile production through use of new weaving/production techniques/ dyes/ designs.
- **Outcome 2:** Increased income from textile sales, through enhanced market access and training.
- **Outcome 3:** Increased number of women active in weaving activities and weaving sector leadership, after project-supported gender trainings.
- **Outcome 4:** Increased number of state government policy decisions that recognise/support weavers' rights, following project-backed advocacy efforts.

As with the farming component of the CTSC project, weaving institution-building activities were not observed during the Stories of Change field visits—therefore outcomes related to this area of the project have not been included here.

### 2.2.3 INTERVENTION LOGIC MODELS

As part of the Stories of Change process, prior to the start of this evaluation, Oxfam staff and an external consultant worked with local partners to capture the above-mentioned project processes in simple, clear logic models. The models aimed to give all project implementers a clear, shared understanding of the changes that each project hoped to achieve in local communities. The completed models for each intervention are shown here, along with the implementation and social change assumptions which stakeholders have identified in order for each model to unfold successfully:

## Logic Model: Support to Cotton Farmers

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Human Resources: Oxfam staff Partner staff	Identify and train 8000 cotton farmers in 100 villages on organic farming techniques/soil and water conservation.	8,000 Cotton farmers practicing organic farming techniques/soil and water conservation.  <b>8,000</b> Cotton farmers accessing and using organic farming inputs.	<b>Reduced cultivation costs through use of new organic farming techniques.</b>	Improved income security and reduced debt/poverty for farmers and their families, through better market access.
	Procure and distribute: bio-fertilisers/pesticides, vermi-composts, tools and equipment.  Hold training seminars for additional farmers on organic practices.	35,000 farmers trained on organic farming practices.		
Financial resources	Identify and train <b>8000</b> cotton farmers in marketing techniques: hygienic harvesting methods, grading, packaging, labeling and storage.	<b>8,000</b> Cotton farmers trained in and practicing new marketing techniques.	<b>Increased income from cotton sales through better market access and training.</b>	Greater gender equality in project communities.
	Set up Organic Farming Groups; help groups apply for organic accreditation.  Establish a Farmers' Trading Company to support Organic Farming Groups in accessing markets and micro-credit.	100 Organic Farming Groups established and holding organic accreditation.  8,000 Cotton farmers accessing marketing support and loans from Farmers' Trading Company.		
Equipment/Supplies: Organic cotton seeds Bio-fertilisers Bio-pesticides Vermicomposts Tools and equipment	Facilitate market visits/participation in trade fairs.	8,000 Farmers participating in market visits/trade fairs.	<b>Increased number of women active in farming activities and farming sector leadership.</b>	
	Identify and train 4,000 women in organic farming and marketing techniques.  Conduct gender trainings with male and female beneficiaries.	4,000 women trained in organic farming and marketing techniques.  50 % of Organic Farming Group leadership positions held by women.		

## Logic Model: Support to Cotton Weavers

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Human Resources: Oxfam staff Partner staff	Identify and train 1,000 handloom weavers in new weaving techniques, dyes and designs.	1,000 Handloom weavers trained in new weaving techniques, dyes and designs.	<b>Increased handloom textile production through use of new weaving techniques/ dyes/ designs.</b>	Improved income security and reduced debt/poverty for weavers and their families, through better market access.
	Procure and distribute: natural dyes and designs.	1,000 Handloom weavers practicing new weaving techniques, and using new dyes and designs.		
Financial resources	Identify and train 1,000 handloom weavers in new marketing techniques. Set up Handloom Production Groups in local villages. Establish a Handloom Trading Company to support Handloom Production Groups in accessing markets and micro-credit. Facilitate market visits/ participation in trade fairs.	1,000 Handloom weavers trained in and practicing new marketing techniques. Handloom Production Groups established in local villages. 1,000 Handloom weavers accessing marketing support and loans from Handloom Trading Co. 1, 000 weavers participating in market visits/trade fairs.	<b>Increased household income from textile sales due to better market access and training.</b>	
	Educational resources/equipment: Information/materials on new weaving production techniques, dyes and designs	Identify and train 250 women in new weaving techniques, dyes and designs.	<b>250</b> women trained in new weaving production techniques, dyes and designs.	
Conduct gender trainings with male and female beneficiaries.		50 % of Handloom Production Group leadership positions held by women.	<b>Increased number of state government policy decisions that recognise/support weavers' rights.</b>	
Hold awareness-raising workshops to promote weaver groups' participation in government lobbying.  Publish and disseminate materials which highlight livelihood challenges faced by weavers.		Workshops held for local weaver beneficiaries. Local weaver groups actively lobbying government for increased support.  Reports published, distributed, and utilised as the basis for local lobbying		Greater gender equality in project communities.  Sustained government support for the handloom weaving sector.

### **Implementation Assumptions – Support to Farmers:**

- Farmers will be sufficiently convinced of the benefits of organic farming to switch from conventional to organic production methods.
- After switch-over, organic methods will yield comparable or higher crop volumes and incomes, such that farmers will continue farming organically over time.
- Male beneficiaries/spouses of female beneficiaries will be willing to take part in gender trainings.

### **Theory of Change Assumptions – Support to Farmers:**

- Sufficient market opportunities will be available to farmers for selling cotton.
- Incomes from sale of cotton will exceed input and household expenses such that overall net profits will increase.
- Farmers' trading company will become financially self-sufficient, such that it can offer ongoing support to farmers after the project's end.

### **Implementation Assumptions – Support to Weavers:**

- Weavers will be sufficiently convinced of the benefits related to participation in group production, weaving company (CCW) production and marketing mechanisms, such that they are willing to weaver for CCW.
- Male beneficiaries/spouses of female beneficiaries will permit females to access new weaving training and take on more active roles in the weaving process.
- Male beneficiaries/spouses of female beneficiaries will be willing to take part in gender trainings.

### **Theory of Change Assumptions – Support to Weavers:**

- Sufficient market opportunities will be available to farmers for selling hand-woven cotton products.
- Incomes from sale of woven cotton products will exceed input and household expenses such that overall net profits will increase.
- Weavers' trading company will become financially self-sufficient, such that it can offer ongoing support to farmers after the project's end.
- Government officials will be accessible to weaver lobby groups, and amenable to hearing their concerns and responding with policy changes.

## **2.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

### **2.3.1 OVERVIEW**

In conducting its evaluation of the CTSC project, Oxfam and its partners aimed to answer two key research questions:

- 1) Through its ongoing activities, has the CTSC project made progress toward achieving the anticipated outcomes (and, by extension, impact) highlighted in the logic models (outlined above)?
- 2) Which, if any, of these project results (positive or negative) might be attributable to Oxfam's support?

To carry out this assessment work, Oxfam engaged a Programme Resource Officer from Oxfam GB and a third-party evaluation consultant to perform a two-week assessment at farming and weaving project sites in the Warangal and Nalgonda districts of Andhra Pradesh state. In designing the evaluation, team members noted that while the current iteration of the CTSC project has only been underway since early 2008, many beneficiaries and project activities have remained constant since the initial project launch several years earlier. As a result, the team opted to approach the project as a continuous series of activities (rather than two discrete project cycles), and felt that sufficient time had elapsed since initial project launch such that progress toward listed outcomes could be assessed fairly reliably. Findings could then help inform project delivery efforts for the remainder of the new implementation cycle, and could later be compared against data collected closer to the project end-date in 2011 (or after the project’s conclusion). Following this approach, the team used the outcomes in the logic models above as standards for project performance measurement, and used the evaluation tools described below to gauge actual beneficiary status relative to these standards. Results have also been analysed within the framework of two main OECD-DAC EHA criteria<sup>2</sup>:

OECD-DAC Criterion	Evaluation Questions
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the project component achieving its desired outcomes? Why/why not?</li> <li>• What positive/negative outcomes might be attributed to Oxfam’s project support?</li> <li>• What is Oxfam doing to enhance/impede the effectiveness of this component?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any evidence that the project component is creating wider social/economic impact? Why/why not?</li> <li>• What positive/negative impact, if any, might be attributed to Oxfam’s project support?</li> <li>• What is Oxfam doing to enhance/impede this component’s impact?</li> </ul>

Like Stories of Change as a whole, the evaluation and its products have several audiences: Oxfam staff and external stakeholders including the general public, project beneficiaries, and project partners. Internally, Oxfam hopes the evaluation will be used by:

- India country staff to stimulate discussion, reflection and learning about 'good practice' in project delivery and as a basis for follow-up monitoring
- Oxfam Managers and Livelihoods Advisors in the development of the new Livelihoods strategy
- Oxfam MEL Advisors in their periodic assessments of Oxfam's effectiveness
- Other Oxfam country teams, to learn from the India team’s experience of working with smallholder farmers and traditional artisan groups, and managing a large-scale supply chain project.

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria*. Note that project activities/data were not evaluated/analysed in the context of the remaining DAC criteria due to time and resource constraints. For example, data on “efficiency” (costs per participant, gross expenditure, etc.) was not actively tracked by local partner NGOs and therefore not available for analysis.

Externally, Oxfam aims to share evaluation results with:

- Local NGO implementing partners, to inform future planning and help enhance joint work
- Donor audiences in India, the UK and other Oxfam donor countries (in tandem with/embedded in communications products), to stimulate more involvement with Oxfam’s work
- Government/civil society members in India and/or the UK, to demonstrate Oxfam’s effectiveness and increase buy-in/cooperation with key decision-makers.

## 2.3.2 METHODS

### Activities

To measure progress to date toward the farmer and weaver projects’ planned outcomes, the evaluation team compared targeted organic cotton farmer and handloom weaver beneficiary populations against respective non-beneficiary samples of farmers and weavers with similar characteristics, usually located in the same communities. For beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in each of these two project components, evaluators sought to determine whether clear differences existed between the two groups in the each outcome area being evaluated and if so, whether these differences could be attributable to Oxfam-supported activities. Given the project’s emphasis on promoting gender equality and analysing differences between men and women in targeted communities, the team also opted to evaluate male and female beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries separately where possible—or disaggregate data by gender. As Stories of Change aims to capture both numerical and narrative outcome/impact data, the team used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **A Quantitative Household Survey** was administered to evaluate the potential effects of support to cotton farmers<sup>3</sup>. The farming component survey was delivered to an overall sample of 80 beneficiary households and 80 non-beneficiary households in 7 villages served by local partners in the Warangal district. Surveyors asked respondents to compare perceived *ex post* levels of organic production skills/knowledge, market access/income generation, household debt/access to loans, and women’s empowerment with *ex ante* levels. Beneficiaries were asked to compare 2008 levels with levels in the last year prior to entering the project (usually between 2005 – 2007); non-beneficiaries were simply asked to compare 2008 levels with levels two years prior, as best they could recollect. Surveys were delivered by a team of 10 local surveyors trained by the evaluation team. Data entry was carried out by a team of two local analysts at the office of farmers’ trading company OORVI before the external evaluator analysed the results. Full survey questionnaires can be found in the appendix of this report.
- **Qualitative Focus Group Discussions** were held to assess both the cotton farming and handloom weaving interventions of the CTSC project. For the farming component, the team held 5 group discussions with beneficiaries and 5 with non-beneficiaries in villages across Warangal district; for the weaving component, the team held discussions with 4 beneficiary groups and 4 non-beneficiary groups in Nalgonda district. Where feasible, groups were gender-segregated; most groups contained a minimum of 10 participants (a detailed listing of

---

<sup>3</sup> Due to time and resource constraints, evaluators were unable to carry out a household survey related to the weaving component of the project.

all groups can be found in the Appendix). For both interventions, focus groups comprised two key activities: First, participants took part in a structured matrix ranking activity (based on the FAO's Livelihood Matrix tool), where they were asked to self-rank changes they had experienced in outcome-linked areas ranging from income generation to women's empowerment—either since the start of their participation in the project (for beneficiaries) or in the past two years, for non-beneficiaries. (A full list of matrix criteria can be found in the Appendix.) In the second part of the focus group, evaluators asked participants a series of open-ended questions related to each matrix response area, and documented the participants' narrative answers. Each focus group was led by a local facilitator, an Oxfam evaluator, and a local translator. Facilitators and translators were trained by Oxfam evaluators prior to the start of field work.

- **Semi-structured interviews** were also held with stakeholders involved in weaving advocacy work supported by Oxfam and carried out by partner organisations, so that evaluators could gain further insight into specific advocacy activities. Here, Oxfam evaluators carried out interviews directly, through the aid of local translators where needed, using structured questionnaires—however interviewees were also encouraged to add additional response content/comments where pertinent. Interviewees included government officials, opposition MPs, partner staff who spearheaded advocacy campaigns, and Oxfam/partner staff.
- **Individual Profiles** formed a final element of the evaluation; here, Oxfam communications staff (with the aid of a translator) followed a selected beneficiary over the course of a working day, documenting their activities through photography, audio and journalistic interviews. Other beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were also interviewed and photographed. This qualitative process aimed to capture the outcomes and impact of the program through the eyes of beneficiaries.

### Sample Selection

For both project component evaluations, Oxfam asked partner NGOs active in each geographic catchment area visited to randomly select beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries for focus group participation (stratified by gender, where possible). Selected beneficiary/non-beneficiary farmers were typically men and women between the ages of 15 and 60 who were heads of households containing 3 to 5 members. Most had been farming cotton as their primary crop for an average of 7 – 10 years (with beneficiaries switching from conventional to organic cotton when they joined the program); most worked small plots of 1 – 2 acres. Selected beneficiary/non-beneficiary weavers were also men and women aged 15 – 60 from households with 3 – 5 members. With Oxfam staff reporting that over 8,500 farmer beneficiaries have been served by the project to date, evaluators estimated that approximately 1.6% of all beneficiaries (about 140 farmers) were reached through the evaluation activities described above. In contrast to the farmers sampled, most female beneficiary and non-beneficiary weavers did not self-identify as household heads. Virtually all weavers had been weaving since the start of their working life, citing the trade as a hereditary livelihood passed down from parents to children. With Oxfam staff reporting 760 weavers served by the project to date, evaluators estimated reaching 7% (about 55) of all current beneficiaries through the four beneficiary focus groups described above.

While all evaluation participants shared certain overarching characteristics, the absence of a readily accessible pool of non-beneficiaries for each component meant that evaluators were forced to rely on partner NGOs and local community liaisons to identify and recruit available non-beneficiaries. In many cases, this resulted in a biased selection process where non-beneficiaries were chosen simply because they were known to partner NGO staff, or because they were present on site at the time of the evaluation visit, rather than yielding a truly random sample that would be directly comparable with the beneficiaries.

### 2.3.3 LIMITATIONS

In addition to the sampling error described above, several other limitations affected the quality and rigour of data collected (but were not, in the evaluators' view, substantial enough to compromise the overall quality of the evaluation):

- Evaluation sites had varying characteristics: Beneficiaries in some villages had joined the project earlier than beneficiaries at other locations—in Damera, a village served by partner SYO, most project participants had received support from Oxfam partners since 2005. In Laxmipuram, a village served by partner PSS, project delivery did not begin until 2007. Implementation approaches also differed by partner NGO: While some partners provided technical inputs such as vermicompost, for example, others did not. These fundamental differences made it difficult for evaluators to draw conclusions that might be applicable at the beneficiary population level.
- A lack of quantitative background data for the evaluation sites made *ex ante/ex post* comparative analysis difficult. For both project components, a shortage of good early baseline data for the locations visited forced evaluators to rely on Oxfam staff, partners and respondents' *ex post* recollections of their prior livelihood status—a somewhat unreliable process—rather than simply comparing new reported responses with previously documented *ex ante* results. Results from a survey carried out in August 2008, while helpful as a guideline, were too recent to utilise as a credible comparison point.
- Given the short time-frame of the evaluation, evaluators' access to local communities was limited—enabling them to assess only a small sample of the overall project beneficiary population (and non-beneficiary population within the same communities). As a result, the team found it difficult to make credible population-level extrapolations from the data gathered.

However, despite these constraints, evaluators still felt that the response data collected through the methods described above was clear and relevant enough to permit a rapid, general evaluation of the program which can serve as a basis for further, more in-depth monitoring. Selected quantitative and qualitative findings are presented below, grouped by project component and sub-grouped by outcome.

## 3.0 KEY FINDINGS

### 3.1 FARMING INTERVENTION OUTCOMES

#### 3.1.1 REDUCED CULTIVATION COSTS

**[Summary Box Removed]**

With Oxfam baseline research revealing that most farmers cite rising input prices as a key contributor to their mounting economic woes, a key CTSC project priority has been cultivation cost reduction—mainly through the introduction of cheaper organic inputs and farming methods. As a result, evaluators focused attention on project efforts to boost farmers’ organic farming skills and knowledge. Through the household survey and parallel focus group discussions, the team set out to assess whether organic farming methods and supplies were in fact an effective means of reducing cultivation costs (and farmer debt, by extension).

Initial findings are encouraging: as Table 1 illustrates, beneficiaries reported a 33% decrease in annual mean aggregate cultivation costs (from Rs. 13,815 to Rs. 8,851) after joining the project, while non-beneficiaries reported a 16% rise in costs during the comparison time period of 2006 – 2008, from Rs. 23,114 to Rs. 26,794 (aggregate costs include prices of seeds, manure, equipment, pesticides, labour, and any other/‘miscellaneous’ expenses). Unfortunately, a lack of reliable survey data on cultivated acreage per household precluded an analysis of costs per acre. However, focus group data collected in the same communities as the household survey suggest a fairly uniform allocation of 1 – 2 acres for cotton cultivation among the vast majority of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries--leading evaluators to conclude that the survey data shown below are largely controlled for plot size, and therefore reasonably accurate.

**Table 1: Comparative Cotton Cultivation Costs (n = 155)**

**[Table Removed]**

Worth noting, however, is the discrepancy in initial reported cultivation costs between the two cohorts. A disaggregation of cost items by category in Tables 2 and 3 reveals that, *ex ante*, non-beneficiary equipment and labour costs appear to be far higher than those incurred by beneficiaries. Pesticide, seed and manure expenditure is more uniform among both sample groups. These results may hint at initial socio-economic differences between the groups: while no precise vulnerability criteria were attached to project enrolment, CTSC activities are nonetheless targeted toward the “poor producers” in a given target community<sup>4</sup>—farmers who may not be able to afford equipment or hired help, and thus cultivate their cotton plots using simple tools and/or household labour.

**Table 2: *Ex Ante* Comparative Cotton Cultivation Costs by Component (n = 155)**  
[Table Removed]

**Table 3: *Ex Post* Comparative Cotton Cultivation Costs by Component (n = 155)**

[Table Removed]

Equally interesting are the comparative results for the manure and pesticide sub-categories. While non-beneficiaries reported an increase in costs for both inputs over time, beneficiaries affirmed that their spending on each item decreased substantially after joining the project. Although exogenous factors (like improved access to cheaper supplies) may explain part of this variation, evaluators believed that the project’s introduction of organic farming methods—which include home-based manure cultivation and natural pesticide creation—among beneficiaries have likely contributed to this decrease in item costs.

Focus group results support these findings, with beneficiaries in multiple CTSC communities confirming a decrease in cultivation costs after switching to organic pesticides and other farming methods introduced by Oxfam partners.

- In Laxmipuram, female beneficiaries reported paying Rs. 3,000/acre each year for chemical pesticides before they joined the project—in comparison with a Rs. 500 – 600 Rs/acre outlay each year for bio-pesticides after project enrolment. Most agreed readily that **bio-pesticides and organic fertilisers were far cheaper to make or obtain than chemical pesticides and fertilisers.**
- Male and female beneficiaries in Thanda reiterated this claim, reporting that they previously spent Rs. 2,000 – 3,000/acre each year on chemical pesticides—but now, **after switching to**

---

<sup>4</sup> Source: *Project Overview: Improved livelihoods for Cotton Farmers, Weavers and Garment makers in South India.*

**homemade natural bio-pesticides like neem or chilli powder, they've been able to save these funds for other uses.**

- Female beneficiaries in Damera observed that Oxfam-supported **home-based production of bio-pesticides has eliminated the need for high cost input purchases from outside sources**: “In the past, [a] commissioning agent/cotton trader would provide money in advance so that we could pay for pesticides and fertilisers. [But] their interest rates were as high as 60 per cent at times and they would take a five per cent cut from each quintal we sold [the equivalent of 100 kg of cotton]”.

The wider positive impact of this cultivation cost reduction appeared to be substantial, with most beneficiaries in focus groups reporting that savings on input purchases had enabled them to pay down outstanding debts and avoid taking on new loans.

- “What has happened is that **our costs have been reduced because we are not having to pay large amounts for pesticides and fertilisers. So overall our [financial situation] has gotten a lot better.** It’s still not great, but it is much better than before.” – Male beneficiary, Laxmipuram.
- Male beneficiaries in Manikya Puram reported a noticeable **decline in the number of new loans taken out by farmers since the start of organic farming** through the project. They observed that few Oxfam-supported farmers were now acquiring new debt from banks or private lenders.
- Female beneficiaries in Laxmipuram commented that farm **debts have decreased because cultivation costs have decreased**—leaving beneficiaries with more income at year end.
- “Our **costs have come right down [since we started] organic farming.** No more pesticides, no more fertilisers. This has made a very **big difference [with regard] to how much [debt and income] we have.**” – Male beneficiary, Laxmipuram.

### [Case Study Removed]

In contrast, non-project cotton farmers painted a far different picture—and spoke of rising costs and growing debt. While some non-beneficiaries living in the same communities as project participants (like Laxmipuram, a community where Oxfam partner PSS is working, for example) had heard of organic pest control and fertilizing techniques, few used these non-chemical methods because they felt the processes were too time consuming and their positive effects unclear. Across the communities surveyed, non-beneficiary reactions were similar: In Damera, like Laxmipuram, non-beneficiary women reported that they favoured chemical pesticides over organic alternatives because the conventional inputs were more readily available and could be used immediately (in contrast to organic repellents which took time to prepare). Yet despite the perceived surface-level

advantages of non-organic farming methods, non-beneficiaries conceded that their overall cultivation costs were ultimately rising because of increasing conventional input prices:

- In Damera, female non-beneficiaries noted that **the price of conventional inputs has increased over the past two years, leading to declining profit margins** for cotton sales.
- “The [conventional] seeds, the pesticides, the fertilisers are costing so much, too much. **We are not saving anything with this type of cultivation. All of the costs are increasing like crazy** and the cotton product price is not high. We are just about breaking even.” – Female beneficiary, Rajula Kotha Palli village.
- In Damera, some female non-beneficiaries **proactively asked** evaluators and partner staff **for training on improved farming techniques that were less costly**, citing high conventional farming costs as a pressing problem.

[Case Study Removed]

Yet while most non-beneficiaries associated higher non-organic cultivation costs with falling net profit and savings levels, both project and non-project participants admitted that conventional cotton farming—while potentially more costly—frequently yielded higher production volumes than organic methods. “We produced such a large amount [of conventional cotton] because of the chemical fertilizers,” offered a male beneficiary in Laxmipuram when asked about pre-project farming practices. Female non-beneficiaries in Damera agreed, citing a (potentially unsubstantiated) local belief that conventional methods yielded more cotton than organic techniques. However, both sample cohorts were also quick to observe that greater output did not necessarily compensate for higher input costs: Female beneficiaries in Laxmipuram noted that their prior conventional cotton yields were high—but that their cultivation costs were also high, and net profits were ultimately lower than those from organic cotton. Male beneficiaries in the same village concurred, noting that even if conventional yields were more plentiful than organic harvests, the “[cultivation] costs were extremely high [and] this reduced any profit we made.” Overall, then, evaluators felt reasonably confident that the Oxfam-supported introduction of organic farming techniques to beneficiaries has likely been an effective contributing factor to falling cultivation costs in the short term—and declining household debt in the long term. If true at the population level, this finding suggests that Oxfam’s support has successfully helped create genuine, positive “Stories of Change” in this outcome area.

### 3.1.2 INCREASED INCOME THROUGH BETTER MARKET ACCESS

[Summary Box Removed]

While cultivation cost reduction represents a key step toward impact goals of sustainable livelihoods and income security, it only addresses part of the complex cotton farming value chain. Oxfam-backed efforts to boost beneficiary incomes and increase small holder farmers’ influence in the supply chain --through enhanced market access and training—are a second, equally central part of the farming model. If successful, CTSC project activities that promote stronger linkages to cotton buyers have the potential to transform farming enterprises from small outfits to profitable large-scale businesses. However, if they fail, weak market strategies can leave producers powerless and lacking a secure income —with unsold inventory, unpaid debts, and an uncertain future. Given the pivotal role of market access support in the CTSC project, evaluators devoted a large part of their time to assessing whether these activities have been effective in boosting short-term cotton sales—and whether they’ve had a visible longer-term impact on household incomes.

### Market Access

Where cotton market penetration is concerned, household survey results showed that the vast majority of beneficiaries (over 93%) felt their ability to sell their raw organic cotton at market had increased since joining the project and taking part in marketing/value addition training. Only 54% of non-beneficiaries felt their own market access had increased during the comparison period of 2006 – 2008. At the same time, 23% of non-beneficiaries felt their market sale opportunities have remained unchanged over time, and a further 23% felt their market access has progressively decreased.

**Table 4: Comparative Perceived Changes in Market Access (n = 150)**

**Survey Question:** *Overall, since joining the project, has your ability to sell your cotton decreased, stayed the same, or increased?*

[Table Removed]

Naturally, a wide range of exogenous factors (from weather patterns to government policy) can influence farmers’ ability and opportunity to sell their cotton at market. However, focus group findings supported the notion that improved access is likely linked to Oxfam-supported project activities—with many beneficiaries citing CTSC training and resources as key contributors to new marketplace success. In their focus group comments, beneficiaries highlighted two areas where they felt Oxfam partners had helped them most: product value addition (or quality enhancement), and product marketing coordination. In the area of value addition, beneficiaries were quick to link several key project support components with improved market outcomes:

- Female beneficiaries in Damera praised project efforts to help them obtain **organic certification** for their cotton from the Swiss Institute for Market Ecology, a leading organic standards body. “Because of this certification we are getting a **better price** for our cotton. It has given us a better standing in the marketplace. People will approach us now,” said one beneficiary.
- Male and female beneficiaries in Thanda reported that project training on “**clean picking**” practices has enabled them to **enhance the quality of cotton** they sell and fetch a **higher market price** for it. For example, most beneficiaries now use head coverings and shirts

when they pick cotton, which results in less human hair mixing with the picked cotton, a cleaner product for sale, and a higher price obtained per bag sold.

- Thanda beneficiaries also mentioned project efforts to educate farmers on **moisture reduction techniques**—as drier picked cotton contains fewer insects and is thus more highly prized by buyers. Following project training, beneficiaries now reported changes in their harvesting patterns, with most only picking cotton between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm--when less moisture is retained in cotton plants.
- **Improved packaging** was another key value addition technique associated with the project. Before joining CTSC, Thanda beneficiaries reported storing their cotton in low-quality sacks made of thin material that allowed dirt to permeate the bags—decreasing the value of the cotton inside. Now, the project provides access to durable storage sacks which protect against dirt and moisture, and ensure that the quality of picked cotton remains high.

In addition to helping farmers enhance the quality and marketability of their product, beneficiaries also acknowledged project efforts to coordinate product marketing logistics and build linkages between producers and buyers. Central to these efforts (according to the beneficiaries) has been the CTSC's creation of *mandal*-level marketing cooperatives, or MACS, which fall under the umbrella supervision of a newly-established for-profit cotton trading company, OORVI.

- In Laxmipuram, female beneficiaries noted that prior to project involvement, they sold cotton in local markets as individuals. As smallholder vendors, they were forced to bear all marketing outlay costs themselves—paying “middle men” out of pocket for packaging, transport, unloading, weighing, and market commission. Now, however, **the MACS pre-identifies market buyers** on the farmers’ behalf, and **arranges for the buyers to pay all logistical costs**. In exchange, the farmers simply contribute 50 Rs/month to the MACS to fund these market linkage activities.
- Thanda beneficiaries also voiced their support for the MACS system: Now that the cooperative sells cotton on behalf of the farmers, they felt they could **save time on direct market trips and earn 10% more net profit per Rs. 1,000 of cotton sold**, thanks to the MACS’ coverage of marketing costs.
- Beneficiaries in Manikya Puram village cited benefits from a similar Oxfam-supported system, where farmers paid their local MACS an initial Rs. 510 sign-up fee and a Rs. 20 fee per quintal of cotton in exchange for direct buyer linkages and coverage of all marketing costs. More importantly, the **MACS also gave farmers partial payment for their goods immediately**, at the time of sale to the cooperative, and provided the balance of payment 10 days later. This policy has **guaranteed income** for producers who were previously forced to wait in the open marketplace for days with no sure promise of a buyer. Table 5, compiled from focus group data in the village of Manikya Puram, depicts this reported reduction in beneficiary marketing costs since the start of the project
- Finally, in addition to facilitating better market linkages, The MACS system has also given farmers **a safe, dry location to store surplus or entire cotton harvests** (thanks to Oxfam funding support), thereby reducing the need to sell under pressure in order to liquidate stock. Commented one female beneficiary in Damera: “We are now able to...use the [cooperative] buildings to store our cotton. Before this training, we stored the cotton in our houses, which are very small. We often had to spray our homes to eliminate the mosquitoes and the spray would spoil the cotton”.

**Table 5: Comparative Recurrent Beneficiary Marketing Costs (per quintal) - Manikya Puram Village (n = 10)**

[Table Removed]

### **Market Income**

Beyond linking project activities with higher market values for cotton, beneficiaries also credited the project with having a long-term positive impact on their income levels—thanks to comparatively higher profits resulting from the sale of organic cotton. Most beneficiaries did note that yields from organic cotton have been initially modest in the first few seasons after switch-over from conventional methods, mainly because organic crops often require several planting cycles before they can generate sufficient quantities of marketable cotton. As a result, many observed that annual net profit from initial seasons of organic cotton sale has been slightly inferior to past earnings from conventional cotton sale—and, by extension, inferior to that of community peers who continue to produce conventional cotton.

However, the vast majority of beneficiaries also noted that their profits from organic cotton had increased rapidly in each successive year since they joined the project, such that many believed they could potentially achieve parity with non-beneficiaries/their own past conventional cotton profit levels within a short span of time—if they hadn't already done so. Tellingly, an aggregate 95% of beneficiaries across all focus group discussions felt their income-earning prospects had improved since joining the project; only 36% of non-beneficiaries felt the same (for the comparison period of 2006 – 2008). Table 6 provides some support for these claims, and specifically for beneficiaries' assertions of strong income and profit growth prospects from organic cotton sales. Here, data show that surveyed beneficiaries reported a 112% growth in net profits from cotton sales since joining the project—while non-beneficiaries reported a mere 13% increase, despite reaching slightly higher overall profit levels.

**Table 6: Comparative Changes in Net Profit From Cotton Sales (n = 150; Winsorised means)**

[Table Removed]

Sample/Time	Mean (Rs./year)	Standard Deviation (Rs./yr)
Beneficiary Income “Before” (2005/2006/2007)	Rs. 10,129	Rs. 7,775
Non-Beneficiary Income “Before” Time 1 (2006)	Rs. 20,477	Rs. 23,500
Beneficiary Income “After” (2008)	Rs. 21,547	Rs. 14,313
Non-Beneficiary Income “After” (2008)	Rs. 23,185	Rs. 30,909

Evaluators did immediately note the beneficiary cohort’s comparatively low *ex ante* profit levels. With the household survey yielding an unfortunate lack of production quantity data—possibly because farmers’ record-keeping is often rudimentary—the factors underlying this gap were difficult to discern. However, a low standard deviation value suggests relatively little initial profit variance among beneficiaries, hinting that if the bulk of beneficiaries shared similar profit margins they may have also shared underlying economic conditions. One possible explanation might posit that beneficiaries, who often represented the poorer members of surveyed communities, may have uniformly planted less cotton in pre-project years due to high running costs, thus earning much less income and net profit from cotton sale as a result. Equally likely, though, is the notion that other exogenous factors (like access to inputs and market transport) have also contributed to initial earnings discrepancies between communities. Ultimately, the team felt that more follow-up inquiry is needed before Oxfam and partners can reliably claim that rising profits are mainly the product of project intervention, and not external factors.

Nonetheless, focus group comments supported the assertions that beneficiaries may indeed be poised to fare economically better in the area of market access than their non-beneficiary peers—and that these changes may be linked to the project. Most focus group beneficiaries affirmed that their gross incomes from cotton sales had risen because of new Oxfam-backed marketing support—a promising result, when coupled with the reported decreases in cultivation costs cited above. Some beneficiaries also pointed to a direct increase in net profits that has enabled them to make key new household purchases:

- Female beneficiaries in Laxmipuram reported earning a **Rs. 250 retail premium per quintal**, now that they sold clean-picked cotton, **following project training**, and a further Rs. 250 premium per quintal from packaging their products in project-supplied durable bags.
- “Before, we used to grow cotton using conventional farming methods. We...could not get the same price that we are commanding now.” – Elka Samba, Female beneficiary, Damera.
- Male and female beneficiaries in Thanda agreed, noting that their use of **project-taught marketing and value addition practices has raised their value of cotton by Rs. 300 – 500 per quintal**. With Thanda farmers harvesting up to 15 quintals in a season, these changes have yielded **up to Rs. 7,500 in new gross income**.
- In Manikya Puram village, male and female beneficiaries noted that their mandal-level **Oxfam-backed marketing cooperative (MACS) has been able to identify better buyers who pay higher retail prices** than the farmers could fetch as individuals: Before the project, most earned Rs. 2,200 per quintal of cotton sold. Now, through the MACS, they can

earn 3,300 per quintal—a **gross income gain of Rs. 1,100 per unit**. For Manikya Puram farmers, who produce up to 8 quintals of cotton each year, this increase translates into **Rs. 8,800 in additional yearly earnings**.

- Beyond paying off outstanding debt, beneficiaries also funded a range of other household purchases with new additional income from organic cotton sale—suggesting that project support has likely had a far-reaching socio-economic impact on its participants. “I was able to **build a new house and pay for my children’s education**”, reported one female beneficiary in Thanda. “I’ve purchased a **new pair of bullocks** for Rs. 50,000,” added a fellow male farmer.

### [Case Study Removed]

When compared with non-beneficiaries’ reported outcomes, the notion that Oxfam’s project is likely helping beneficiaries improve their livelihoods becomes increasingly plausible. In focus group discussions, non-beneficiaries reported little familiarity with value addition practices, little market access assistance from organized mechanisms like a MACS (which appear to have helped beneficiaries increase their collective bargaining power at market), and declining income gains over time.

- In Damera, **none of the non-beneficiaries interviewed had heard about value addition** techniques like clean picking or durable packaging. Moreover, many asked the evaluators for resources/training so that they could learn more about new ways to increase the value of their crop.
- Where marketing coordination was concerned, few non-beneficiaries were part of any organised marketing cooperative or farming group; most bore all marketing costs individually and felt they obtained inferior prices as a result.
- In Laxmipuram, male non-beneficiaries spoke of the need to **sleep over at the market** with their cotton **until they could find buyers**—because they lacked access to a cooperative that can arrange purchasing deals for them.
- Laxmipuram non-beneficiaries also mentioned frequent **pressure to sell** their cotton at inferior prices immediately after harvesting, **because they lacked the facilities to store their crops** until better sale opportunities arose.
- Thanda non-beneficiaries complained of **poor leverage in the marketplace**: “We just go to the market to sell our cotton. Whatever price people demand we try and provide.....It all depends on the buyers. Whatever price he asks for we give. He is king!...We are not saving anything. As soon as we have anything it has gone again”.
- Female non-beneficiaries in Damera also complained of **limited access to a narrow range of buyers, who were often delinquent in their payments**. In the absence of good linkages to private merchants, government buyers were the sole option for many non-beneficiaries—but these agents took up to 1.5 months to pay for their purchases.

- In general, female non-beneficiaries in Damera cited an average **loss of Rs. 100 net profit per quintal** for transport, unloading, and other market fees which they were forced to bear as individuals.
- Overall, Damera non-beneficiaries reported fetching an average of Rs. 2,500 per quintal in 2008, compared with an average Rs. 2,000 per quintal two years prior. With most farmers producing a mean 15 quintals per year, this amounted to an increase of Rs. 7,500 in annual income—**less than the gains accruing to some beneficiary farmers.**

Overall, these results do suggest that farmers assisted by Oxfam and partners likely have better access to market buyers, incur lower marketing costs, and are seeing their income and profits grow at a more rapid pace than conventional cotton farmers—even though non-beneficiaries’ net profits are still nominally higher at present. Equally likely is the notion that many of these positive changes are associated with Oxfam project activities.

Whether these improvements will continue at a robust rate over time, raising beneficiary earnings levels to parity and even above those of non-beneficiaries, remains to be seen. Marketing support and incentives provided by the MACS may prove unsustainable over time, for instance, if the demand for and cost of MACS services exceeds the modest income each MACS earns through farmer user fees. Equally uncertain are the prospects for reproducing these achievements on a larger scale. If most beneficiaries affirm that initial yields and profits are low after the switch-over from conventional to organic cotton, and that several years are needed before organic crops are marketable at lucrative rates, farmers from more vulnerable backgrounds may be unwilling (or simply unable) to shoulder the financial risks associated with organic farming. However, despite these potential challenges, the wide range of CTSC project-related benefits reported by beneficiary farmers suggests that overall the project appears to be having a positive impact on new organic farmers, even if the change created in beneficiary households is time-limited and feasible only on a smaller scale.

### 3.1.3 INCREASED WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

[Summary Box Removed]

In addition to improving farmers’ economic well-being, the CTSC project also strives to strengthen women’s status within their communities by raising awareness about gender equality and increasing women’s participation and leadership. With Oxfam baseline research showing that cotton farming has traditionally been a male-dominated activity, and that women in the sector have suffered from inferior opportunities and wages, the project laid out an agenda for change: by 2011, Oxfam and partners aim to increase the number of women active in local cotton farming activities and in farming sector leadership, through the delivery of targeted gender trainings (and follow-up support) for men and women alike. In response to these stated aims, evaluators sought to determine whether the CTSC project has in fact been effective, to date, in its efforts to empower women—and whether these efforts have produced any tangible impact that might be attributed to Oxfam’s support.

Initial household survey data showed promise, revealing that a far higher proportion of male and female beneficiaries (94 percent) have taken part in a gender training course since the start of the CTSC project than have non-beneficiaries during the comparison time-frame of 2006 – 2008. Evaluators did note, however, that the factors underlying this finding may be numerous. For example, non-beneficiaries’ non-participation in training may be due to a lack of awareness or desire to participate, rather than the outright absence of training opportunities per se.

**Table 7: Comparative Participation Rates – Gender Trainings (n = 143)**

**Survey Question:** *Have you taken part in gender trainings delivered by Oxfam partners through the project/ a local community organisation?*

[Table Removed]

Evaluators also recognised that gender training attendance only tells part of a potential “story of change”—and so they probed equally into perceived follow-up changes in practices, ideas and beliefs related to gender. Here, the team found favourable results among beneficiaries and less robust outcomes among non-beneficiaries, suggesting that Oxfam activities may be helping improve the status of women in the communities where the project is being implemented. 93 percent of surveyed male and female beneficiaries believed that the number of women taking on leadership positions in local cotton farmers’ groups/cooperatives has increased since the project’s start. Only 37 percent of non-beneficiaries felt similarly with regard to their own communities; in fact, close to one-third of non-beneficiaries believed that the number of women holding leadership positions has actually declined in recent years (although evaluators were unable to definitively determine why this was the case).

**Table 8: Perceived Changes in Women’s Leadership of Farmer Groups (n = 127)**

**Survey Question:** *Compared to the time before you took part in the project/two years ago, do you believe that the number of women taking on leadership positions in local farmers’ groups/cooperatives/trading companies has decreased, stayed the same, or increased?.*

[Table Removed]

When asked broader questions about the general role of women in community-wide decision-making, respondent (both groups?) answers were largely the same. Here, 96 percent of beneficiaries reported that women’s roles in community decision-making have increased since the start of the project, while only 41 percent of non-beneficiaries felt similarly, for the comparison period of 2006-08. Most non-beneficiaries (51 percent) observed no real change in women’s decision-making roles.

**Table 9: Perceived Changes in Women’s Participation in Community Decision-Making**

(n = 155)

**Survey Question:** *Compared to before you took part in the project/two years ago, do you feel that women's participation in community decision-making has decreased, stayed the same, or increased?.*

[Table Removed]

Taken together, these survey results suggest a possible relationship between the introduction of gender training into beneficiary communities and improvements in the status of women. Focus group findings supported this notion, with male and female beneficiaries reporting visible improvements in gender relations following project gender activities.

- In Laxmipuram, female beneficiaries spoke of the positive linkage between project gender trainings and improved social status: Most attended regular meetings to learn about their rights as women and their power as decision-makers—and noted that as a result of these sessions, they were asserting their rights more proactively. **Many women reported that they are now going to local markets to sell cotton/produce** (a practice previously restricted to men) in greater numbers and that this increased participation in marketing their produce has given them **access to their own income and savings for the first time**.
- Female beneficiaries in Damera agreed, with one participant mentioning that: “before the project, we never used to have any recognition. I would be at home all day; I couldn’t attend the market [and] my husband made all of the decisions. Now we [women] can take more decisions about finances, about farming, and our husbands are listening and asking for our opinions.”
- Female beneficiaries have also been playing a **greater role in the management of household finances**, since project gender trainings began. In Damera, one participant noted that prior to the CTSC project, “the husbands made all the decisions, especially around finances. Now they are asking for our assistance. We are both sitting down together”.
- Beneficiaries also reported an increase in the number of women taking on local leadership roles in Organic Farming Groups and marketing cooperatives. Male project farmers in Laxmipuram observed that **50% of MACS leadership positions in their community are now given to women**, such that today the cooperative’s board of directors comprises 6 males and 6 females. “This is a good thing and is a very good sign for the future and for our daughters,” offered one male focus group participant.

- Across project communities, **male beneficiaries** acknowledged the importance of empowering women—attesting that trainings had helped men improve their relations with female peers, and had led to a **decrease in violence against women**. “Women are free to participate in our affairs, and this is a good thing”, offered a beneficiary in Thanda. Added a male farmer in Laxmipuram: “No one is beating their wife anymore. This is because of the training we have received.” Female beneficiaries confirmed this change, with most female participants in Laxmipuram reporting that violence against women has decreased since project training began—partly because men are better educated about gender equity, and partly because women are now more empowered to band together and prevent violence from occurring.

[Case Study Removed]

In contrast, many non-beneficiaries spoke of continued disempowerment, continued disengagement from community affairs, and a lack of leadership/decision-making opportunities.

- Beneficiaries in a mixed comparison group in Thanda spoke of a **shortage of gender training and support**: “We want this, we want women’s empowerment but we haven’t had the training,” reported one non-beneficiary. “We don’t have women’s organisations and we are really sad about that.”
- Female non-beneficiaries in Rajula Kotha Palli echoed these sentiments and remarked on their continued **lack of involvement in farming and marketing activities** over time: “We don’t go to any markets. Our husbands are the ones who go and interact with buyers,” explained one participant.
- Many **male non-beneficiaries** reported no real access to/participation in gender training activities, and **felt that men remained dominant decision-makers and leaders** in their communities. In Laxmipuram, for example, no focus group participants had taken part in gender workshops or awareness sessions, and most felt that men “still have the final word” in household decision-making.

These contrasting findings further reinforce the assertion that positive gender outcomes in beneficiary communities may be linked to Oxfam-backed training—and that negative outcomes among non-beneficiaries could be due to a lack of similar training on women’s rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, evaluators did also note the clear presence of other gender actors (ranging from government to local NGOs) in communities visited—a reality which suggests that positive changes may be attributable to other, non-Oxfam interventions as well. In Thanda, for example, a mixed group of beneficiaries noted that women’s roles in household

financial management have improved over time—but that this may be more closely tied to new government drives to give more loans to local women. In Manikya Puram, beneficiaries credited the other non-project NGOs with establishing women’s self-help groups and improving unity among women, despite acknowledging the positive effect of trainings delivered through the CTSC project. Similarly, non-beneficiaries in Damera and Laxmipuram spoke of state-delivered gender trainings led by government partner NGOs DWACRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) and IKP (Indira Kranthi Patham)), and indicated that these non-Oxfam initiatives had led to some improvements in the status of local women.

That multiple actors are promoting women’s empowerment is likely a positive trend—assuming that these various organizations are credible, working in coordination, and not duplicating each other’s work. However, this reality does suggest that positive changes observed among beneficiaries may be the aggregate result of several interventions, and not Oxfam-backed efforts alone. While survey and focus group results revealed a likely relationship between CTSC initiatives and improved gender outcomes, evaluators felt that more detailed analysis is needed in order to isolate the extent of Oxfam’s exact, specific contribution to this outcome area.

## **3.2 WEAVING INTERVENTION OUTCOMES**

### **3.2.1 INCREASED HANDLOOM PRODUCTION**

**[Summary Box Removed]**

While farmers clearly play a key role in the cotton supply chain—cultivating the raw crop and selling it to wholesale buyers--weavers hold an equally important position as the skilled producers who turn the fibre into finished goods. At present, Oxfam staff reported that the CTSC project has not yet achieved its long-term goal of linking project-supported farmers directly with project-supported weavers (mainly because the project aims to build these relationships through its trading companies—and farmers’ trading company OORVI is still in its initial stage of development). However, as an interim step, Oxfam and partners offer a range of support (described above in Section 2.2.2) to local handloom weavers in Warangal who use cotton to create clothing and textiles for sale. As a result, evaluators devoted a considerable part of assessment visit to examining this second key component of the CTSC project. Initial analysis focused on the first of several Oxfam-identified outcomes for weaver support: an increase in handloom textile production quantities, through the use of new weaving production techniques/dyes/designs introduced by project staff and partners. Evaluators sought to determine whether the project has, to date, tangibly contributed

to a rise in production levels—and if so, whether this increase has had any positive impact on weaver beneficiaries.

A lack of concrete *ex ante* and *ex post* production data made it difficult for evaluators to compare beneficiary and non-beneficiary output changes over time. Most weavers in both sample cohorts had a general idea of their average monthly output in meters, but few kept reliable, precise or regular records. Nonetheless, based on estimated output quantities reported by beneficiaries in 8 focus groups, the team created a rough representation of changes in cotton and silk production over time. These results, shown below in Table 10, suggest that mean weaver beneficiary cotton output has increased by roughly 20% since the start of the project, from an average of about 45 meters/month to an average 55 meters/month—a robust change. Project staff and beneficiaries noted that since hand-weaving of both cotton and silk is a technically difficult, labour-intensive process, these gains should be considered substantial, even if nominally the increases seem small. In contrast, non-beneficiary output has essentially remained unchanged during the comparison period of 2006-08, with most non-project weavers reporting monthly mean production rates of 52 meters. Silk production results mirror these findings, with beneficiaries reporting a mean output growth of close to 15%, but non-beneficiaries reporting constant, unchanged output.

**Table 10: Comparative Mean Monthly Weaving Production (n = ± 100)**

[Table Removed]

These discrepancies suggest that Oxfam’s work to educate beneficiaries on new weaving techniques may have contributed to their higher output levels—a notion reinforced by focus group comments:

- Male and female beneficiaries in N. Puram village spoke of the **linkage between project-supported training activities and increased output**. Through Oxfam partner Chethana Society, beneficiaries received first-ever training on textile design and dyeing. All beneficiaries confirmed that they now used these methods in their daily weaving, and that **efficiency gains from these new project techniques are the reason their output has increased from 49.5 m/month to 55 m/month, on average**. Beneficiaries confirmed that Oxfam partners have been the sole providers of weaving support in their community—and that the government/other NGOs have played little, if any, role in helping handloom producers.
- Male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem supported these claims, observing that most have been able to **produce an additional 2 meters** of woven silk per month (on average), and that

these **output gains are largely attributable to training on new techniques, which have improved production efficiency.**

- Female beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam further supported the notion that project training has increased production efficiency. Since joining the project, beneficiaries in this community received project training on textile design, dyeing and colouring. All now apply their new knowledge to daily production activities, and feel that **“because of the trainings we have been getting quicker at producing cotton items”**.
- In addition to reporting that project training has been an effective catalyst for boosting output, beneficiaries also spoke of its wider positive impact on local communities. Female beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam explained how CTSC’s first-ever **training of women on design and colour work has enabled them to take on more advanced weaving duties—empowering female weavers and helping augment output further** as both men and women can now work the looms. Commented one beneficiary: “Because of the training, even if my husband is not around I can still work. Before, we could only carry out the mundane tasks. Now that has changed.”

[Case Study Removed]

In contrast, non-beneficiary weavers reported negligible access to training or the development of new skills, and little (if any) increases in production output over time.

- In Koyyala Gadem, no male non-beneficiaries reported receiving any formal training on new dyeing or design techniques. Most indicated that their **weaving knowledge has simply been inherited from other family members** who are weavers—and as such, their **skills are limited to what they can glean from others.**
- Female non-beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam reiterated this observation, commenting that none had received any type of training on new production techniques, and that **most simply acquired their limited knowledge from their husbands and/or parents**, who learned a small range of designs from family members and/or master weavers.
- Where output changes are concerned, In Swamulavari Lingotam female non-beneficiaries observed that most weave an average of 33 m of cotton (the equivalent of 6 saris) per month, and that this **output quantity has not changed over time.**

- Across non-beneficiary groups, evaluators found similar results: In Koyyala Gadem, male non-beneficiaries reported that their average monthly output of 25 m silk has remained unchanged in recent years. Group members confirmed that cotton production had stayed similarly stagnant over time.

Comparison of these results against the outcomes reported by beneficiaries did suggest to evaluators that the differences between the samples are likely linked, at least in part, to Oxfam interventions. Evaluators felt reasonably certain that project skill-building trainings have played a role in enabling beneficiary weavers to boost their production—a compelling “Story of Change” if true at the population level as well.

### **3.2.2 INCREASED INCOME THROUGH BETTER MARKET ACCESS**

**[Summary Box Removed]**

Helping weavers boost their output is a key step along the path toward more sustainable livelihoods, but it cannot occur in isolation. Without reliable buyers and lucrative sale prices, local beneficiaries risk producing hand-woven cotton for naught—and will likely fail to realise any monetary gain from increased production. As a result, promoting good market access is another crucial part of the CTSC project’s change model. Here too, the project team has outlined a mandate for change, aiming to help beneficiaries earn increased income from textile sales, through enhanced market access and training. During their evaluation, the team inquired in depth about project activities undertaken to achieve this outcome, in order to determine whether Oxfam-backed efforts have been effective in increasing market entry/presence—and in achieving the wider anticipated impact of income security, by extension.

#### **Market Access**

In the absence of household survey data or formal record-keeping, quantitative figures on market access changes over time were difficult to obtain. However, livelihood ranking matrices created during focus group discussions revealed that the vast majority of beneficiaries (89 percent) felt their ability to sell cotton has increased since the start of the project, while virtually all non-project weavers reported a decline in market access during the comparison period of 2006-08.

**Table 11: Comparative Perceived Changes in Market Access (n = ± 100)**

**[Table Removed]**

Focus group comments supported these findings, with the bulk of beneficiaries confirming a close linkage between project training/resources and improved access to reliable buyers. In particular, beneficiaries highlighted two areas where they felt Oxfam partners had helped them most: product value addition and product marketing coordination. In the area of value addition, beneficiaries cited several key positive results from project support:

- Female beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam noted that **project trainings on dye mixing and colouring had helped them sell more products, at higher prices.** Prior to joining the project, weavers were often forced to sell their stock for half price (or even less) because of inconsistencies in their dyeing patterns. After completing project trainings, however, they felt that this is no longer the case.
- In Koyyala Gadem, female beneficiaries spoke of an **increased market demand** for their weaving, after they began **applying new pattern designs taught in project trainings.**
- Male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem mentioned that the **training** they had received on **safer dye application** (by using gloves and protective clothing) had **helped them enhance the quality of their work and achieve higher sale volumes.**
- Male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem and female beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam both reported that additional project **training on retail pricing and bookkeeping** had improved their understanding of market mechanisms, enabling them to **charge more competitive rates for their wares.** “Before we used to sometimes come back [from the market] with the same material because it hadn’t been sold,” explained one female beneficiary. Now, however, better market knowledge has helped producers sell more inventory on an ongoing basis.
- Beneficiaries in N.Puram and Swamulavari Lingotam also noted that project-established Handloom Production Groups (or **HPGs**) **have helped them coordinate large-scale production and input purchasing more efficiently, to meet buyer orders** from CCW and elsewhere. Many beneficiaries noted that the HPGs represented the **first time they had ever worked together with fellow community members** in a structured setting.

Beyond helping them improve product marketability through quality enhancement, beneficiaries also praised the project’s efforts to coordinate the market sale process itself. Many cited Chenetha Colour Weaves (or CCW), a trading company established as part of the CTSC, as a cornerstone of this latter support. By design, CCW aims to provide low-cost inputs, secure buyer orders, and purchase finished products from local weavers at above-market rates (for resale to commercial buyers). In practice, beneficiaries confirmed that the company has been playing many of these roles well.

- Most male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem were quick to point out the advantageous **purchase price premium** offered by CCW for woven cotton. The trading company pays Rs. 20 more than the market rate for shawls/stoles, and a Rs. 50 - 200 premium for saris.
- Male and female beneficiaries in N.Puram also observed that when CCW commissions orders from project weavers for local buyers, it also **provides inputs for free**—which **saves beneficiaries the time and cost of procuring their own materials** at the local market.

- In Swamulavari Lingotam, female beneficiaries noted that CCW’s **direct purchase agreements** with buyers help local weavers **save on market commission**. Rather than paying market “middle men”, they can now **sell directly to the trading company without paying any fees**.

### Market Income

In addition to associating project activities with better market access and improved sale prospects, beneficiaries also credited the project with having a longer-term positive impact on their net profit levels. Again, a lack of quantitative data precluded an exact analysis of profit and income levels (few beneficiaries had precise knowledge of their overall annual sale volumes, percent profits/net income earned, and changes in these levels over time). However, in focus group discussions most beneficiaries affirmed their belief that the project marketing strategies described above had helped them generate higher annual weaving earnings over time. Livelihood matrix data formed the basis of these assertions, with 77% of beneficiaries reporting that their net profit from weaving had increased since the start of the project. In contrast, virtually all non-beneficiary weavers felt their earnings from cotton production had decreased during the comparison period of 2006-08.

**Table 12: Comparative Changes in Net Weaving Income (n = ± 100)**

[Table Removed]

Anecdotal reports of income changes, shared during focus groups, appeared to reinforce these findings.

- In Swamulavari Lingotam, female beneficiaries reported earning **10 per cent more** for their cotton products, **thanks to new project-taught designs** and colouring schemes. Since receiving project training, they sell one warp (a unit of textile measurement, equivalent to about 55 m) of cotton for about Rs. 1,300, compared with Rs. 1,180 previously. Similarly, silk now sells for Rs. 3,500, compared with just Rs. 3,180 prior to project participation.
- Male and female beneficiaries in N.Puram have seen their **net monthly incomes rise by 17%**, from Rs. 3,000 before joining the project, to Rs. 3,500—now that they **sell their products to Oxfam-backed trading company CCW**.
- Where broader, impact-level changes are concerned, male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem noted that their savings have also risen, in addition to their income. After receiving **CCW training on financial management**, weavers began to track income and expenses on a balance sheet for the first time, and they’ve now been able **to monitor and grow their savings** as a result.
- The **project-backed CCW** was also credited for its efforts to **help beneficiaries reduce outstanding debts**. The trading company’s **loan scheme** has provided new access to low (6 percent) interest funds with manageable repayment schedules. One female beneficiary in Swamulavari Lingotam commented that “debt levels have gone down because we are no

longer going to private money lenders [who charge interest rates of up to 36 percent]. We have the [CCW] fund...”

- Overall, beneficiaries were quick to cite the tangible longer-term positive impacts of project participation—specifically, changes in purchasing power and consumption patterns (which reinforce the claims of substantial income gains reported in the household survey). **“Now I am able to send my children to school and they are eating three meals a day,”** offered one female beneficiary in Swamulavari Lingotam when asked how the project has impacted her income levels. In Koyyala Gadem, male beneficiaries echoed this assertion, reporting an **increased ability to pay school fees and buy clothing, thanks to additional income from cotton products sold to CCW at above-market rates.**

[Case Study Removed]

In contrast, non-beneficiaries painted a bleak picture for evaluators, complaining of higher barriers to local market entry, decreasing net profits, and rising debt burdens.

- In Koyyala Gadem, most male non-beneficiaries reported working for local “master weavers” who control all aspects of the marketing process and offer little support or incentive in exchange, aside from occasional offers to pay salaries in advance. **None have access to any marketing cooperative/company, and none have any marketing training or know how to seek out new market opportunities.**
- In the absence of a coordinated CCW-style marketing scheme, many Koyyala Gadem non-beneficiaries felt that **master weavers are unfairly withholding earnings** (or are themselves forced to pay “middle men” for marketing expenses ) and that weavers’ net profits are suffering as a result. Most are aware that master weavers **sell silk saris for Rs. 2,000 per unit**, but that they **only pay the producers roughly Rs. 600 per unit**. Most felt that this gap is wider than it should be, given their knowledge of component input/marketing costs.
- Across non-beneficiary communities, weavers noted that **in the absence of a strong, coordinated marketing mechanism, their work orders have declined over time**—leading to a parallel decline in income. In Swamulavari Lingotam, female non-beneficiaries spoke of large numbers of women weavers leaving the handloom sector as the result of a decrease in demand for their products. Male beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem estimated a **50% drop in production and income**, noting that two years ago, most wove for 8 hours per day—but **now that orders are few**, many will go for entire days without working.

- In Koyyala Gadem, male non-project weavers reported earning only Rs. 2,500 – 3,000 per month for their labour—**up to Rs. 1,000/month less than project beneficiaries**. In Swamulavari Lingotam, female non-beneficiaries estimated that in a household where only the husband weaves (as is often the case), **earnings can be even lower at Rs. 2,000/month**.
- **In the absence of good market opportunities and low-interest loans, many non-beneficiaries felt that their debt levels have increased.** In S. Lingotam, most female weavers reported taking on new loans or curtailing their food consumption in order to reduce household costs and free up funds to repay old debts/borrow more cash.
- Most non-beneficiaries quickly identified the **negative long-term impact of these conditions on their socio-economic status**: “We are not earning enough money for our households,” explained one female non-beneficiary in Koyyala Gadem. “If we worked all day, everyday without a rest, only then would we be able to make some money,” added a peer. Women in Swamulavari Lingotam echoed these remarks, noting that many fellow weavers have **migrated to cities in search of better work** opportunities and a more promising future for their children.

After hearing about the dire realities facing most non-beneficiaries, the comparative benefits of project support appeared relatively clear to evaluators: coordinated marketing structures and training (through HPGs and CCW), a no-commission sales mechanism that finds stable, long-term buyers, and low-interest loans all appear to be advantages that have helped beneficiaries earn comparatively higher net profits over time. However, the team did note a common concern expressed by both sample cohorts. Rising prices for inputs and household goods are increasingly whittling away net earnings, to the extent that even beneficiaries feel their recent income gains are at risk. Beneficiaries in N.Puram, for instance, noted that raw cotton prices have jumped 45% since they joined the project and the price of dyes has doubled, erasing much of the gains accrued from higher retail prices. Male and female beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem related that while net profits had risen due to project-linked enhancements in product design, colouring, and overall quality, the prices of raw materials and the general cost of living had increased in step. In Swamulavari Lingotam, the verdict was similar, with female beneficiaries citing that despite gross earnings gains, they were “just breaking even” at month end because of sharp increases in food prices, input costs, and other expenses. Non-beneficiaries in the same village shared this observation, noting that while sari retail prices appear to have risen by Rs. 20 per unit in the past two years, but rising input prices have counteracted any potential income gains.

In the face of these rising costs, evaluators also raised concerns about the sustainability of incentives and subsidies provided by the weavers’ trading company CCW. While cheaper inputs and above-market product purchase prices are clearly beneficial to project weavers in the short term, the team questioned whether these mechanisms would be able to continue self-sufficiently in the longer term, once project funding ends and CCW must raise its own revenue. Indeed, evaluators feared that beneficiaries’ increasing income and sale price expectations may be unsustainable in the future if CCW is not strengthened to the point of sustainability by 2011.

As a result, the team concluded that while project marketing activities are likely helping beneficiaries achieve better market outcomes in the short term, realities like rising living costs and the uncertain

future of incentive schemes are also likely making the journey toward income security more arduous. As with project efforts to support farmers' market outcomes, this finding reinforces the notion that market access is a complex process which is influenced by a wide range of outside forces. To ensure that Oxfam-backed efforts continue to produce "Stories of Change" in this project area, staff may wish to examine the role of rising external prices in more depth, and develop a response strategy if these cost increases continue over time. Staff may also wish to initiate transition/sustainability planning for CCW and its marketing functions before the end of the calendar year, to ensure a smoother transition to autonomous operation by 2011.

### **3.2.3 INCREASED WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

**[Summary Box Removed]**

In parallel with the CTSC project's focus on boosting women's empowerment among farmers, the project also aims to empower women weavers through a similar range of training and follow-up capacity building (for both male and female beneficiaries). Here too, Oxfam and partners aim to increase the number of women active in local weaving activities and group leadership—an outcome that ideally feeds into the larger impact-level goal of greater gender equity across weaver communities. As with their analysis of support to farmers, evaluators sought to determine whether the CTSC project has been effective in its efforts to assist female weavers, and whether these efforts have produced any tangible impact that can be directly attributed to Oxfam.

Livelihood matrix results revealed clear discrepancies between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, despite the fact that both samples were drawn from the same communities—a finding which may suggest a link between Oxfam's work and better outcomes for project weavers. Virtually all beneficiaries across eight focus groups reported a belief that the status of local women has improved since the start of the project. Meanwhile, only 44% of non-beneficiaries felt similarly, for the comparison period of 2006-08. Close to one-third of non-beneficiaries (31%) reported no perceived change in the status of women within their communities; roughly one quarter (24%) believed that women's social standing has decreased over time.

**Table 13: Perceived Changes in Women's Community Status (n = ±100)**

**[Table Removed]**

Focus group comments offered additional insights into these results, with beneficiaries noting a range of improvements in the lives of women in their communities—but with non-beneficiaries generally voicing frustration over the lack of positive changes among women in their own cohort.

- Almost all beneficiaries reported receiving CTSC project training on gender issues—including household responsibilities, appropriate roles for men and women, and joint decision-making.
- In Koyyala Gadem, another village where both male and female beneficiaries had been trained by a project gender consultant, women weavers noted that **50% of leadership roles in local weavers' groups are now filled by women, since the start of the project.**
- In N. Puram, both male and female beneficiaries reported taking part in Chethana-delivered trainings on gender roles. The mixed beneficiary group noted that prior to the project's start, husbands had discouraged their wives from leaving the house to go to the bank or market. Now, however, **more women are actively managing household affairs outside the home.**
- On a broader scale, many beneficiaries believed that **project trainings have had a positive overall impact on their social status and place in the community.** Female beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam who received project gender training, along with their husbands, on decision-making and related topics reported that they're now **making more joint decisions with their husbands**—and that this is largely **due to the fact that their husbands had attended the gender training sessions** with them. “We [men and women] have both received training, [from Chethana] so we are both aware of our rights,” explained one female beneficiary.
- Beyond the household, women weavers in Swamulavari Lingotam noted that their **participation in community affairs has also increased since the project's start.** One female beneficiary confirmed that prior to the project “we never used to come and sit [in meetings] like this.” Now, however, women are a regular fixture at community meetings and events.

For their part, non-beneficiaries appeared to have far less awareness about gender issues, and far less access to any type of trainings aimed at empowering local women.

- In Koyyala Gadem and Swamulavari Lingotam, most non-beneficiaries had never taken part in any gender training—neither through government initiatives nor from NGOs.
- In Swamulavari Lingotam, female non-beneficiaries spoke candidly about a **near-total lack of power in the weaving process.** Most observed that their husbands make all decisions about textile production, their husbands engage in all interactions “master weavers” who commission work, and their husbands procure all weaving inputs. **If the women ask any questions about these activities, their husbands “accuse us of meddling”.**
- Other female non-beneficiaries in Swamulavari Lingotam added that the **males in their household exercise sole control over financial decision-making,** and that this reality has not changed over time. Men are the only household members who sell finished products at market, and as a result hold all income from product sales.
- Some non-beneficiaries went further, noting that their husbands also obligate them to hand over any government loans or support funds they receive through state-run “self-help groups” directly to the men of the house, thereby negating any potential benefits to women

of group participation. One female weaver summed up the group’s sentiments succinctly: “Our husbands control all our finances, even the loans!”

These contrasting comments support the notion that Oxfam’s activities may be underlying many of the positive gender changes reported by beneficiaries. However, like the farmers’ communities, weaver villages have also played host to other external gender training providers, like government agency DRDA (the District Rural Development Agency). At some weaver project sites, like Koyyala Gadem, beneficiaries confirmed that Oxfam partner Chethana was the primary and best-known implementer of gender programming. But in N.Puram village, many beneficiaries reported receiving similar trainings from DRDA—and in Swamulavari Lingotam, both sample cohorts mentioned that government-led women’s self-help groups were widespread. This reality undoubtedly helps explain why, overall, 44% of non-beneficiaries reported an improvement in women’s community status—despite the less encouraging non-beneficiary comments reported above. It also implies that some of the positive changes observed among project beneficiaries may be attributable to other, non-Oxfam efforts. Nonetheless, the clear associations between project activities and improved gender equality reported by many project weavers left evaluators with a strong conviction that the project is playing a key role in helping local women—even if the project is not alone in this achievement.

### **3.2.4 INCREASED SUPPORT FOR WEAVERS’ RIGHTS, THROUGH BETTER ADVOCACY**

[Summary Box Removed]

In addition to its direct efforts to boost beneficiaries’ socio-economic status, the CTSC project also focuses on more “behind the scenes” support for advocacy related to weavers’ rights.<sup>5</sup> Through partner organisation CHIP (the Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy), which has emerged as one of the leading NGOs in the field of handloom lobbying, Oxfam supports the delivery of periodic training and the provision of advocacy resources (like fact sheets and information guides) to local handloom production groups (or HPGs). These efforts aim to empower HPGs to mobilise and petition state government more effectively—such that by 2011 the project achieves its intended outcome of increasing the number of state policy decisions that recognise and support weavers’ rights. Through focus groups with weavers and interviews with key weavers’ rights activists, Oxfam/CHIP staff, and state politicians, evaluators worked to determine whether these activities have yielded any tangible results since the project’s start, whether results can be clearly attributed to Oxfam and partners, and whether subsequent policy changes have had a wider positive impact on weaving communities.

---

<sup>5</sup> Advocacy activities to advance the rights of farmers and garment workers—two other key elements of the project—were not assessed in this evaluation.

In individual interviews, state government officials and Oxfam-supported rights lobbyists appeared to agree on a key point: Project-supported advocacy has, in fact, helped raised awareness about weavers' working and living conditions and has played a role in improving the support available to them.

- Member of Parliament P. Madhu, who receives frequent reports and other resources from Oxfam partner CHIP, related that the organisation has played a key role in **“increase[ing] [parliamentarians’] knowledge [of weaver rights issues] through its publications, articles and booklets”**. He added that “CHIP and its staff have had a very important role in raising our awareness...about the issues facing the sector. Whenever we needed some details or information, CHIP would produce...memorandums or briefing papers. We have even presented these to the Prime Minister of India...”
- **CHIP advocacy has also likely helped create concrete policy change**. While MPs declined to mention whether their personal voting decisions had been influenced by CHIP lobbying, one MP felt that **“CHIP contributed an important role” in the state government’s 2008 decision to introduce pension packages** for handloom weavers who hold government-issued identity cards, by mobilising weavers across the state to lobby for policy change.
- The Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Handloom and Textile Department observed that **lobbying by civil society groups (like CHIP) had also likely helped influence a recent state government decision to waive outstanding loans** for weavers borrowing through government cooperative societies. In a separate interview, the president of the Handloom Promotion Council (an advocacy NGO which works closely with CHIP) agreed, noting that **CHIP helped mobilise over 15,000 weavers to stage a public rally** demanding loan relief—and that within one week of the rally, **state officials cancelled Rs. 3.9 billion in unpaid weaver debt**. While both acknowledged that state election pressures and other advocacy groups likely played a part in this decision, the Handloom Promotion Council president stated that “if CHIP had not organised this rally, it wouldn’t have taken place on such a large scale and the government would have been less likely to listen”.
- CHIP staff and consultants also pointed to several instances where they felt their organisation had impacted government decision-making. At the party level, they noted that key **information from CHIP documents on weavers’ rights had been included in the election manifestoes of several major political parties** in the state. Text stating the specific need for a national handloom policy, better funding for the handloom sector, and improved social security for weavers—all pillars of CHIP’s lobbying—were added to the manifestoes after concerted CHIP efforts to persuade the parties of their importance. While a CHIP consultant noted that the organisation was not directly cited in these manifestoes, he observed that a staff member of one such party had informally acknowledged its contributions to the documents.
- CHIP staff also believed that their work has **helped influence recent state government decisions to protect hand-woven products** from false “look-alike” competitors through enhanced labelling. While the state government has not directly attributed these policy shifts to CHIP lobbying per se, CHIP’s primacy in this advocacy issue-area—and the absence of other major lobbying efforts by other parties—suggest that the organisation has likely played a part in shaping state decisions.

At the ground level, however, beneficiaries were more cautious in their comments about linkages between project advocacy efforts and government policy change. While most acknowledged that Oxfam-backed resources and training have helped local HPGs lobby the state government more effectively, many also explained that the impact of this lobbying has been less perceptible—and that greater government support for weavers’ rights has not yet been felt in many villages. Nonetheless, beneficiaries offered substantial positive feedback about project-backed advocacy to date.

- In Koyyala Gadem, male and female beneficiaries felt that their **project-backed HPG represents their interests effectively, and that this was the first time an organised group had ever defended their rights**. Many noted that the group has organised large-scale protests on key issues like wages and input prices at local government buildings and collectors’ offices, and that large numbers of weavers mobilised for these events.
- Most female beneficiaries in Koyyala Gadem said they were **now aware of minimum weaver wages, pension benefits and handloom protection legislation, thanks to project-backed rights education** efforts.
- In N. Puram village, male and female beneficiaries noted that a project consultant had trained them on weavers’ rights, and had encouraged them to organise in order to lobby more effectively. **Through project-backed HPGs, many local weavers marched en masse to state capital Hyderabad** and district centre Nalgonda to demand higher wages and debt relief. The weavers were **able to meet directly with the Chief Minister** of the state, and voice their concerns in person.
- However, beneficiaries across all communities noted that despite their increased mobilization, rights awareness, and access to key decision makers, **few had seen any tangible policy changes** enacted by the state government **in response to their demands**. N. Puram beneficiaries ultimately felt their large-scale march had no effect on their daily wages and debt levels; Koyyala Gadem beneficiaries felt their recent input price protests failed to create real change at the state level.
- Nonetheless, most beneficiaries **acknowledged general government support** to their communities, in the form of national life insurance schemes, scholarships for girls’ secondary schooling, and very basic health insurance. Many observed, however, that these benefits are available to any villager, and have little relationship to their status as weavers.

For their part, non-beneficiaries reported very little understanding of their rights as weavers, little (if any) involvement or link to advocacy campaigns, and general discontent with government efforts to ensure their well-being.

- In Koyyala Gadem, **no male non-beneficiaries had ever received formal training about their rights** as weavers. Female non-beneficiaries also felt they had no information about their entitlements under state law, or about benefits they may be eligible to receive (a reality which, evaluators acknowledged, may also be linked to gender discrimination within non-beneficiary communities). One female beneficiary summed up the group’s frustration: “Aside from the right to cook, we have no rights”.
- In Swamulavari Lingotam, **no female beneficiaries felt their rights were well represented by local HPGs**. Most felt that the non-project Self Help Groups offered no real support at all—organising **no lobbying campaigns or rights education campaigns**—and so few took part in group activities.

- In Koyyala Gadem and Swamulavari Lingotam, non-beneficiaries observed that the government does provide some small-scale social benefits like life insurance (a Rs. 50,000 maximum accidental death pay-out in exchange for Rs. 80 monthly fees). However, like beneficiaries, they noted that these services are for the general public and do not address weavers' specific needs per se.

Taking these comments and the remarks of state officials/CHIP personnel together, evaluators drew several conclusions. First, the team felt that project advocacy efforts have likely had a positive impact on beneficiaries' awareness and mobilisation levels—and in turn, this has likely helped influence government policy decisions, at least in part. By providing beneficiaries with better education about their entitlements, better resources and information for mobilising, and better opportunities to interact with government leaders, the project appears to be helping create real momentum for policy change in project communities—relative to non-project communities, where engagement in rights issues appears minimal. However, the team also heeded both cohorts' repeated observations that policy changes cited by state officials/CHIP personnel as the outcome of project lobbying may have not yet been implemented in local communities.

As a result, it is likely still too early to determine whether the project has been wholly successful in its efforts to increase the number of state policy decisions that recognise and support weavers' rights. While the project has likely contributed to policy changes at the government level, further follow-up monitoring is needed to determine whether these changes ultimately reach the village level as well. In the end, evaluators agreed with most interviewees' assertions that project advocacy work requires a great deal of time before grassroots results are visible. In the words of one former MP interviewed by the team, "things take a long time to change. There need to be continual, sustained [lobbying] efforts for long periods" before actual policy transformations can occur. Evaluators also noted interviewees' concerns that monitoring and evaluating the project's direct contribution to policy change can be tough—given the wide range of factors influencing the policy process, and government's reluctance to attribute its own decisions to specific outside actors.

Looking ahead, the team suggests that project staff may wish to explore more concrete ways to capture and document advocacy work, so that Oxfam's role can be more clearly identified. As a start, more active cataloguing of media activities/references and tracking of interactions with government officials are two ways in which project work can be quantified. Evaluators learned that CHIP is already carrying out some monitoring in these areas, however CHIP staff commented that more formal monitoring processes could further strengthen the organisation's ability to show impact. Overall, though, given the length, high profile, and broad range of Oxfam involvement in advocacy to improve weavers' rights, it seems likely that the project has contributed at least partially to recent government policy decisions. Ideally these changes will ultimately reach project weavers at the local level, so they can reap the benefits of their lobbying work, and a compelling "Story of Change" can be told.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[Summary Box Removed]

Overall, Oxfam’s CTSC project interventions to support cotton farmers and weavers appear to have achieved success on multiple fronts to date, demonstrating solid progress toward key project outcomes. In the area of support to farmers, Oxfam partners’ introduction of organic farming practices among beneficiaries has likely helped these producers to reduce their annual cultivation costs by a mean 33% in communities surveyed. Project training on organic farming has also likely helped beneficiaries lower their outstanding debt levels and new loan burdens, as cost reductions from the switch-over to non-organic pesticides and other inputs have enabled farmers to spend less on production and save more household funds. This increased ability to save has enhanced farmers’ longer-term income stability, by enabling them to contribute more to emergency loan funds set up by project-supported Organic Farmers Groups—such that a greater pool of low-interest loan funds is now available in times of need.

CTSC project efforts to boost farmers’ market access—through the creation of marketing cooperatives (the MACS) and the delivery of value-addition training—are likely linked to beneficiaries’ higher net profits from cotton sale, which have grown more than four times faster than those of non-beneficiaries since the project’s start. Market support initiatives may also underlie the dramatic reductions in beneficiary marketing costs—from over Rs. 100 per quintal before the project to only Rs. 40 per quintal. Where gender relations are concerned, project awareness trainings appear to be linked to relatively greater increases in women’s decision-making and leadership roles among beneficiary farmers, despite the presence of other actors working in this issue area.

Oxfam-backed interventions to support cotton handloom weavers have also likely created key “Stories of Change” in the lives of beneficiaries. Since the start of project trainings on weaving, beneficiaries’ mean monthly production has grown by close to 20%, relative to non-beneficiaries’ unchanged output levels—a result which suggests that project efforts may have contributed to this increase. In the area of market access, project-led value addition training and marketing coordination--through local weavers’ groups and the larger CCW trading company--have likely contributed to a 17% rise in beneficiary income since the project’s start (while almost all non-beneficiaries have reported a decrease in net earnings over time). Oxfam-sponsored trainings on women’s rights have likely empowered female beneficiaries to take on greater roles in household decision-making, community meetings, and local weaver group leadership. Finally, ongoing advocacy campaigns led by Oxfam-funded CHIP have likely contributed to recent state government decisions that guarantee pensions, sectoral funding support, and debt forgiveness for handloom weavers.

However, both interventions also face certain implementation challenges. Where market access and income growth is concerned, it is clear that weaver beneficiaries (and potentially farmers as well) have not been immune to the wider economic crisis affecting most global sectors of economic activity. As a result, exogenous factors like rising input and daily living costs (like food prices) risk reversing the wage and market access gains that the project has likely created. In the area of cotton farming, the team also noted that several cultivation cycles are needed before organic crops produce marketable cotton—and that poor initial yields (plus the high initial costs of the switch-over from conventional crops) may deter farmers from adopting organic practices. In the area of gender training, Oxfam initiatives for farmers and weavers “compete” with a host of other NGOs’ efforts for the attention of local farmer and weaver beneficiaries—with mandates occasionally overlapping and coordination of efforts unclear. This reality may have led to duplication of project activities and inefficient resource use.

Where advocacy is concerned, despite the affirmations of state officials and lobbyists that Oxfam-backed efforts have contributed to real policy change, many weaver beneficiaries reported a lack of tangible improvement in their socio-economic status. Evaluators noted that these contrasting views may point to gaps in information-sharing about the positive results of advocacy campaigning—and that resources devoted to informing local communities about policy achievements from project lobbying may not be sufficient. Finally, the sustainability of project marketing mechanisms (like the MACS and the farmers’/weavers’ trading companies) is unclear. Currently, both the farmers’ MACS and the weavers’ trading company CCW rely on project funds—rather than self-generated revenue—in order to provide the marketing subsidies and purchase premiums they offer to beneficiaries. The farmers’ trading company OORVI is still at a nascent stage, with little current activity in the marketing sphere. With the current project cycle slated to end in two years’ time and the self-sufficiency of both companies unproven, beneficiaries’ increasing wage and price expectations may be unsustainable in the future if these companies are not strengthened to a point where they become fully self-sufficient in the project’s timeframe.

To help project staff and partners reflect on and address these challenges—while building further on the project’s strengths--this report concludes with several recommendations gathered from beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, project staff/stakeholders, and the evaluators. Feedback and suggestions are grouped by project component for easier reference, but some overall comments are provided here first: Globally, the evaluators’ main recommendation is for greater ongoing project monitoring and periodic evaluation. Accurate and reliable data are the best proof of a project’s success or failure—and more importantly, they can help project staff make timely changes to project delivery. Particularly in the area of rights advocacy, where results are often hard to measure—and even harder to attribute to Oxfam’s direct support—more robust monitoring practices (like regular cataloguing of Oxfam/partner media mentions, or enumeration of advocacy rally attendance and outcomes) can help staff demonstrate clearer linkages between project work and ground-level positive outcomes. Additional recommendations by project component are presented in the sections that follow.

#### **4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS – FARMING INTERVENTION**

- **Challenge:** Evaluators and project staff noted that the project-established **MACS and farmers’ trading company OORVI** offer an impressive range of subsidised services and

cotton purchase premiums—but **depend largely on project finances to fund these incentives**. User fees from project beneficiaries account for only a small part of running cost coverage at present, creating **concerns about these mechanisms’ long-term sustainability**.

- **Potential Response:** While evaluators agreed with Oxfam and partner observations that OORVI and the MACS are newly-established entities—and as such, their self-sustaining revenue-earning potential has yet to be fully realised—the team nonetheless suggests that staff take more proactive measures to ensure that OORVI and the MACS continue to provide cost-free marketing support and premium-price cotton purchasing to farmers after 2011. Securing reliable bulk buyers who are willing to pay consistent premiums for high-quality cotton from a single vendor is one way to ensure steady inflows of income to OORVI—indeed, this is the project’s long-term vision for the company. To jump-start this process in the short term, however, staff may wish to explore two options: First, the creation of a **private sector advisory board**, comprising key local business leaders with strong social consciences and advisory experience, could do much to help promote the OORVI brand among large-scale cotton buyers in Warangal and other markets (both nationally and internationally). In addition (or, as an alternative which may be quicker and easier to implement), the recruitment of **individual business mentors**/advisors to coach OORVI and MACS marketing staff may also help the company and cooperatives to acquire new clients and strengthen its marketing approach. Presently, OORVI only has a single marketing coordinator, with minimal resources and access to corporate contacts. Mentors and/or advisory board members can bolster current company staff’s efforts to identify new buyer prospects, analyse prevailing market trends, and streamline farm-to-market logistics, among other potential roles. In addition, the project could engage **ad hoc local marketing managers** across the Warangal district to identify prospective buyers and coordinate sales. These managers could then take a portion of profits generated through this new business as compensation for services rendered. The implementation of one or both strategies will likely do much to help OORVI enter the cotton market with a strong brand presence—and, by extension, a strong client roster that will generate sustainable revenue to fund farmer support.
- **Challenge:** Beneficiaries reported that numerous **organisations are delivering training on gender** issues and specialised support to women (ie. group loans for female borrowers). These **multiple trainings often cover similar topics** and reach the same beneficiary cohorts, making it difficult for Oxfam partners to distinguish the impact of their own work from that of other local NGOs.
- **Potential Response:** To ensure efficient resource use, avoid duplication of efforts, and optimise benefits for local farmers, project staff may wish to organise **local gender support working groups** that serve as a coordination mechanism for all local NGOs delivering programs in CTSC project communities. Working groups could include multiple stakeholders—from government agencies to representatives of the beneficiaries themselves—and hold regular meetings to ensure that ground-level efforts to deliver gender programming are mutually reinforcing and not redundant. At a national level, the India Gender Working Group (GWG) has, since 2005, served as an umbrella for a range of international NGOs, UN agencies like UNFPA, and government aid agencies like USAID which implement gender programming through local projects. Oxfam and partners could

adapt the GWG’s model of coordinating technical assistance and information dissemination, and implement a similar type of mechanism in districts where project delivery is taking place. If the set-up of an in-depth coordination network lies too far outside the CTSC project’s current scope and/or resources, Oxfam and partners may simply wish to encourage the convening of ad hoc knowledge-sharing meetings (or a **one-time knowledge-sharing workshop**) between peer implementers of gender programming in project communities.

## 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS – WEAVING INTERVENTION

- **Challenge:** Beneficiaries reported that **despite the success of project advocacy efforts** in strengthening local lobbying groups, they have **seen/heard little evidence that this advocacy has produced tangible results** at the state policy level. Many beneficiaries articulated their frustration at a process which they feel has been slow, and at the lack of real change in their rights as weavers.
- **Potential Response:** To bridge what appear to be knowledge gaps between state officials, CHIP advocacy coordinators, local HPGs, and beneficiaries at large, project staff may wish to consider **novel options for enhancing the dissemination of key information** about advocacy achievements and policy successes. If, for example, the government’s 2008 decision to introduce handloom weaver pensions was likely attributed to CHIP-led mobilisation for weaver rallies, then Oxfam and CHIP may wish to highlight this probable attribution link more clearly through mass media and local information-sharing with beneficiary communities. **Travelling theatre presentations** that summarise recent rights campaigns and their results are one way to convey key achievements in an easy-to-understand format, and on a large scale. Already used by the Andhra Pradesh state government to promote literacy and school enrolment (and used to some extent by CHIP and partners in the past), the theatre medium is familiar to local communities—and is therefore likely to gain traction quickly. **Mobile phones** may be another effective way to broadcast real-time, instant updates on advocacy activities, thereby crystallising the linkage between project-supported work and state-level events or decisions. For example, a simple Telugu-language text message, sent by CHIP staff from the site of a rally to thousands of project beneficiaries with the text “Chief Minister cites lobby efforts in rally speech & pledges help 4 handloom wvrs”, can give local weavers a clear, immediate indication that their interests are being promoted—and acknowledged. Follow-up messages like “govt includes handloom guarantee in new budget, after CHIP lobbying” can further help beneficiaries draw a link between project efforts and state decisions—particularly when mainstream media may not cover the same events in detail. In addition to enhancing reporting about advocacy, this technology also has the potential to strengthen CHIP’s active advocacy efforts themselves—as weavers could campaign/petition/sign up for inclusion in local advocacy events using their mobile phones. With over a third of all Indians owning mobile phones, and evaluators anecdotally observing a similar ownership rate among focus group participants, this basic information dissemination strategy may prove effective in educating beneficiaries and ensuring their buy-in for further advocacy work. Oxfam staff reported that Oxfam’s Delhi office has previously piloted some SMS-based information gathering tools in partnership with local IT firms; this prior experience may facilitate the potential integration of a mobile component into the CTSC project.

- **Challenge:** Project beneficiaries report that **rising input costs** (for yarn, dyes, etc.) and living costs risk **counteracting recent income gains** that are likely linked to project marketing support. While close to 80% of beneficiaries have seen their net profit from cotton production rise since the project's start, many fear that these increases will not be sustained over time if profit margins continue to shrink.
- **Potential Response:** Evaluators acknowledged that the exogenous factors which influence market prices are often tough to predict—and, as a result, these current input price increases may simply represent a short-lived spike that will self-correct once the present economic crisis ends. However, in the event that prices continue to rise more quickly than weavers' gross incomes, project staff may wish to expand CCW's role in providing low-cost raw materials to weaver beneficiaries—if this can be carried out in a cost-effective manner. One option may be to **fast-track linkages between raw cotton farmers in Warangal and weavers in Nalgonda**. If cotton yarn purchasing can be coordinated more directly under the auspices of the project and/or its trading companies, stable input pricing deals may be reached more easily—as the project and its affiliates can control terms of trade first-hand. A quicker alternative may be to simply engage **local buying agents** with experience in weaving input wholesale purchasing (similar to the marketing managers described in the farmers' recommendation section above). Linked to weavers' trading company CCW, these agents could be given incentives, through a commission-style system, to locate cheap, reliable input sources each month—in a marketplace where prices fluctuate regularly and bulk contracts are hard to obtain. Project staff may also wish to explore **diversified skill-building training** for interested weavers who want to develop their capacities in power loom weaving or other skill areas, as a supplement to handloom weaving in times of economic stress. Overall, though, price control policies may be the best longer-term guarantee of stable input rates if yarn and dye costs keep increasing. Here, the project could engage in **targeted advocacy work** to promote state-level change, but if the economic crisis continues to affect multiple sectors across regions, policy successes may be tough to obtain.

## 5.0 APPENDIX: TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[Appendices Removed]

## 6.0 REFERENCES

- Reddy, Dr. D. Narasimha, Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy (2007). *Poverty Alleviation in Handloom Sector through Better Policy Environment*. (CHIP Internal Document, Hyderabad).
- Coudouel, Aline et. al. (eds.). (2006). *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis of Reforms* (World Bank Group, Washington, DC).
- Kusek, Jody Zall and Rist, Ray C. (2001). *Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System*. (World Bank Group, Washington, DC).
- Messer, Norman and Townsley, Philip (2003). *Local Institutions and Livelihoods. Guidelines for Analysis*. (UN-Food and Agriculture Organisation, Rome).
- Muralidhar, G (2008). *Baseline Assessment for Cotton Textile Supply Chain Programme*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Hyderabad).
- Overseas Development Institute (2006). *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria*. (ODI, London).
- Oxfam Great Britain (2008). *Indian Agricultural Scale Up (IASU) Programme - Draft Programme Implementation Plan*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Oxford).
- Oxfam Great Britain (2007). *Project Overview: Enhancing the Power of Poor Producers & Processors in Cotton Textile Supply Chain*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Oxford).
- Oxfam Great Britain (2004). *Project Overview: Enhancing Power in Markets of Poor Producers Engaged in Cotton-Textile Supply*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Oxford).
- Oxfam Great Britain (2008). *Project Overview: Improved livelihoods for Cotton Farmers, Weavers and Garment makers in South India*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Oxford).
- Pasteur, Kath (2001). *Tools for Sustainable Livelihoods: Livelihoods Monitoring and Evaluation*. (Institute of Development Studies, Brighton).
- Rao, V. Rukmini and G. Muralidhar (2007). *Study of Cotton Textile Supply Chain Programme and Potential for Scale-Up*. (Oxfam Internal Document, Hyderabad).

© Oxfam GB 2009

First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

This document is part of a collection of programme evaluations available from Oxfam GB in accordance with its evaluation policy.

This document was originally written for internal accountability and learning purposes, rather than for external publication. The information included was correct to the evaluator's best knowledge at the date the evaluation took place. The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect Oxfam's views.

The text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for reuse in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. Email [publish@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:publish@oxfam.org.uk)

For further information on the issues raised in this document email [phd@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:phd@oxfam.org.uk)

Oxfam is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 202918) and Scotland (SC 039042). Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.

**[www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)**