



Evaluation of the Promoting A Culture of Equal Representation (PACER) Project in Sierra Leone

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

February 2008

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB West Africa

Evaluators: Akijul

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. PACER is a five year joint project between Oxfam GB in Sierra Leone and the 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone that aims to support the government of Sierra Leone's efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability in the country through promoting the equal participation of women and men in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction and development initiatives. The 50/50 group of Sierra Leone is a Local women's non-governmental organization specialized in advocacy around women involvement in governance and politics. The 50/50 group has been operating since 2002.
2. The mid-term Review aims to create the opportunity for reflection and common learning amongst those involved in this project, and will thus take a participatory approach. The consultant understand that the rationale for this review is to obtain perspectives on impact and lessons learned, in addition to assessing what has worked, what has not and to analyze the reasons for both success and challenges. Particularly, the consultants will seek to understand the impact of the projects in three dimensions: Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency. This analysis and the resulting recommendations will then feed into the process of developing strategies for the remaining part/period of the project.

The Findings

Overall Assessment

3. Through the mid-term evaluation, the consultant sought to answer the question- **what progress has been made towards the attainment of the above objectives so far?** After studying the various project documents and meeting with various project stakeholders, the Consultant is of the view that limited progress was made towards ensuring an increase in the number of women elected into Parliament. Whilst some training activities were carried out, as well as radio talk shows and awareness campaigns, it appears that some of these initiatives were not thoroughly planned and /or coordinated for maximum impact.
4. However, amongst the communities that the consultant visited, there was evidence of change in attitudes towards women aspirants and a desire amongst both male and female members, including community leaders to have some women elected as councillors in the forthcoming local council elections.
5. There are a number of factors that contributed to the project's failure to attain desired impact in the first phase. These include:

- (i) Project implementation was hampered by a failure to develop a common understanding between the partners about what partnership is and means until a couple of months ago. The project was meant to be implemented by Oxfam and the 50/50 Group as partners, with Oxfam playing a capacity building and oversight role and the 50/50 group as implementer on the ground. However, tensions arose in the relationship that made it difficult to work and get anything done. To date, very little capacity building in terms of systems and procedures has been undertaken.¹ The roles in the partnership were not elaborated until recent attempts.²
- (ii) The Oxfam programme in Sierra Leone has been undergoing a number of changes over the last couple of years including a shift from humanitarian support to more development approaches, a refocusing of the country strategy and an introduction of the partnership approach. It is therefore within this context of many significant changes within the overall organisation, that the PACER project was undertaken by Oxfam.
- (iii) A number of concerns were raised about the technical capacity of the PACER staff, and their inability to implement multiple activities. This situation was further compounded by delays in the purchase of equipment and delays in staff recruitments.
- (iv) A Capacity Building Officer was recruited to support PACER staff, however no capacity building plan is in place, and there was no evidence of any capacity building support until about a month ago.
- (v) Absence of a well planned and coordinated training and advocacy strategy
- (vi) The targets set for the first phase were unrealistic and did not seem to take cognisance of Sierra's Leone's unique challenges as a country recently emerging from conflict.
- (vii) External factors like the hesitation of political parties to give women aspirants party symbols, also affected project implementation and contributed to hindering the project from fully securing progress in the first phase.

6. Evidence of Impact at Local Level. Despite the above challenges, the project has registered some impact at the local level, mainly attributed to the dedication and commitment of district-based staff. In particular the project offices in Koinadugu and Kailahun have been able to stimulate discussions about the possibility of women contesting for local council elections, particularly in Koinadugu which did not have any women elected onto the local councils in the last elections (2002). They have also been able to get some of the community leaders to express support for women's

¹ Even in this process, there were challenges about Oxfam's role.

² A workshop was held with the new project manager and the Oxfam partnership facilitator in November 2007.

participation and representation in the local councils. This support by community leaders, increased awareness and interest amongst the community are important in building momentum towards supporting potential women candidates.

7. Learning from Past Mistakes. The Consultant also found that Oxfam and PACER have recognised their past failings and are making attempts to rectify these. The following initiatives have been carried out over the past three months: (i) Meetings between Oxfam and the 50/50 Group to review the partnership agreement and clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations (ii) New PACER Project Coordinator and Governance Officer recruited by Oxfam³ (iii) Purchase of equipment and recruitment (iv) Working with other CSOs and media agencies to develop a joint media strategy (v) Organizational and Institutional Assessment of the 50/50 (vi) Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the project

8. The Overall Project Challenge: The Project needs to immediately adapt lessons from the first phase of the project, and work with other CSOs to encourage more women to contest for elections on to the Local Council elections.

Recommendations

Whilst the project fell short of attaining planned results in the first phase, it is apparent that Oxfam and the 50/50 Group are committed to turning this around in the second phase. With a new Project Manager who seems to have built good relationships, and is keen to refocus the project, the results for the second phase will most likely be attained.⁴ The project should thus continue, with recommended changes, in to the next phase.

Recommendations for Phase 2 of the Project

- (i) Review the project logical framework to provide for more realistic targets and more specific and measurable indicators.
- (ii) Focus on getting women out in the LC elections, consolidate the gains. Plan a coordinated approach for this.
- (iii) Finalise the Advocacy and Media strategies and implement them. This strategy should emphasize collaboration with media agencies as a central component.

Recommendations for Oxfam

- (i) Ensure that the capacity building plan for the 50/50 group is developed, finalised and implemented.
- (ii) Finalise the M& E Framework and utilise it.

³ They have both taken the initiative to address the previous challenges and are working with PACER staff and the 50/50 Group to plan and strategize for the upcoming local council elections.

⁴ The results being referred to here are the results that will be provided in a revised project document. The logical framework and indicators were reviewed to set more realistic targets during a workshop to develop the M&E framework in early February 2008.

(iii) Support the 50/50 Group to refocus and envision the future (both institutional and programmatic), through a strategic thinking and planning process.

(iv) Provide greater accompaniment to the PACER staff through the Capacity building officer

(v) Have a discussion with the 50/50 Group Executive on the possibility of facilitating their efforts towards implementing the PACER project.

Recommendations for the 50/50 Group

(i) Provide greater leadership and direction to the PACER project and staff.

(ii) Ensure that any pending issues and /or concerns about the partnership are finalised and a final partnership agreement signed

Recommendations for Donors (UNDP and DFID)

A lot of investment has already been put into the PACER. Project. Oxfam have realised their mistakes and have recruited a new Project Manager, the relationships between Oxfam and the 50/50 Group seem to be on track and a common purpose and vision is emerging. There is opportunity to build upon, however to ensure that Oxfam and the 50/50 Group implement planned activities effectively, the following outputs should be used as a condition for further support:

(i) Capacity building plan for the 50/50 Group

(ii) Finance system set up and operational

(iii) A training plan for the Local Council elections.

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First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

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