

Global Partnership Strategic Evaluation - Management Response

Overview comment

The global Partnership Strategic Evaluation has provided Oxfam GB with a wealth of lessons, insights and feedback about what we are doing well and where we can improve our practice when working with others.

The findings and recommendations from the evaluation have been made available to programme staff. All Oxfam GB country programme teams will be focusing on improving their ways of working in partnership over the next few years as an organisational priority.

This management response highlights some of the findings and recommendations from the evaluation. We have chosen those that had greatest resonance with partners and which, in our judgement, have the greatest impact on our ways of working. Other more specific recommendations are being taken forward by the relevant teams within Oxfam GB but are not detailed here.

For further information on our approach to partnership, please e-mail:

enquiries@oxfam.org.uk

Findings and Lessons	Response and Planned Management Actions
<p>1. Partners want to continue building strong relationships with Oxfam GB based on openness and trust. This involves recognising the value that each organisation brings to the partnership; providing clarity around roles, responsibilities and decision-making; sharing and respecting each others' values and beliefs; being mutually accountable, and being committed to long-term partnerships.</p> <p>In particular, partners called for Oxfam GB to improve its accountability to partners; provide greater clarity about the decision-making domains of each partner, and invest in understanding the values and ways of working of the organisations with which it works.</p>	<p>Following an extensive consultation with partners and using the findings of the Partnership Strategic Evaluation, Oxfam GB has agreed a new partnership policy. The policy sets out five partnership principles to which we will hold ourselves accountable and seek to be held accountable by partners, communities and other stakeholders with whom we work. These 5 principles are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complementary purpose and added value 2. Mutual respect for values and beliefs 3. Clarity around roles, responsibilities and decision-making 4. Transparency and accountability 5. Commitment and flexibility <p>At the beginning of each new partnership, Oxfam GB and partners will discuss and identify how the principles will be put into practice and agree mechanisms for holding each other accountable.</p> <p>The partnership policy will be translated into local languages and will be widely disseminated among international staff, other Oxfam GB teams who work in partnership with others and the partners and communities with whom we work. It will be the responsibility of Oxfam GB programme staff and managers to put the policy into practice.</p>

	<p>A set of partnership tools and resources are being developed to help Oxfam GB programme staff implement the policy. All tools, including a new partnership contract, provide greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of both parties.</p> <p>As part of increasing public accountability, Oxfam GB has agreed a new public complaints policy that, for the first time, provides a mechanism for individuals, communities and organisations around the world to register complaints and concerns about our performance. The complaints will be regularly monitored by senior managers.</p>
<p>2. Partners called for Oxfam GB to increase its accountability to them by making a number of very specific improvements, such as providing focused feedback on partner reports, making grant payments on time and providing greater clarity on exit strategies.</p>	<p>A revised Oxfam GB partnership relationship toolkit will highlight a set of minimum standards and good practice guidelines that we expect our staff to follow. This will include a focus on how to put the broad policy principles into practice as well as a more specific focus on grant management.</p> <p>In addition, a new Project Cycle Management manual will reinforce the importance of a clear exit strategy as part of overall programme design and delivery. The development of possible exit scenarios should be part of an ongoing dialogue with partners.</p>
<p>3. Partners would like greater and more systematic investment in their organisations to enable them to become independent and sustainable.</p>	<p>At the beginning of a new partnership, Oxfam GB will work with the partner to identify their capacity-building needs together with ways of meeting these needs. These needs and support plans will form part of the agreement between Oxfam GB and the partner. In those cases where Oxfam GB is unable to provide the support needed directly, every effort will be made to help the partner identify another support source.</p>
<p>4. Partners highly value the relationships they have with Oxfam GB staff who are often seen playing the roles of coach, facilitator, listener, advocate and challenger.</p>	<p>Work is now underway to ensure that, as an organisation, we recognise, reward and develop further the partnership skills of Oxfam GB programme staff. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater focus on mentoring and accompaniment opportunities as part of on-the-job practice and learning • Providing training in both practical programming techniques as well as softer skills development such as coaching and facilitation • Using the performance objectives and review process to focus on partnership skills and activities. • Developing partnership support networks • Using the new Project Cycle Management framework to reinforce ways of working with partners

<p>5. Partners value the time they spend in the field with Oxfam GB programme staff, joint planning, learning and problem solving. They are concerned that this time is being eroded by administrative tasks and ask for it to be protected.</p>	<p>As part of Oxfam GB's new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system, we have begun to hold programme 'monitoring reviews' – a regular learning process for programme staff and partners to reflect upon information gathered through monitoring activities and to analyse programme progress and context. This learning then shapes future planning and delivery of the programme. Monitoring reviews will be integrated into all programmes by April 2009. Country learning reviews will build on these. All will offer opportunities for partners to contribute to and be part of the learning process.</p> <p>Oxfam GB is also reviewing its internal administration and support systems with the aim of streamlining these.</p>
<p>6. Partners appreciate Oxfam GB's support in advocacy and want Oxfam GB to put its credibility and influence behind their issues, particularly at national level.</p> <p>At the same time, they ask Oxfam GB to take care not to dominate, compete or take their space.</p>	<p>It is an organisational priority to strengthen national advocacy as part of our overall programme approach. Work is underway to build Oxfam GB national staff capacity around advocacy and to provide further support to partners already involved and/or who want to develop national campaigning and advocacy.</p> <p>This concern from partners highlights the delicate balance which many Oxfam GB staff have to manage in supporting increased national advocacy work on a wide range of issues – some of which will be led by partners and some of which will be led by Oxfam GB. Enabling Oxfam GB staff to manage this tension well is an objective of the partnership skills development plan.</p>
<p>7. Partners are calling for Oxfam GB to be more consistent in its policy and strategy, and to be more transparent about its future direction and funding priorities.</p>	<p>All country programmes are updating their country analysis/national change strategy, involving partners and other stakeholders in the process. The strategies will form the basis of Oxfam GB's work in each country on a 3-year rolling cycle and will be shared with partners and other stakeholders with whom we work.</p>