

Oxfam GB Project Effectiveness Review Management Response

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Name of Project reviewed: Routes to Solidarity

Date: March 2012 (final report)

Targeted Outcome	Extent observed (high, medium, low, none)	Extent of project contribution (high, medium, low, none)	Specific contribution score* /5
Duty-bearer Practice Outcomes			
1. Investment by Leeds City Council in gathering better statistics on gender/ethnicity	Medium	High	4
2. Decision by Big Lottery to fund Westwood & Coldhurst Women Association	High	Medium	4
3. Establishment of ESOL classes for Somali women	High	Medium	4
Other Final and Intermediate Outcomes			
1. Establishment of Women Solidarity Forum	High	High	5
2. Development of Why Women Refugee charter	High	Medium to High	4.5
3. Broad-based support for Black Manifesto	High	Medium	5

<p>1. What follow-up to the review have you undertaken or planned (if any) e.g. discussion, analysis, workshop?</p>
<p>The review was discussed in draft form by all of the RTS team and a summary of comments was sent to PPAT and the consultants The final review was discussed at a quarterly project management meeting for RTS The review was the main topic for an England programme Quarterly Monitoring Review which involved all programme staff from the England team in discussion of the lessons.</p>
<p>2. Overall, do the findings concur with your own expectations or assessment of the project/programme's effectiveness?</p>
<p>Yes in that the project came out as being very effective and a model of good practice. However the evaluation was a slightly missed opportunity to comment on and make recommendations about some wider features of the project because it was quite strictly constrained by the methodology.</p>
<p>3. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project (ie large impact)?</p>
<p>Yes – the project methodology of training followed by intensive support and mentoring was seen as successful, as was the decision to work both with women's groups and some individual women. The focus on voice, empowerment, policy and lobbying was a successful part of the project and offered the Black and Minority Women's sector a new and different approach to previous projects. The project was successful because it was well thought through and planned from the beginning, and a strong and committed staff team were recruited to deliver it. Having a dedicated business support post on the project was very cost effective and proved a good way of delivering a higher than planned level of outputs and activities. Project management was flexible so that ways of working were responsive to changing external circumstances. The view of the external evaluators was (summarised):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is extensive evidence that the training had a genuinely empowering effect. Stakeholders across the case studies have confirmed the importance of proactive follow up mentoring support. Where it has not been possible to provide follow-up support, longer term impacts have suffered. • The 'style' and way of working of project staff has been equally important. Staff were credited with working in a genuinely empowering way – encouraging and supporting but letting the BME women themselves lead and set the agenda. • Routes to Solidarity ran during a period when many groups were fighting for their survival. This was a challenge because at times it proved hard to engage organisations in advocacy. The project's capacity-building work was a real help for some organisations by building their confidence to contact funders and decision makers; making them think about how to evidence the need for their services, and be generally better in case-making.
<p>4. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were weak or very weak (ie no or very little impact)?</p>
<p>None were identified</p>
<p>5. a) Is the reviewed project continuing? If yes, what actions are being taken in response to the weak areas identified in question 4?</p>
<p>The project is continuing into a second 3 year phase. Weak areas were not identified, but the project has slightly changed focus as a result of feedback from the women. The empowerment work will continue but in addition some livelihoods work will be carried out with a focus on the development of financial assets both for the groups and individual women.</p>

b) What actions are you planning in response to the Programme Learning Considerations?

Programme Learning Considerations

4.1.7

- **The Routes to Solidarity training has been an important part of the support. There is extensive evidence (also confirmed in the analysis of the training feedback forms) that the training has had a genuinely empowering effect. That being said, all case studies have included an element of active followup mentoring support following the training – and stakeholders across the case studies have confirmed the importance of this additional and proactive follow-up support;**

The second phase of the project will continue to use this successful methodology. The England programme is also seeking to trial using this methodology in a different context in work we are developing on prevention of community conflict around race.

- **The ‘style’ and way of working of Oxfam Routes to Solidarity staff appear to have been equally important. Organisational development and coalition building can be challenging processes and Oxfam staff appear to have skilfully navigated these challenges. In particular, staff were credited with working in a genuinely empowering way – encouraging and supporting but letting the BME women themselves lead and set the agenda;**

The project has been very fortunate in its strong staff team most of whom are continuing into the next phase of the project. Part of the reason for the strength of the team was a well run recruitment process which was designed to attract and enable BME women to apply. Management of the project has supported staff to trust their own judgements in occasionally sensitive or tricky circumstances. The next phase will continue to operate on these principles.

- **Routes to Solidarity ran during a period of a real squeeze in funds and many groups were fighting for their survival. This presented a number of challenges to the initiative in that it proved at times harder to engage organisations in advocacy. That being said, there is evidence that the Routes to Solidarity capacity-building has been a real help for some organisations by building their confidence to contact funders and decisionmakers; making them think about how to evidence the need for their services and be generally better in case-making;**

The project will continue to work on voice and empowerment issues and support women and their groups to lobby around policy issues, but in response to the comments of the women and their groups (and the effectiveness audit) the next phase will include more work on improving income (eg meeting donors events, expert advice on contracting for services, setting up social enterprises or small businesses). We hope this will support the groups to address directly some of the resourcing and funding challenges they face in the current environment of cuts.

- **Encouragingly, the different groups established through Routes to Solidarity seem optimistic about their future and the sustainability of their network. That being said, they all identified the possible discontinuation of the Routes to Solidarity support as a serious challenge. Where it has not been possible to provide follow-up support (as for example in the case of the Black Manifesto), longer term impacts appear to have suffered.**

Fortunately UKPP have been able to identify resources to continue RTS. We will continue to support partners so that their work is sustainable. We are reviewing the possibilities for strategic support to the wider/national BME sector given that the Black Manifesto was a very successful piece of lobbying but there has not been the capacity in the sector for sustained follow up work.

4.2.2

- **the evaluation appears to confirm the effectiveness of the model used by Routes to Solidarity – training followed by more in-depth mentoring support, with a strong empowerment ethic through, enabling and facilitating but leaving the BME women themselves in the driver seat – suggesting that this model may be re-used in future**

We will continue to use this model in phase 2 of the project, and are also seeking to trial the approach in a different sector – community cohesion.

6. If the project/humanitarian response is ending or has already ended, what learning from the review will you apply to relevant new projects in the future? How can the Regional Centre and Oxford support these plans?

Not applicable.

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