

PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS

'enhancing effectiveness through evidence-based learning'



Influencing of Policy and Public Management : Bolivia 2011/12

The “Influencing Policy and Public Management Program” is a program through which Bolivia’s Fundación Jubileo (FJ) seeks to address the country’s continuing high levels of extreme poverty through improved public policy and public administration outcomes. The Foundation emerged out of the international debate on how to address the stifling indebtedness of one of the world’s most impoverished countries, but, over time, Jubileo broadened its interventions to cover a wide range of governance and political participation issues. In addition to using its own relationships and access to information in order to influence key policy debates, the Foundation works to create and strengthen spaces of public dialogue between social and political actors and build the capacity of other civil society actors to successfully influence those debates.

This study focuses on an assessment of the outcomes of Jubileo’s advocacy work during the period, 2008-2011. Oxfam provided just over 50% of funding to the FJ during that time. Beyond funding, Oxfam GB has provided FJ with strategic planning support and worked to better link it to important regional and global networks and gain visibility for its positions on key issues.

Evaluation Method

Under Oxfam GB’s Global Performance Framework, the Routes to Solidarity project in England was randomly selected in 2011/12 for a project effectiveness review.

An external evaluating firm, Kevin Murray Strategic Consulting, was selected to apply a pre-defined research protocol to rigorously assess the project’s contribution to key outcomes. Drawing on theory-based evaluation approaches, Oxfam has defined a robust qualitative research protocol, ‘process tracing’, to enable assessment of a) the extent to which intended objectives, or interim outcomes that signal progress towards these objectives, were successfully achieved and b) the extent to which the intervention contributed to these changes. (Re) constructing the campaign’s theory of change with key stakeholders, the approach identifies the interim and final outcomes the campaign sought to achieve. The evaluator then seeks evidence for the extent to which these outcomes have materialised; identifies plausible causal explanations for those outcomes (including but not limited to the campaign itself); and assesses the extent to which each of the explanations are, or are not, supported by the available evidence.

Results

In their efforts to ensure public resources are used to promote sustainable, equitable economic development, FJ targetted Central Bank of Bolivia (CBB), who plays a leadership role in the development of macroeconomic policy. The evaluator found that the CBB had made “subtle, but clear, shifts in the Bank’s public posture” on issues of sustainability of the national debt of Bolivia and on public accountability for external debt, and concluded that the evidence suggests a high degree of contribution by FJ to these shifts.

FJ sought to ensure that effective social programs reach the poor. In many areas of the country, the Bolivian Catholic Church (CBC) is often the primary provider of services, though it does this in a highly decentralised manner. FJ was found to have played a “critical catalytic role” to a recent decision by the CBC to develop an integrated information system that will greatly improve the church’s ability to provide services, while also serving as a critical alternative source of information.

Finally, FJ sought to influence the effective and transparent administration of funds. In addition to efforts to improve citizen-government relations in El Alto, FJ worked to secure a municipal law on social monitoring in La Paz. While not a panacea, a formal process for civil society monitoring of government was seen as a key strategy to increase government transparency and the effectiveness of public administration. The Draft Municipal Law on Social Monitoring (Anteproyecto de Ley Municipal de Control Social) was approved in 2011, and the evaluation concluded that FJ provided “powerful” inputs to this complex process.

Outcome	Rating	Commentary	Other evidenced explanations and extent of their contribution (high, medium, low)
Outcome 1: Repositioning of the Central Bank of Bolivia	4/5	Medium level of change realised High project contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other NGO inputs (low) • Bank’s own analysis (medium)
Outcome 2: Integrated Information System of the Bolivian Catholic Church	5/5	High level of change realised High project contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish and Diocesan interests (medium) • Interest of Bishops’ Conference (medium) • Interest and technical inputs of Sumaj (low)
Outcome 3: Social Auditing in the Municipality of La Paz	3/5	Low level of change realised High project contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inputs of FOCAPACI (high) • Desire of community for change in form of negotiation (low) • Openness of local gov’t (low)
Outcome 3: Civil Society Capacity Building and Municipal Dialogue in the Municipality of El Alto	5/5	High level of change realised High project contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Legitimacy (medium) • Openness of Municipality (high) • Broad civil society participation (medium) • Facilitative leadership of Steering Committee (Low)

Going forward

FJ has embarked on a new strategic planning process in order to identify relevant outcomes to pursue going forward. As part of this review, and as a direct result of the recommendations of this evaluation, FJ is considering the contribution of its social communication strategies to its overall mission, in order to adjust and reinforce them as appropriate. Both Oxfam and FJ have realised the importance of their strategic partnership in Bolivia, and they will work to deepen their relationship going forward, while recognising their distinct contributions. Finally, efforts will be made to present and discuss this evaluation as an example of how the impacts of complex advocacy interventions can be evaluated.

Photo credit: Fundación Jubileo