“When you work for women’s interests, it’s two steps forward - and at least one step back. And those steps back are... often evidence of your effectiveness; they represent the threat you have posed to the power structure, and its attempt to push you back.”

Sheela Patel, SPARC

Hannah Beardon & Eva Otero

03 June 2013
Evaluation of the Oxfam GB Portfolio

“Raising Her Voice”

External evaluation by: Hannah Beardon (lead consultant) and Eva Otero with case studies by Hannah Beardon and Carmen Manuate

This report has been produced by independent evaluators, commissioned by Oxfam GB. As such, the views put forward in this report should not be considered as those of Oxfam GB, but reflect the evaluators’ analysis and reporting of the views of numerous informants and sources. Any comments regarding this report can be forwarded to the evaluation team by email or telephone at:

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Our sincere thanks and appreciation to the following people who dedicated time to share their thoughts and experiences and provide content for this research. Thanks specially to Emily, Claire and Maria for their continued support.

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# 1. Programme Identification Details

(based on table in annual report)

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<th>GTF Number</th>
<th>(as per your Grant Arrangement)</th>
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<td>Raising Her Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Lead Institution</td>
<td>Oxfam Great Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start date[1]</td>
<td>(dd/mm/yyyy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount of DFID Funding:</td>
<td>(amount in GBP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>List all countries where activities have taken or will take place</td>
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<tr>
<td>List all implementing partners in each country</td>
<td>If more than 10 partners, you may list in an additional annex.</td>
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<td>Target groups- wider beneficiaries</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>As above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Discussion Circle (Nepal)</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<td>DVL</td>
<td>Domestic Violence Law (Mozambique)</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<td>GBP</td>
<td>Great Britain Pounds Sterling</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>GEO</td>
<td>Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>GTF</td>
<td>Governance and Transparency Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAG</td>
<td>Local Action Group (Albania)</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>MTR</td>
<td>Midterm Review</td>
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<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>OGB</td>
<td>Oxfam Great Britain</td>
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<td>RHV</td>
<td>Raising Her Voice</td>
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<td>SOAWR</td>
<td>Solidarity for African Women’s Rights</td>
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<td>TOC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAPP</td>
<td>Violence Against Persons Bill (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
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<td>Value for Money</td>
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<td>WLG</td>
<td>Women Leaders’ Group (Pakistan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSAG</td>
<td>Women’s Self Advocacy Group (Armenia)</td>
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4. Executive Summary

4.1 Methodology

This final evaluation is both a meta-analysis of the national evaluations of the Oxfam GB’s Raising Her Voice (RHV) programme, and an assessment of the global portfolio as an entity. The former seeks to draw learning and conclusions from the evidence generated by the different RHV projects on progress, implementation and impact, review and update the RHV theory of change, and identify strategies which can support effective work on gender and governance. The latter focuses on the added value of the RHV global portfolio to the individual projects, and to governance and gender work of OGB.

The evaluation design and questions (included as annex) are based on thorough engagement with RHV coordination staff and the information requirements of the donor (DFID). This needs assessment included identification of key documentation and stakeholders to be consulted. The evaluation questions included the main sections of this report, as well as attention to learning on how change happens, and the added value of OGB and the portfolio structure to the work of RHV partners. After secondary and primary research, preliminary findings were shared with OGB RHV, gender and governance staff to allow for collective sense-making and contribution of further relevant data. The evaluators have taken an explicitly feminist approach to the research.

4.2 An introduction to the Programme

The RHV portfolio includes 19 projects across four continents, 17 national¹ and two regional², funded mainly through the UK Department of International Development (DfID) Governance and Transparency Fund, and coordinated by Oxfam Great Britain (OGB).

Twelve country projects in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe have developed out of their own national priorities. Seven African national projects are managed within a regional Pan-African programme, where a portfolio focused on advocacy around the Maputo Protocol was developed by the Solidarity for African Women’s Rights (SOAWR), of which OGB is a member. This enabled linkages between local, national and global awareness raising and advocacy work, demonstrating the value of both investment in local processes and actors, and networking for collaboration, scale-up and sharing of learning. However, this has complicated to some extent the role of OGB country offices, as they did not choose the partners with whom to work, nor strongly influence the overall approach and theme of their individual country projects. A small global coordination team supports project management and accountability, facilitates the sharing of learning and carries out global advocacy.

RHV was developed as a portfolio, within the limits of the DfID GTF funding criteria, and started as a diverse range of locally relevant projects with a common theme of gender and governance. Although there was a clear objective of collective learning and sharing to add value to the individual projects, this has been limited by the range and diversity of projects, and a 15% cap on DFID funds to be retained and used within OGB. Over the five years, RHV’s conceptual identity and theoretical framework has become clearer and stronger, especially from the centre, providing at this point a strong basis for future work on the theme.

¹ Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia Aceh, Indonesia Papua, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia and Uganda.
² Mercosur (from Uruguay) and Pan Africa (from Kenya)
4.3 Relevance

- RHV’s focus on women’s participation and voice is considered extremely relevant to women’s rights work in general. In many RHV countries, governments have also subscribed national and international commitments to guarantee the rights of women, giving the national framework for work on women’s rights and participation which makes the projects relevant to national priorities.

- RHV is implemented through a partnership between OGB and partner organisations from civil society, most of whom were involved from project design phase. This has meant that partners have been able to build RHV into their own objectives, programming and expertise, with a common focus on ‘gender and governance’. This has had mixed results, limiting opportunities for conceptual coherence and leadership across the portfolio, but ensuring strong ownership and relevance to implementing partners and national contexts.

- RHV is relevant to Oxfam, to broaden understanding, expertise and capacity to work on women’s rights, which are ‘at the heart of everything they do’. On the other hand, OGB was a relevant organisation to implement this programme, given its power, reach and influence in the development sector across the world. However, this value and relevance depends on the organisation strengthening its own capacity to design and deliver such programmes in the future, and advance its own understanding of how change happens in women’s voice and influence.

4.4 Impact

4.4.1 Personal Sphere

It is important to recognize that sustainable changes in women’s lives, voice and influence depend on changes in all three spheres but are rooted in work in the personal sphere.

- In most of the focus countries the project’s activities have had an impact on the self-confidence and sense of agency of individuals in the target groups. The project with most reported impact on women’s personal confidence and capacity is Nepal.

- There are many examples in the evaluations and case studies of marginalised women engaging and taking action in planning and policymaking in a more strategic and organised manner. Where RHV has supported grassroots women to come together in groups, there have frequently been correlated increases in members’ participation in local governance and decision making structures.

- A significant result of the increased confidence and solidarity of women and awareness of their rights has been their increased ability and will to speak out on rights abuses and access justice on their own or their peers’ behalf. There are several reported cases of women accessing property rights, stopping harmful and discriminatory traditional practices and reporting cases of violence against women.

4.4.2 Social Sphere

The social sphere, especially in relation to networking and solidarity, are the glue enabling greater changes in the two other spheres.

- RHV projects in most countries have established, built and supported groups of women, women’s rights activists and women’s organisations at local and national levels. This has had an impact on the capacity, confidence and influence of individual members as well as the groups themselves.

- The impact area of ‘up to date information, knowledge and tools available for women’s organizations’ has not been systematically evaluated at national level, and as such the assessment depends largely on annual reporting from OGB. Notable exceptions are Bolivia and
Chile, where the partner produces an annual report on the voting behaviour and debate attendance of MPs in relation to gender issues. At global level, information on gender politics and RHV issues has been produced and disseminated, with a notable impact on organisational thinking and capacity and some peer organisations.

- The impact of RHV on public awareness and support for women’s rights and participation has been visible mainly in the local areas around the project. There is little systematic reporting of impact (as opposed to outputs) of reported monitoring of media coverage. It should be recognised, however, that the impact of this type of work is gradual and long term.
- The actions of RHV partners and participants have, in many places, increased the social acceptance and support for women to actively engage in public decision making. This has created, in some project areas, a reported increase in respect and interaction between women and political leaders and officials, and opening of spaces for influence and engagement.
- An important area of impact, not specifically covered in the monitoring framework, is the institutional capacity and commitment of OGB and partners to sustain and move forward work on women’s participation and voice. It is encouraging to see examples from partner organisations of mainstreaming and deepening understanding of the political aspects of women’s rights and empowerment. There was also evidence that RHV has been an important source of learning and evidence for Oxfam, and had an influence on the organisation beyond the participating departments and country programmes. The survey showed a widespread perception that RHV had contributed significantly to increasing the organisation’s commitment to women’s participation and voice. The influence extended in some places to regional level, with Nepal working with colleagues in the CIS region to share best practices and support the development of their gender justice programme.

4.4.3 Political Sphere

All of the projects except for Guatemala have outcomes expected in this sphere, and the evaluations do specify examples of changes in policies and quotas for women’s participation, increased numbers of women leaders and some movement towards more open and inclusive decision making, especially at local level.

- There are reported examples of new women leaders emerging at local level in RHV project areas in all focus countries, as well as others such as Tanzania and The Gambia and others.
- A few of the RHV projects (Honduras, Nepal, Nigeria, Albania and Armenia) directly engaged in campaigning and lobbying to put in place quotas for women’s participation in governance, with some success.
- There are many examples of local government systems becoming more accessible, notably in Indonesia where women’s participation and project activities have resulted in participatory budgeting taking place for the first time in villages in the project areas. An important result of this greater participation in budgeting and planning has been the closer scrutiny and accountability of local government for the delivery of their promises and plans. Women activists have held community decision makers to account, and now local MPs have to report on their engagement with citizens routinely. A similar experience was reported in Albania.
- RHV partners have been working with women’s rights coalitions to draft and lobby parliamentarians to pass women rights oriented bills such as the Women’s Act in The Gambia, and supporting legislation such as domestic violence bills in Nigeria and Mozambique. In Nigeria the coalition-drafted Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill has been chosen as the government’s preferred means of domestication of the protocol, and the supporting VAPP bill was passed into law in March 2013, with OGB and partners lauded as major contributors to this process.
- RHV partners have had some impact in making public institutions more gender aware and sensitive, with gender focal points named in local areas in Indonesia and Nepal for example.
4.5 Effectiveness

- Objectives of increased women’s voice, influence and participation are best reached through an *holistic approach* addressing all three spheres. The feedback and research also showed the importance of *integrating work across local, national and international levels*.
- Given that increases in women’s voice and influence will happen over the long-term, the entrenched nature of the barriers and challenges, the work must be understood in *long-term and collaborative terms*. This has particular implications for work on public awareness and attitudes, essential strategic pieces of the larger change process, but beyond the scope of any single project or actor.
- The RHV theory of change positions the projects within feminist theory, recognizing that entrenched male domination and power is the context for women’s limited participation and voice. This evaluation finds that the natural ‘home’ for this type of work (and OGB as implementing partner) is with the national and global women’s movements, who are addressing these broader issues over the long term. Some of the strongest and most sustainable impact has been found where RHV has contributed meaningfully to the strength, collaboration and organization of CSOs working for women’s rights.
- The theory of change generated clarity and change and promoted effective delivery and advocacy for women’s voice and participation. However, this would be stronger in a programme of work – and working relationships - designed around the implementation of the theory, and outside of the constraints of a portfolio design and limited potential for investment in OGB capacity.

4.6 Efficiency

Overall, the portfolio achieved impressive results given the resources and inputs. However, limitations in the coordination mechanisms and human resourcing have compromised efficiency.

- There has been a recurrent tension between contextualised, independent projects and overall conceptual coherence, with implications for coordination and shared learning. This tension has been well managed, given the human and financial resources available at global coordination level. However, more progress could be made on testing and improving the underlying theory and approaches, given more resources for central coordination and greater conceptual leadership.
- The efficiency, effectiveness and results of the projects have derived from the quality, commitment and competence of the local partnerships. While competent partners, with appropriate support, have been able to efficiently and effectively deliver results, the portfolio structure (and limited human resources) could not systematically ensure this. In some cases, partners have benefited greatly from considered and continued support from Oxfam. Others comment that OGB are flexible, or ‘not fussy’, or that OGB support was insufficient or irregular.
- There have been missed opportunities for OGB to add value to the partners’ work, by providing a strong conceptual framework through which to understand their context and plan their work and contributions of each.
- Beyond the funding relationship, there are several different areas in which partners feel that an organisation of the size and influence of OGB could contribute to their work. These include technical support and capacity for project design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation and addressing women’s rights and voice issues; long term, flexible and resilient relationships which can allow for a longer term, less reactive, process and attention to the bigger picture; access to audiences, debates and decision making spaces, at national and international levels; and sufficient convening power, relationships and neutrality to facilitate networking, shared learning and reflection. Much of this has been delivered, but the evaluation found that the relative scarcity of resources invested in Oxfam’s internal capacity has restricted the potential for adding value and thereby the efficiency of the programme.
RHV managers in country programmes rate the support provided by the global coordinator very highly. This builds a picture of good quality support and coordination within limited means and resources, focused on donor reporting and accountability, as well as shared learning and communication. Evaluated on its own merits it is very positive. However, given the broad scope of the work, the sheer number of projects being brought together, the scale of the need for coordination, facilitation and support, the evaluation finds that the amount / proportion of resources given to global coordination may compromise its efficiency.

RHV has invested in reporting and evaluation in line with donor and OGB contract management requirements. However this has taken up large amounts of human and financial resources which could have been more efficiently used for reflection and shared learning.

4.7 Value for money

- The £5.8 million funding from DFID and OGB, split between the numbers of partners and projects and after global coordination costs, averages at just under £22,000 per partner per year, and just over £50,000 per project. The types of changes to which the project has contributed shows the relative weight of inputs to outcomes, while also demonstrating the challenges of this type of analysis given the complex nature of this type of change.
- This may mean that more investment (if necessary in fewer initiatives) may represent greater value for money. Also, a proportionally greater investment in the capacity of the coordination team to support, link and facilitate reflection and learning would represent greater value for money overall.

4.8 Sustainability

- Some kinds of change are more integral and permanent, including changes in individual and organisational capacity, confidence and attitudes. These types of changes have been observed in increased a) capacity for, commitment to and mainstreaming of women’s political rights in implementing partner organisations, including OGB; and b) capacity and self-confidence of grassroots women and activists to participate in the decision-making of their families, communities, and – to some extent – political parties and structures. Though more sustainable, these types of changes also tend to be slow and gradual, the result of multiple inputs and influences.
- Some areas of change appear to be more fragile and vulnerable to erosion. Increases in the openness and responsiveness of public systems and officials or leaders, for example, can be vulnerable to changes in the environment, or individuals. The numbers and influence of women leaders, too, can increase through the existence of more role models and examples of women’s effective participation, but they can also be vulnerable to decreases if women are not supported, or come under attack.

4.9 Recommendations

Overall, the evaluators recommend that future programmes of work on women’s participation and voice take as a starting point the theory of change, building relationships and planning processes which recognise the multi-faceted and contributory nature of this type of work. More specifically:

- The RHV theory of change be the starting point for future projects and programmes designed with objectives of women’s increased public participation and voice. In particular, this means that all future projects should consider and address the three spheres, as indivisible aspects of women’s participation and voice. Furthermore, the theory of change should be updated to incorporate findings reflected in this evaluation, and future programmes of work engage staff and partners to validate and interpret the theory of change, given their own context, values and knowledge.
- **Long term planning:** An inception period (suggested one year) should be provided before the start of large programmes of work such as RHV to allow for identification of partners and mapping of stakeholders, relationship building, validation and interpretation of the theory of change, planning and capacity building. Monitoring and evaluation systems should also recognize the need to evaluate progress in relation both to the short term objectives and goals, but also the longer term vision. Finally, where possible relationships should be bigger than the specific project and attention paid to building capacity for more strategic and long-term action.

- **Greater coordination:** Dedicate a larger proportion of the overall funds to global coordination and national OGB support staff. The coordination mandate needs include facilitating reflection and shared learning, communicate findings and results, and access organizational policy and decision making processes. This also means including a smaller number and range of countries and contexts to enable more effective facilitation of shared learning and common strategies.

- **Institutional capacity:** Oxfam needs to focus more on building the capacity of its own staff to test and apply the theory, to provide support and networking, up to date knowledge and tools, access to spaces, contacts and relationships in the country and internationally. This institutional capacity and commitment to increase women’s voice and participation (mainstreaming) should be included as an objective of any future such project.

- **MEL:** The monitoring and evaluation framework should be based on regular opportunities for staff and partners to reflect, also with participating women, on progress, effective strategies and emerging opportunities. This means explicitly seeking to include women’s voices. Building on a system based on reflection and developing the theory, a unified global external evaluation process with ample case studies (perhaps with a ‘critical stories’ approach which recognise multiple perspectives and actors) would be more effective and efficient. The monitoring of value for money needs to be able to link outcomes to inputs and those to financial resources. It is important to build in ways to relate these elements together without losing the complexity and nuance of how change happens.
5. A short introduction to the programme

*Raising Her Voice is a broad and wide-ranging portfolio of projects working in different ways and contexts to strengthen women’s participation and voice in governance.*

5.1 Purpose

*RHV promotes women’s capacity to engage effectively in governance at all levels.*

“Raising Her Voice” (RHV) is a 5 year global portfolio of Oxfam GB projects to promote women’s rights and capacity to engage effectively in governance at every level: raising women voices, increasing their influence, and making decision-making more accountable to women. The work is founded in Oxfam’s belief that women’s access to political leadership and participation is a crucial aspect of achieving gender equality and development – and that Oxfam has an important role to play in supporting this, as part of its commitment to put poor women’s rights at the heart of all it does. The overall focus of the initiative is on improving governance and transparency by recognising and increasing the significant contribution women can make in public life, and in promoting their rights.

The portfolio includes 19 projects across four continents, 17 national and two regional, funded mainly through the UK Department of International Development (DFID) Governance and Transparency Fund, and coordinated by Oxfam Great Britain (OGB). Directly participating in RHV activities and implementation are 43 OGB staff, 45 partners and 410 coalition members, as well as hundreds of thousands of grassroots women and activists3. Seven African national projects are managed within a regional Pan-African programme. This has links to a continent-wide coalition which is working to ensure the ratification, domestication and implementation of the African Women’s Rights Protocol. Ten country projects in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe have developed out of their own national priorities. A small global coordination team supports project management and accountability, facilitates the sharing of learning and carries out global advocacy.

5.2 History of the portfolio

*RHV was designed as a portfolio of projects, and has developed a more coherent theory and approach over the 5 year project life.*

In each context the projects were designed to build on existing work and local processes, and globally it was derived from a clear organisational commitment to gender and governance, two of OGB’s five organisational aims, in response to the funding opportunity of the 2008 DFID fund to explore issues related to the UK Government’s White Paper on Governance and Transparency. When the opportunity arose, there was a short turnaround period to develop a funding proposal, and Oxfam worked quickly to put together a broad and ambitious portfolio of work. OGB country programmes were offered the chance to submit proposals based on their own, and their partners’, capacity and focus. A summary logframe was developed based on the accepted proposals, which formed the basis for each country to further develop their projects.

This process was not followed in quite the same way for countries in the Africa regions, where a portfolio focused on advocacy around the Maputo Protocol was developed by OGB’s Pan-Africa office and the coalition Solidarity for African Women’s Rights (SOAWR), of which they are a member. This was rolled

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3 In June 2012 Oxfam global output reporting figures collected at country project level each year estimated that 712,526 women had so far benefitted from the collective impact of 4 years of RHV programming in 17 countries.
out by SOAWR members in eight countries. This enabled linkages between local, national and global awareness raising and advocacy work, demonstrating the value of both investment in local processes and actors, and networking for collaboration, scale-up and sharing of learning. However, this has complicated to some extent the role of OGB country offices, as they did not choose the partners with whom to work, nor strongly influence the overall approach and theme of their individual country projects.

5.2.1 The RHV identity: Portfolio or Programme

The design and resourcing of RHV as a portfolio has limited the potential for added value and conceptual leadership

RHV was developed as a portfolio, within the limits of the DfID GTF funding criteria, and started as a diverse range of locally relevant projects with a common theme of gender and governance. Although there was a clear objective of collective learning and sharing to add value to the individual projects, this has been limited by the range and diversity of projects, and a 15% cap on DFID funds to be retained and used within OGB.

This evaluation research suggests that, by design, the process of constructing the RHV portfolio privileged context, and in particular the expertise and entry points of OGB country offices and partners, over global conceptual coherence. Ultimately, as the first RHV coordinator reflected, “in hindsight the overall goal was probably too broad”. This allowed for flexibility, enabling competent partners to do important work, but has given relatively little scope within the limited and highly stretched resources, for elements of global coordination, shared learning and exchange. Over the five years, RHV’s conceptual identity and theoretical framework has become clearer and stronger, especially from the centre, providing at this point a strong basis for future work on the theme.

The design process described above was an effective way of building contextualised projects in many countries. The first global coordinator explained: “Competent staff could see opportunities and make it work.” However, in such a large scale intervention, particularly working on such complex social issues and with the additional layer of partnership working, there is a difficult balance to achieve between contextualisation and overall coherence. One interviewee from OGB explained:

“RHV was put together from the centre, but with countries given a lot of freedom to define their own approach. So the level of participation was strong - which was great in terms of showing the breadth of possible approaches and innovation, but not so great in terms of consistent approaches to measuring performance and not fantastic for learning.”

An interviewee from the donor team managing the fund recognised this problem in such diverse and wide-ranging programmes of work: “We have learned that, when managing a new multi-country programme you need to allow at least the first year to get contract agreements, select partners and so on. And this of course does not mean that by then a team is formed working towards the same programme’s objectives.”

This is a recurring theme in such programmes of work, further complicated in the case of RHV by the initial request for a ‘portfolio’ structure. In addition, RHV was OGB’s first concerted (global) effort to focus on women’s rights and governance, an area of women’s rights with relatively low focus and expertise in the organisation and across civil society as a whole. As such, the evaluators consider that part of the purpose and value of the work was to explore effective strategies and approaches to dealing with this area of work in different contexts.

This evaluation, and the midterm review, found that because of the relatively new nature of the area of work, more conceptual and theoretical clarity was needed. In both research exercises, it was sometimes difficult to understand how some projects related to governance, or voice. This is understandable, as the links between empowerment, voice and participation and rights are interwoven. A woman who is not able to exercise power in her household, because of poverty and/ or violence for example, will be much less likely to be able to participate in the public arena. However, there is a danger that, by tackling all of
the interrelated issues without clear justification in terms of ‘voice’, projects working on ‘raising her voice’ become indistinguishable from generic ‘women’s rights’ projects. While their impact may be important at personal or social level in that context, they are not helping the organisation and wider women’s movement to better understand how to positively contribute to women’s political participation and voice. We found this particularly in African projects who had taken as a starting point the ratification or domestication of the Maputo Protocol, and in many cases had gone on to implement (or at least be evaluated as) projects focusing specifically on violence against women legislation, awareness or services with no distinct link to women’s participation.

5.2.2 Midterm Review and Theory of Change:  
The midterm review in 2011 introduced a unifying theory of change for the projects and portfolio.

“The midterm evaluation asked to show how change happens and brought the theory of change in personal, social and political life of women. We are working on this area but not conceptualizing like this. RHV was able to draw out the concept of the theory of change which was very helpful to show changes in women’s lives to beneficiaries themselves and policy targets and especially in programme design. I’m using this in Nepal and Georgia too.”  
OGB Manager, Nepal

“The theory of change enabled people to hear the message that women’s empowerment has to be context specific. It provides a simple front end to a complex process. In Oxford, we work with it all the time”.  
OGB staff, Oxford

A global midterm review (MTR) of Raising Her Voice was undertaken in 2011, by the authors of the current report. By the midterm review, an underlying pattern was discernible, resulting in the proposed and later adopted programme level theory of change. The portfolio was already starting to look like a programme, a series of projects coordinated at global level, for greater shared learning and communications, as well as accountability and reporting to the donor.

An important output from the midterm review was the identification of a programme level theory of change for the portfolio, based on the approaches and learning emerging from the ground. The theory identified three broad spheres - personal, political and social - which influence women’s opportunities to participate in governance, and which need to change in order to strengthen women’s voice:

- The political spaces need to be more open, inclusive and representative of women. This includes public and customary laws, policies, structures and decision making processes, the mechanisms by which women can claim and uphold their rights and interests.
- For a woman to create, access and take-up opportunities for participation and influence, she needs personal capacity, self-esteem and confidence. The RHV theory of change highlights the need to work on this sphere, to redress the situation whereby the political and social spheres have strong influence over a marginalised woman’s ability to participate, influence and secure her rights, but she has little opportunity to influence them back.
- The social sphere supports and embeds changes in attitudes, relationships and behaviours. It includes norms promoted or upheld by cultural and religious institutions and the media, as well as the strength and capacity of the women’s movement and civil society to support women with a platform to raise their voices.
The proposal was that, in order to be effective, gender and governance projects must consider and address all three spheres at different levels - local, national and regional/global - employing a range of diverse strategies and alliances depending on the context. At the midterm stage, the evaluators found relatively little overt focus in the design of the 19 projects on the personal sphere, although it was clear from the evidence that much work and some important impact was happening. The emphasis has shifted since the MTR, with more intentional focus on women’s personal empowerment as an essential piece in the work to increase their influence and voice. The case studies of Honduras and The Gambia are testament to this.

The midterm review urged the global coordination role to build relationships and shared learning, using the theory as a basis for communication and comparison across the portfolio. Oxfam wanted to go in this direction. However, in reality, given the scale with 17 national and 2 regional projects, the resources available at the global level were barely sufficient to provide support on demand and ensure smooth reporting and donor relations, let alone build a multinational team. This was confirmed by an interviewee from the donor, who considered that the managers were overstretched considering the needs and demands of the portfolio.

5.3 Objectives and expected outcomes.

*The RHV outcome areas and indicators were reframed after the MTR in relation to the three spheres of the theory of change.*

After the mid-term review, the global RHV coordinator worked to restructure the original project log-frame to reflect the theory of change. This resulted in **14 outcome areas** framed under the three spheres, helping to monitor, assess and understand the collective progress of RHV projects in relation to the theory. Although we recognise that individual projects have varied both in their internalisation of the theory of change and application of reframed outcome areas, this evaluation uses them to assess and categorise the different areas of impact and change. Box 1 below details the outcome areas, and lists the projects which are expected to report to each of them.
Box 1: RHV outcome areas

**Personal Sphere**
1. **Women activists in target communities** have a deeper understanding of their rights, and the skills, confidence and capacity to engage with local governance.
   * Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, The Gambia, Uganda
2. Poor and marginalised women are able to participate and be heard in government planning and policymaking
   * All projects
3. Small steps taken by women and men to change attitudes, behaviours and practices regarding gender-based discrimination and violence
   * All projects

**Social Sphere**
1. Greater public awareness and support for realising women’s rights
   * All projects
2. Vibrant coalitions and/ or networks of organisations working on women's rights
   * Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Liberia, Mercosur, Nigeria, Pan-Africa, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda
3. Evidence of best practice and lessons learned on how to strengthen women's participation in governance decisions and processes identified and shared
   * Nepal, Pan-Africa, South Africa, Uganda
4. Up to date information, knowledge and tools available for women’s organizations, political actors and public opinion, about gender politics, gender violence and discrimination.
   * Bolivia, Honduras, Nepal, Nigeria, Pan-Africa, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda
5. Targeted media partners improve quantity and quality of coverage of women’s rights issues
   * Armenia, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria
6. Women are seen as relevant political partners in proposals for social change.
   * Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan

This evaluation has assessed the progress and impact of the portfolio in relation to an additional outcome area in the social sphere: institutional capacity and commitment to women’s participation and voice of participating organisations. This is explained and assessed in 7.2.2.1 and reflected in the recommendations.

**Political Sphere**
1. Women leaders have an influential role in community and local governance
   * Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Honduras, Nepal, Pakistan
2. Women’s organisations influence public debates on the approval of legal and administrative measures to increase the participation of women in elections for representative positions
   * Chile, Honduras, Pakistan
3. Traditional structures and community decision-making fora are more responsive to women’s priorities
   * Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Pan-Africa, Uganda, The Gambia
4. Local government make community development plans, budget formulation and monitoring of policy and budget implementation processes more accessible; and increase investment in areas prioritised by women.
   * Armenia, Albania, Bolivia, Honduras, Indonesia, Pakistan
5. Laws, public policies and institutions reviewed and reformed to better promote and protect women’s rights and priorities
   * Armenia, Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Liberia, Mercosur, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Pan-Africa, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda
5.4 Approaches and entry points

The 19 projects in the RHV portfolio address the three spheres to different extents, through different entry points.

“I have learnt that when there are women political leaders, women’s confidence increases. Their status is increased and women’s issues and rights are brought to the forefront and put into policy … I have learnt that in all structures women’s participation is necessary. After that women achieve their rights.”

RHV Partner, Nepal

A review of the 19 RHV projects shows a range of approaches and entry points to working on the three spheres. The choice of entry points were made in an organic way informed by the expertise, priorities and understanding of partners. The evaluators have attempted to categorise the projects according to their focus and entry points, to give an idea of the range of work and approaches in relation to the three spheres. The categories are being applied retrospectively, and have not been validated by the partners themselves.

The two case studies conducted for this final evaluation show how attention to all three spheres can effectively address barriers and create opportunities for women’s participation and voice. In The Gambia, the partner took the opportunity of RHV to extend and link up their policy advocacy work with grassroots capacity and activism. They brought together women’s CSOs into a formal network to enhance collective voice for domestication of the Protocol, and strengthen the political awareness and participation element of members’ work with women leaders at the grassroots. RHV Honduras partners worked to promote marginalised women’s active citizenship and participation in public decision-making processes at local level, building grassroots networks and engaging with and reinvigorating public mechanisms for women’s issues. This was linked to national level coalition campaigning to increase quotas for women’s representation in national decision-making spaces.

Several of the projects have taken the personal sphere as an entry point, including Nepal, South Africa and Pakistan, focusing their efforts and engagement on the confidence and capacity of (especially grassroots) women to effectively raise their voices. For example RHV in Nepal engaged marginalised rural women in regular facilitated meetings for collective analysis, planning, learning and personal growth to build and support their knowledge and confidence to participate in local management committees. Similarly in Pakistan, RHV built the skills of women leaders (and potential leaders) from all walks of life to interact effectively with local actors from government, service providers and civil society. RHV in South Africa worked with members of women’s organisations, groups and their own staff to explore issues of power, voice and vulnerability in a crosscutting way. In all three of these cases, empowerment work was supported with work on the social sphere to create a more supportive and enabling environment for women’s participation and voice.

Some RHV projects took as an entry point the political sphere, supported with work to build social capital and support for women’s rights activists. In particular, this was the obvious entry point of Pan-Africa projects, given their initial focus on the Maputo Protocol, its ratification and domestication in their national contexts. For example, RHV Nigeria’s primary objective was to get the rights enshrined in the Maputo Protocol passed into national law, namely the Gender and Equal Opportunities and violence (VAPP) bills. To achieve this, RHV partners built the national campaign coalition, increasing membership, grassroots participation and advocacy capacity, strengthening relationships with decision makers, and providing key inputs and resources. In Chile, the RHV partner campaigns, networks women politicians and, collects and disseminates information to strengthen the ‘gender agenda’ in parliament, and increase numbers of women candidates.
Other RHV projects have developed strategies with the **social sphere** as the entry point, bringing women and women’s rights organisations together at grassroots, or national levels, and raising public awareness. RHV in **Guatemala** focuses almost exclusively on the social sphere, building the capacity of women’s organisations for strategic communications to position the women’s rights agenda and build legitimacy. For example in **Albania, Armenia** and **Indonesia**, RHV partners promoted **participatory budgeting, establishing and training groups** for women to meet, discuss and research local needs, decide investment priorities, plan and negotiate funding from private and public sources. Inevitably, participation in such groups and networks has an impact on the individual members’ capacity and confidence, interlinking strongly with the personal sphere.

### 6. The evaluation methodology

This final evaluation is both a **meta-analysis of the national components** of the Oxfam GB’s Raising Her Voice (RHV) programme, and an **assessment of the global portfolio** as an entity. The former seeks to draw learning and conclusions from the evidence generated by the different RHV projects on **progress, implementation and impact**, review and update the RHV **theory of change**, and identify **strategies which can support effective work** on gender and governance. The latter focuses on the **added value of the RHV global portfolio** to the individual projects, and to governance and gender work of OGB.

The evaluation design and questions are based on thorough engagement with RHV coordination staff and the information requirements of the donor (DFID). This needs assessment included identification of key documentation and stakeholders to be consulted. The evaluation questions included the main sections of this report, as well as attention to learning on how change happens, and the added value of OGB and the portfolio structure to the work of RHV partners. After secondary and primary research, preliminary findings were shared with OGB RHV, gender and governance staff to allow for collective sense-making and contribution of further relevant data.

### 6.1 Research tools

The evaluation team directly consulted **123 people**, from **18 organisations** from Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Chile, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda and UK.

- **Desk review:** Primarily the 16 national evaluations and effectiveness reviews (all except The Gambia), regional meeting minutes and global portfolio communication and documentation.
- **Interviews and group discussions:** Two group discussions in Oxford; 5 in-depth interviews; 3 feedback sessions with OGB staff in Oxford and with country programs by teleconference.
- **Surveys:** An online survey with both ranked and open questions was adapted for 5 target groups from partners, OGB country programme staff and directors, internal and external ‘bellwethers’. Of 122 recipients we received 44 responses, equalling a 36% response rate, which allowed for quantitative analysis but is insufficient for thorough statistical extrapolations.
- **Case studies:** Two in-depth case studies were conducted in **Honduras** and **The Gambia**, selected to balance the regional and thematic case studies gathered so far and based on 4-5 days field research primarily engaging grassroots women, and RHV staff and partners. The research used participatory methods for facilitating reflection and analysis and capturing stories from different stakeholders to explore the projects in context, how they have interpreted RHV, what change has happened and how.
6.2 Limitations to this evaluation

Some crucial limitations should be stated which affect the breadth and quality of the findings:

- **Common time and resource constraints** limited the ability to capture, analyse and include all of the relevant information. The information available from each project is very rich, but not always comparable, or adequately captured in the evaluations.

- **The 16 project evaluations were of very mixed quality.** This was a limiting and frustrating way to understand and assess the projects and progress. Nepal, Honduras, Pakistan and Indonesia were examples of stronger and more credible evaluations, and the Albania effectiveness review was very revealing. Others where members of our team had been involved, Pan Africa, Liberia, Honduras, Mozambique and Chile, were more reliable sources of evidence, and deepen the analysis. However, some projects seemed to have been evaluated under different criteria than the final evaluation and often it was hard to distinguish the contribution of RHV from the general work of the partner. In some projects effectiveness reviews\(^4\) had been conducted instead of traditional evaluations, meaning that some areas of information and analysis were not available.

- **The relatively fixed parameters provided by the donor did not support a ‘theory of change’ approach,** to analyse how change happened, and whether power and gender inequalities have been fundamentally transformed. The standard evaluation template is focused on measuring performance (program inputs and outputs), rather than change.

- Because of the nature of partnership funding and financial reporting, it is not always possible to attribute changes directly to the contribution or work of RHV, although in some of the research (such as Effectiveness Reviews) this relationship has been explored in more depth than in others. This has been exacerbated by the challenge of delineating the boundaries of the RHV projects from the wider work of the partner given the overlap in the nature of activities, the use of human and financial resources and reporting of results. As discussed in section 7.5 below, this is a challenge for organisations like OGB wishing to support partners in their core work, while needing to assess and understand their contribution both for accountability and to learn and improve as partners.

- **It is a characteristic of this type of work**, which feeds into complex, organic social change with many uncoordinated actors and trends, that its impact can only be understood as a contribution to changes. Social and political change is incremental, complex and largely organic. The timeframes for noticeable and sustainable impact on women’s lives, political structures or (particularly) social attitudes are long, on the whole much longer than the 3-5 years of the RHV projects. Some of the biggest changes in women’s lives and lived rights, as seen in the Gambia case study, can be attributed to NGO awareness raising projects such as RHV, but one after the other – consistently (though not coherently!) over 10-20 year period. Tackling the relative lack of influence of women requires grappling with entrenched power and transforming structures, as well as overcoming divisions within the women’s movement itself. This is beyond both the scope and reach of a single project. As the Tanzania evaluation put it: “the main challenges to secure women’s rights in Africa are related to social and cultural contexts where patriarchy is embedded and where even the principle of equity is contentious for some powerful sectors. In these contexts, even small gestures towards opening spaces for dialogue between governments and women’s movements, for example in the Tanzania constitutional review process, have to be seen as a big step forward”.

RHV fundamentally aims to address gender inequalities in power and voice. The evaluation team has explicitly taken a feminist approach to understanding and assessing the portfolio. Feminist research

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\(^4\) Effectiveness reviews are informed by the process tracing research protocol which focuses on analysing the effectiveness of up to three intermediate and/or final outcomes considered by stakeholders to be the most significant for the review to address.
and scholarship does not have a single agreed set of criteria, but is well summed up by Barbara McManus in ‘Classics and Feminism’ (1997) as “attempting to examine beliefs and practices from the viewpoint of the ‘other’, treating women and other marginalised groups as subjects, not merely objects.” She also explains that “Feminists believe that existing inequalities between dominant and marginalized groups can and should be removed. Therefore feminist scholarship has an acknowledged and accepted political dimension, as opposed to the hidden political dimension of scholarship that claims to be ‘neutral’ and ‘objective.’” In the case of this evaluation, a feminist approach rests on explicit political, pro-women’s rights positioning; open discussion and inclusive interpretation of findings to key RHV staff in OGB, and continual sharing, triangulation and readjustment of the process and findings to make the evaluation as useful and representative as possible. In this way we have attempted to provide both a fair and honest assessment of delivery and value that DFID require, while also providing learning, findings and recommendations which can strengthen future work of all stakeholders to promote women’s rights, voice and participation.

7. Findings in relation to standard review criteria

7.1 Relevance

7.1.1 Relevance to women

All 19 projects were found to be relevant to the needs of women who are marginalised from public decision making across the board.

“Raising Her Voice is relevant as it leads to breaking the silence over marginalizing laws, over women being marginalized in decision making and in accessing resources.”

RHV Tanzania evaluation

Consistently, in every national context, RHV research and evaluations have shown that the public sphere is male dominated and that women are largely absent from public fora, leadership and decision making. For example, the Armenia evaluation states that only 0.5% of local council members are women, and in Chile women hold less than 15% of seats in the upper houses of government. In Chile and Liberia, reports noted a decreasing trend for women elected representatives. RHV participants in The Gambia stated: “Out of 114 candidates in the local elections only 11 were women. The numbers are going down, not up! Patriarchy is still very strong.” In some places quotas exist, but are not fulfilled. For example, Armenia has a 15% quota for women candidates to National Assembly elections but currently only 9% are women, and of the target 30% women in government positions in Liberia, only 11% were women in 2011.

This is a deep seated cultural and historical problem, as the Tanzania evaluation noted: “Men dominate positions of power, and their power is entrenched through customary beliefs and discriminatory laws. Women fear that if they challenge and protest they will be marginalised.” There are many examples in other evaluation reports, from Albania, where ‘traditional mentality’ keeps women in the domestic sphere; Liberia where there is a ‘cultural bias’ against the political and professional advancement of women; and Nigeria, where ‘cultural norms and gender roles’ block women’s public participation. Many point to heavy domestic workloads and sexual violence as factors limiting women’s participation in the public sphere.

This makes male domination self-perpetuating, built into the very structures of power: “The structures and mechanisms in place to advance gender equity are themselves male dominated”, as an RHV participant from The Gambia explained. “More women have registered interest in politics at national level, but they are not selected. Most selection committees are only men.” Another
grassroots activist gave a clear example: “Speaking and writing English are criteria for election to the National Assembly, and that limits the participation of women.” The Chile review highlights structural barriers including the ‘binomial’ election system, women’s growing distrust of politics, lack of financial support for women candidates, and the patriarchal culture of political parties. One respondent explained: “Parties tend to support women as candidates in places where they think there is very little chance for us to win”. This experience was echoed in Armenia, where RHV support to local women candidates was not sufficient to overcome the traditional voting relationships, money, people and machinery behind male candidates, leaving the unsuccessful women candidates disheartened and unwilling to reapply.

7.1.2 Relevance to national policy contexts
*RHV is relevant to national and international policies and commitments for equal rights for women, ratified by most RHV countries.*

Because of the above, RHV’s focus on women’s participation and voice is considered extremely relevant to women’s rights work in general. In many RHV countries, governments have subscribed national and international commitments to guarantee the rights of women, giving the national framework for work on women’s rights and participation.

In Pan-Africa, RHV partner SOAWR is a coalition of African women’s rights organisations who had been engaged in the African Union processes to draft and pass a Protocol enshrining African women’s rights. The Protocol entered into force in 2005 and at the current time, 49 of the 53 AU member states have signed the Protocol, of which 36 have ratified and deposited. The Pan-Africa review noted that the Protocol is considered: “...a particularly relevant tool to protect women’s rights in Africa as it highlights issues not effectively covered in other instruments but which have particular relevance to the reality of the continent... It is therefore a legal instrument born within the African context and from an African-led process.”

Examples of national level legislation from the evaluation reports include: Pakistan, where RHV is considered directly relevant to national gender policies and the CEDAW objectives; Armenia, where the national gender policy in place covering all spheres of life and quotas for women’s representation in all levels of government and civil service; Guatemala, where the 1996 peace agreements began a series of political and legal reforms towards gender equality; and Uganda, which has ratified many international instruments that promote the rights of women and passed a Domestic Violence Act and a Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, respectively.

7.1.3 Relevance to implementing partners
*The design of RHV projects fits the objectives, values and expertise of partner organisations from national civil society, making it relevant to their work.*

RHV is implemented through a partnership between OGB and partner organisations from civil society, most of whom were involved from project design phase. This has meant that partners have been able to build RHV into their own objectives, programming and expertise, with a common focus on ‘gender and governance’. This has had mixed results, as described in sections 7.4 and 7.5, limiting opportunities for conceptual coherence and leadership across the portfolio, but ensuring strong ownership and relevance to implementing partners and national contexts.

In many cases, for example across the Pan-Africa region and in Chile and Uruguay, implementing partners have used RHV funds as core funding, to strengthen and expand existing work, or for elements that are more difficult to fund. For example the Chile review states that: “RHV fits neatly into the organization’s focus areas of democracy and political participation; human rights and
international protection and gender justice. Raising Her Voice has made a significant contribution to the organization by providing strategic funds to activities which were difficult to fund, or underfunded.

This has ensured strong relevance to the organizations’ priorities, building on the kinds of expertise, legitimacy and trusted relationships on which the effectiveness of this kind of social change work rests. This has created positive results, for example in Pakistan, where the project has been integrated with other projects and initiatives of OGB and the implementing partner, resulting in multiplier effects on the project’s efficiency and impact. The Guatemala evaluation found that “The project’s main good decision was to bet on historical processes promoted by organizations since their respective foundations.” However, as explained in section 5.2.1 above, the evaluations have found that this, while making RHV very relevant to partners, has in some cases reduced the projects’ relevance to the overall portfolio and theory of change.

7.1.4 Relevance to Oxfam

RHV is relevant to Oxfam, to broaden understanding, expertise and capacity to work on women’s rights, which are ‘at the heart of everything they do’. It is not so clear whether Oxfam is the most relevant actor to implement a programme such as RHV, depending on large part on their own commitment to strengthen their role and contribution to women’s voice and participation.

Raising Her Voice fits into two of the five organisational aims of Oxfam Great Britain, gender and governance. Historically, the organisation has used a livelihoods and economic empowerment lens in their women’s rights work. Increasingly, the organisation is recognising that women’s rights are multifaceted and intrinsically linked. RHV has been an important initiative, especially at global level, to open up this work, strengthening attention to women’s public participation and voice as integral to enjoyment of their rights and quality of life. The work of the global coordination function, to communicate and disseminate of the theory of change and evidence from the programme, has been fundamental to this.

The evaluation finds that more specialised women’s rights organisations - with a more explicit focus, more direct experience and expertise, and more established partnerships with the global women’s movement - may have been more directly relevant to design and implement work like RHV. RHV is unlike any other programme managed by Oxfam GB in focus and scope, and in no way represents the mainstream of the organisation. This evaluation considers that OGB was a relevant organisation to implement this programme, given its power, reach and influence in the development sector across the world. However, this value and relevance depends on the organisation strengthening its own capacity to design and deliver such programmes in the future, and advance its own understanding of how change happens in women’s voice and influence. For this reason, this evaluation has considered an additional outcome area relating to organisational capacity and commitment, as an objective in itself. A clear recommendation comes across from analysis of the survey responses, to mainstream, and invest in capacity for, work on women’s voice and leadership as integral to women’s rights work.

7.2 Impact:

RHV projects have created impact at personal, local and national levels on all three spheres, from women’s participation and influence, to the systems and support for women’s voice.

The impact of each programme is summarised in the individual two-page summaries, attached as annex 1. We have also identified impact on some of the implementing organisations, including OGB
and partners, in relation to their understanding of women’s rights and voice, their capacity and relationships, and their strategic direction.

Here we draw some conclusions about the types of impact seen under each outcome area. The chapter is organised around the outcome areas of the latest RHV evaluation framework, adding at the end of the chapter some emerging themes not captured in the framework but relevant to this evaluation. However, we begin with some examples of testimony from women who have experienced changes in their own power, participation and voice which cut across the three spheres.

“A lot of things have changed as a result of this project. Before, women did not approach local authorities with their problems and requests. Now they are actively involved in the social and political life of their community.”

“We saw the problems but didn’t know how to solve them. Now we are empowered to apply to the LAG as female representatives of the community.”

Armenia

“Now I left the fear to speak behind, the fear of saying what I think. Before, I used to think that only men had this right but I grew aware that we women also have a right to be heard.”

“Our political participation may look modest, but you have to understand the effort it takes to do what we do in a context where we are discriminated against... We live in a State that is not our State.”

Guatemala

“I was one of those invisible girls in the society; but now my life has changed. I have a goal for life.

Nepal

7.2.1 Impact on the personal sphere

“When RHV came and told us of their vision we thought yes! Women have the worth, dignity and thinking to participate! This should have happened a long time ago!”

RHV participant, The Gambia

During the research a consensus emerged indicating that sustainable changes in women’s lives, voice and influence depend on changes in all three spheres but are rooted in work in the personal sphere. The case study of The Gambia, in its distinction between ‘paper rights’ and lived rights, shows how women’s own knowledge, capacity and confidence can enable them to access the legal provisions, spaces and opportunities available to them. As one staff member from the Pan Africa programme stated, “RHV is only a success if women are advocating for themselves.”

There is a sense from the programme reporting and indicators that great value is placed on showing large scale impact. This may, to some extent, be an interpretation of DfID’s requirements and interests. While it is true that large scale social change is the ultimate vision of this programme, it is also important to recognise that changes in the personal sphere relate to individuals, one at a time. Changes in the personal sphere cannot be directly extrapolated to a group, community or nation. While the social sphere deals with solidarity, support and enabling environments, the personal sphere is about the individual. Two women taking part in the same workshop, training or process will change in different ways, undergo different experiences of empowerment, and go on to contribute to or influence their political context to differing extents. Empowerment and active
citizenship are deeply personal, and programmes such as RHV have to be careful not to turn women’s personal lives into targets or measurements by which to judge their own success or progress. For that reason, much of the reporting of impact in this sphere is in the form of testimony and perception.

P.1 Women activists in target communities have a deeper understanding of their rights, and the skills, confidence and capacity to engage with local governance.

“Raising Her Voice had made us aware of our power and how to interrupt the various power sites that seek to oppress us. The project teaches [women] that they have the power to stand up for themselves and make decisions for themselves, because most of the time people make decisions for us as women.”

South African activist/ RHV participant

“The majority of Women Leaders Group members are now more confident, more aware of their rights and able to raise issues that affect themselves and other women significantly, both in public forums and with the District Governments”.

Pakistan RHV evaluation

“Through the LAG, I had the opportunity to feel esteemed and important as we contributed to the local development.”

Albania RHV participant

In line with the above quotes, the national evaluations, interviews and surveys provide sufficient testimonies and evidence to conclude that in most of the focus countries the project’s activities have had an impact on the self-confidence and sense of agency of individuals in the target groups. This in turn has enabled and encouraged many women to speak up and participate, and their examples have increased the respect and recognition of the role of women in decision making. Both case studies also illustrate how the lives of women participating in RHV have been touched by the training, awareness raising, information and sense of solidarity provided by project activities. Women in The Gambia talked about being aware of their worth, knowing how to right injustices, having skills to mediate disputes for example.

The project with most reported impact on women’s personal confidence and capacity is Nepal. Through education and facilitation of reflection, collective analysis and planning, over 2000 women members of 81 Community Discussion Classes (CDC) across the project areas are now more willing and confident to speak up in public spaces, organise meetings of their own, and carry out strategic interventions. One participant explained: "The CDC gave me the vision and confidence and developed my capacity which has enabled me to earn the respect and trust of the society. This (is) something which no wealth can buy." This in turn has led to women enjoying greater influence\(^5\), as well as more respect, cooperation and support from family and community\(^6\), while also developing

\(^1\) 85% of focus group participants said they now have confidence to influence decisions, compared to 15% of comparative survey group.

\(^2\) 91% of focus group discussion participants agreed that family members had become more supportive of their participation in group and community affairs.
strategies to challenge and resist discrimination. A local health centre manager explained that: “Women are more aware and organized. If we ignore their voice, they can make it quite difficult for us.”

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Case studies of The Gambia and Honduras

**P.2 Poor & marginalised women are able to participate and be heard in government planning and policymaking**

“Before, I used to spend my life in the kitchen, I didn’t leave. Now, I’m not embarrassed or afraid to speak in public... I’m no longer afraid to accept different positions. I’ve even received an offer to run for 2nd local government council member at the next elections. I didn’t want to run, but the candidate told me that, due to my commitment to the women’s network, I was the ideal person to defend women’s rights.”

Honduras RHV participant

“We have learned how to communicate with the Community Council. We not only write letters and wait for the responses; we are inviting them to our center for discussions to present our proposals, to raise and discuss community needs and problems.”

Armenia RHV participant

There are many examples in the evaluations and case studies of marginalised women engaging and taking action in planning and policymaking in a more strategic and organised manner. As a result they are increasingly raising issues in planning spaces, particularly at local level through non-formal, traditional and state government structures. Where RHV has supported grassroots women to come together in groups, there have frequently been correlated increases in members’ participation in local governance and decision making structures.

There is some evidence of an increase in women candidates to elected positions. For example:
- in Armenia, the number of women standing in local elections has increased by 10% in some project areas, counter to a national decrease in women candidates, and there is a woman council member (all members of RHV groups) in three of the project areas.
- In Guatemala 28 of the women participating in RHV stood for local elections in 2011, of whom two were successful.
- In Pakistan 90 of the Women Leader Group members surveyed for the evaluation plan to run for office in the 2013 elections, some for the first time and most of whom have belonged to the WLG for four or more years.
- In Tanzania most evaluation respondents reported that they had more courage to stand for election, and many had been candidates although facing strong competition with limited resources.

There are also many cases of women joining local decision making and planning bodies.
- In Nepal RHV targeted four local management committees (from education to natural resources) for increased representation of poor and marginalised women, and the actual figures for women’s participation in these target structures grew from a baseline of 28% to
48% at the end of the project. Overall around three quarters of CDC participants, 1472 women, have taken up local leadership roles, including in local groups such as PTAs and ward citizen forums.

- In a sample of schools in the project areas in Tanzania, where there had never previously been women on the management committees, there was at the final evaluation between 27% and 45% women membership.
- Around a half of the women participating in the case study research in The Gambia had taken up positions in village councils, courts and school management committees as a direct result of participation in RHV, and several were actively campaigning in national politics.

The impact of the increases in women’s participation and representation are seen most markedly under outcomes S6, which shows how perceptions of women as relevant political actors are changing, and PP3-5 which show how public debates, decisions and policies are becoming more responsive and supportive of women’s rights and priorities.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of all projects
- Case studies of The Gambia and Honduras

P.3 Small steps taken by women & men to change attitudes, behaviours & practices regarding gender-based discrimination & violence

“As a widow, the RHV project has really helped me to raise my voice so as to retain some of the things my late husband left behind for me and the children. Before I knew about RHV, I was intimidated by my husband’s people, but after, I have been able to stand for my rights.”

RHV Nigeria evaluation respondent

“Before RHV, FGM was prominent, but it was a no go area and we couldn’t talk about it ... RHV came to give us training on FGM. Now I use the case to raise awareness of rights, I tell people that committees can take action on harassment; you don’t have to put up with it. Now RHV has raised awareness we can challenge this kind of case.”

The Gambia RHV participant

“[Women] are able to defend themselves on their own. They know the law that protects us with respect to matters of violence. Men are afraid to mistreat them because they know they’ll be reported.”

Honduras RHV partner

A significant result of the increased confidence and solidarity of women and awareness of their rights has been their increased ability and will to speak out on rights abuses and access justice on their own or their peers’ behalf. There are several reported cases from the case studies and evaluations of women accessing property rights, stopping harmful and discriminatory traditional practices and reporting cases of violence against women.

In The Gambia case study there are examples of RHV activists directly addressing rights abuses, including successful lobbying to stop discrimination against female secondary school pupils, to protect a 12 year old from forced marriage, and to distribute clan land equally between women and men. One woman told of how her community had stopped the practice of FGM in their communities after being able to analyse and share the harm it does to their bodies, their lives, their sexuality and
their relationships. The two-pagers from **Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan and Tanzania** give further examples of this type of action, as well as a case of forced FGM in **Liberia** which RHV helped to bring to court on the basis of the Maputo Protocol and national constitution, as recognised by the judge in the case.

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### 7.2.2 Impact on the social sphere

“RHV successfully encourages the emerging of women cadres who are courageous, critical and inspiring to other women. The participation of women in village development planning increases and women’s voices are heard more.”

**Indonesia evaluation report**

“First form organisations and raise awareness. If [women] do not know why they are forming organisations, they will not do so. They want to move forward, overcoming their fears, participating in organisations, and making decisions.”

**Honduras RHV partner**

Analysis of the evaluation findings suggest that changes in the social sphere, especially in relation to networking and solidarity, are the glue enabling greater changes in the two other spheres. All of the case studies (including Bolivia from the midterm) highlight the impact of **networking and solidarity** on the ability of individual women to raise their voice. Women pointed to isolation and vulnerability as a strong barrier to their participation in decision-making spaces, and conversely the opportunity to share and work collectively with other women and women’s groups as a factor in gaining confidence to raise their voices effectively. By bringing grassroots women together to discuss issues, identify opportunities and strategies to influence decisions, and act together women have been able to have more influence individually and as groups. Equally, bringing women’s rights organisations together into national networks and coalitions to plan, lobby and campaign together has strengthened their effectiveness and capacity for influence.

The social sphere also covers changes in **public awareness and support** for women’s participation, from family and community to wider public attitudes and media coverage. There is evidence that such changes have taken place with **people directly involved in the projects, and those immediately around them**. As women take up more opportunities to influence and engage, they are gaining the respect and recognition of men, decision makers and others in the communities who see the benefits and value of women’s participation. However, this evaluation has found that on the whole, wider public awareness efforts have been limited (especially in relation to the need) and more opportunistic then strategic. RHV projects lacked the necessary resources to undertake significant public awareness campaigns to change such embedded mind-sets in the wider population. Nevertheless, there have been a great amount of energy and some results reported in this area.

Finally, we include in this section – though not an outcome area identified in the project monitoring framework – the impact that RHV has had on the participating organizations, including OGB at country and international levels and implementing partners. Considering the broader vision of RHV – women’s voices are heard – is a long-term and multifaceted objective, the capacity and commitment of organisations at all levels to continue to work for women’s participation and voice is a key impact of the project. Engagement with RHV has built the **capacity, alliances and knowledge** of many of
the organisations, including project management, advocacy strategies and access to the media, and in general the mainstreaming of women’s participation and voice.

**S.1 Greater public awareness & support for realising women’s rights**

“I realise now that women want to be involved but they have not enough opportunity to speak out. We have to start to listen to women’s voices.”

Religious leader, Papua (Indonesia)

The impact of RHV on public awareness and support for women’s rights and participation has been visible mainly in the local areas around the project. Some evaluations report that **women’s participation in public decision making has become more normalised** in those communities where RHV has been active. In other cases, there is evidence that **attitudes to gender-based violence and discrimination are shifting**, for example in Nepal where 90% of respondents from project areas reported increased awareness of violence against women, compared to 30% from the comparator group.

There is some evidence of increased local support for national legislation and policy supporting women’s rights, but less as regards national public awareness and support. The **Chile effectiveness review** found that the RHV partner has “installed women’s human rights on the agenda”, with statistics showing that over the past 4 years there has been an increase in support for women’s quotas from 40% up to 60% in the Senate, and from 41% to 49% among MPs. and there are many examples of impact on laws, public policies and institutions in section PP5.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:

- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of all projects
- Case studies of The Gambia, Bolivia and Honduras

**S.2 Vibrant coalitions and/ or networks of organisations working on women’s rights**

“The sense of togetherness and power of the women leaders’ group ... transformed women to the power dynamics around them.”

Pakistan evaluation

“Networking has become an indispensable practice to strengthen women’s struggles, establishing effective and affectionate ties between different types of women’s organisations ... which is part of the capacity installed in the women’s movement.”

Bolivia evaluation

“RHV helped to coordinate and harmonize the different strands of gender based initiatives in the country giving the partners a loud voice and visible presence impossible for policy makers to ignore.”

OGB manager, Nigeria

“We have learned to ask and negotiate with authorities. We became aware that it is not necessary to shout but to ask in a peaceful manner. Now we know when we say or demand something we must have evidence”

Guatemala RHV participants
RHV projects in most countries have established, built and supported groups of women, women’s rights activists and women’s organisations at local and national levels. This has had an impact on the capacity, confidence and influence of individual members as well as the groups themselves.

At grassroots level, the case studies show the impact of women’s groups in breaking isolation and building the confidence and capacity of women. Apart from the training and information they receive, it is the value of solidarity and companionship that they value. Evaluations also highlight the power of informed, collective action, with groups reporting that they had become more strategic and knowledgeable of how to effectively engage and defend their rights. However, it is clear that these groups still have far to go to promote equal participation of women, as discussed in section 7.8 below. In several places, RHV has managed to bring women together across political, and traditional religious, ethnic or class divides, cited as extremely valuable by evaluation respondents.

This ‘neutral’ space was also considered very valuable at national level, where organisations working for women’s rights and issues were brought together to work towards common goals and ideals. Coalition building, particularly in African countries to advocate for the domestication of the Maputo Protocol, has been a strong component and many evaluations highlight the impact on the capacity and effectiveness of member organisations, on women’s representation and women’s rights advocacy. The case study from The Gambia again illustrates some of the benefits and impacts of creating a national network to bring together previously competing organisations working towards women’s rights and empowerment objectives. Over time the member organisations have built trust and gained skills and experience of collective working. Network members claimed that the Ministry of Women’s Affairs itself had found it easier to engage with them since they began working together, whereas previously they had found it difficult to know which civil society organisations represented women, and encountered competition and jealousy. The strong and constructive relationship they now enjoy has enabled collaboration to draw up and pass the Women’s Act, and complementary legislation on violence against women and sexual harassment.

Respondents from Chile found that being brought together in a cross-party network of women had broken the isolation of women candidates, and allowed them to establish new links with other candidates, to exchange experiences, ideas and common challenges and to support each other in practical issues: “The campaign allowed us to work on the issues collectively and with generosity. Most of us were not coming from the same political parties or the same geographical areas.” The effectiveness review found that this coalition building process has been important to start restoring bridges and relationships in a women’s movement which suffered fractures after the end of the dictatorship.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
• Annex 1: 2-page summaries of Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Liberia, Mercosur, Nigeria, Pan-Africa, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda
S.3 Shared learning on how to strengthen women’s participation and voice

“Partners have become better at writing substantial reports, conducting indicator based monitoring and using REFLECT method for empowerment of women.”

Nepal OGB staff

Apart from the shared learning opportunities of national networks, summarised above, Raising Her Voice has been an opportunity for implementing partners to strengthen their own practice, and share experiences with others. Several regional learning and sharing events, a ‘Ning’ intranet site and special reports, as well as the midterm review, have all captured some of the learning to share with internal and external audiences. At the end of this section there is a summary of the wider impact of engagement in RHV on implementing partners and Oxfam. However, specifically in relation to shared learning, there has been some reporting of impact, and undoubtedly more which is unreported. In particular, several evaluations have noted the increase capacity of partners to document and share learning, as well as project management and design. Informants from Chile, for example, stated that the global RHV inception meeting provided their staff with new ideas and methods to inspire the communication and campaigning aspects of their work.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:

- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of Nepal, Pan-Africa, South Africa, Uganda
- Sections 7.2.2.1 and 7.4.2

S.4 Up to date information, knowledge and tools on gender politics, violence and discrimination.

This is not an impact area that has been systematically evaluated at national level, and as such the assessment depends largely on annual reporting from OGB. Notable exceptions are Bolivia and Chile, where the partner produces an annual report on the voting behaviour and debate attendance of MPs in relation to gender issues. The review found that the reports have been key to “highlight the lack of priority given to certain laws on women’s issues” and to “making visible how structural some gender issues are in Chile”. This has served to increase the visibility of gender issues and the structural causes of low women’s participation. Civil society organisations and women parliamentarians have stated that they used the reports in their own work, including advocacy, parliamentary work and training. In Bolivia, RHV has supported partners to establish a ‘Gender Equity Observatory’ to generate information and material for women to reflect on key themes and monitor and influence public debate and policy. This has included a gender-sensitivity ranking of local budgets, and information and monitoring of advances in gender politics in different local areas putting pressure on local authorities to make their gender policies (and implementation of such) public.

Annual reports show that RHV projects have provided training, distributed guidance, information and campaign materials on women’s rights and legislation (including in local languages), and supported local and national organisations to develop their advocacy strategies. As well as Chile, Tanzania published an attitudes survey which is used by CSOs in their advocacy work. However, little is reported of the impact of this activity on the intended audiences. At global level, information on gender politics and RHV issues has been produced and disseminated, with a notable impact on organisational thinking and capacity and some peer organisations.
S.5 Improved coverage of women’s rights issues

“Efforts made by the partners to build on a collaborative relationship with local media journalists have been evident, especially as regards radio stations and local TV channels. This has allowed the dissemination of demands and the promotion of different events carried out by organizations.”

Guatemala evaluation

In many of the RHV projects a stream of work has been awareness raising, campaigning and media work. This has ranged from production and distribution of information and communication materials like leaflets and billboards, to broadcast through mobile, TV and radio and mobilisations and demonstrations. In some cases, sustained engagement with the media, including training and campaigning, has attempted to challenge and address stereotyped and sensationalist reporting of women’s rights abuses especially violence against women. These strategic relationships contribute to greater capacity of local and national media allies to better report on diversity and gender issues, as well as election processes. The use of blogs, websites and social media campaigning has also been reported in several projects. For example, in Nigeria, the sustained use of multiple media channels – including Facebook pages and “sustained Bulk SMS messages to the telephone numbers of all 360 members of the House of Representatives with information on the Bill, data to justify and underscore the need to support the urgency for its passage” - was considered a key factor in the recent passing of the VAPP Bill prohibiting violence against women.

However, there is little systematic reporting of impact (as opposed to outputs) of this work, or reported monitoring of media coverage. It should be recognised, however, that the impact of this type of work is gradual and long term. This was recognised in the Nepal evaluation, which considered that: “Relevant information on the increased participation of poor and marginalized women in community decision-making structures, and against VAW, has been widely disseminated through electronic and print media but it is difficult to judge how effective this has been in creating strong popular opinion in these issues. The Liberia Effectiveness Review finds that communication campaigns through posters and community radio, as well as face to face engagement, does have an impact on attitudes and awareness, although this is more cumulative than the result of any one initiative.
S.6 Women are seen as relevant political partners in proposals for social change.

“Changes have taken place. As women, we have more opportunities. We’re taken into account more. We’re no longer invisible.”

Honduras case study respondent

"Within a year or two, things have changed completely. Now I have to be well prepared before I go to hold a discussion session with [these women]."

Nepal Village Development Committee Secretary

‘We have now a community that has more and richer relations – within the community and outside it. We have a group of women that... understand local decision making and know that they can play an important role in community development’.

Albania NGO respondent

As mentioned in section S1 of this section, the actions of RHV partners and participants have, in many places, increased the social acceptance and support for women to actively engage in public decision making. This has created, in some project areas, a reported increase in respect and interaction between women and political leaders and officials, and opening of spaces for influence and engagement. This does not register in the quantitative data, but through examples of changes in community relations and women’s influence, from a variety of internal and outside actors reflected in the quotes above.

It is an impact which is seen way beyond the focus countries reporting under this outcome area, with relevant testimony from the evaluations of Armenia, Albania, Honduras and Mozambique for example. The Armenia evaluation noted that ‘a very important effect of the project is the new model of cooperation between women and local government and consequently different formal and informal ways of women’s inclusion in social and political decision-making on community level.’ The Honduras evaluation found that RHV participants had made “important achievements in institutionalising women’s issues in municipal bodies, establishing women’s councils, increasing the participation of women in public meetings and getting the commitment of 2% of the central budget to councils in most localities.”

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan
- Case studies of The Gambia, Honduras and Bolivia.

7.2.2.1 Institutional commitment and capacity for women’s participation and voice

“... Not only us, but all actors part of the project implementation have new capacities on how to support women.”

RHV partner, Albania

An important area of impact, not specifically covered in the original or revised monitoring framework, is the institutional capacity and commitment of OGB and partners to sustain and move forward work on women’s participation and voice. This is long-term, complex social change involving many different, independent actors, and as such it is strategically important for the capacity of civil society organisations to be sustainably built. Although this issue was not specifically tracked or reported, there are examples from national evaluations and survey responses which point to this being an important impact.
Impact on partners:

“The success of RHV has greatly enhanced the image of the partners in the civil society sector as well as the donor community. Some of the partners have been able to secure donor funding for small projects similar to RHV. Partners now understand how important women’s political participation is and are inspired to put women’s rights and political participation at the centre of their other projects as well.”

OGB manager, Nepal

“Once we got involved with RHV we got into the local level. We got better information, developed materials in different languages and spoke to women. We came up with a model for RHV. RHV helped us to think out of the box on the issues we are working on.”

South Africa partner

“The RHV project has been a great learning experience for WRAPA, its staff and partners. Above all it has opened a new vista in the work we will be doing in the advocacy and defence of women’s human dignity and rights, to be equipped to meaningfully contribute to national development in all its ramifications.”

RHV partner, Nigeria

“After [the] RHV program, I am more aware about the needs of women in society, and every time we design a program, we always put our best effort in paying more attention to materialize the benefit of the program for women.”

RHV partner, Indonesia

It is encouraging to see examples from partner organisations of mainstreaming and deepening understanding of the political aspects of women’s rights and empowerment. In several cases, RHV provided partners with the opportunity to add new dimensions to their work, as seen in the two case studies: in Honduras, an implementing partner with experience in citizen participation was able to add a strong gender element to their work which they will continue; in The Gambia the implementing partner which previously focused on national and regional level human rights policy advocacy was able to strengthen its links to grassroots activism and monitoring. Although not tracked or reported, the impact on staff involved in the project was also evident in some cases, including the case studies, as illustrated in the South Africa evaluation which reported that the partner’s staff had changed the way they view themselves as women and activists, their work and commitments in the sector, and the communities they serve.

Impact on Oxfam:

“As an organization our centre of gravity has been traditionally around livelihoods. RHV has shown that we need to shift from livelihoods. You cannot only do economics to change women’s realities.”

OGB Oxford staff member

“There is a much better understanding of what women’s political empowerment is, how it fits with our broader programming, and what skills are needed in country teams”.

Oxfam Novib survey respondent
There was also evidence that RHV has been an important source of learning and evidence for Oxfam, and had an influence on the organisation beyond the participating departments and country programmes. The survey showed a widespread perception that RHV had contributed significantly to increasing the organisation’s commitment to women’s participation and voice, though higher among staff working on RHV projects (80%) than their Country Directors (66%). In interviews and focus groups with OGB staff, people working to strengthen the organisation’s commitment to women’s rights perceived that RHV has contributed to broadening the understanding of women’s rights beyond livelihoods and economics. This is confirmed by survey respondents from Nigeria and Pakistan, who noted a ‘better recognition’ and ‘stronger belief’ in women’s leadership. In OGB Liberia, there was acknowledged greater capacity on women’s rights, governance and accountability, and more women’s leadership within the organisation and partners.

Feedback from several Oxfam staff suggests that RHV, and the theory of change produced for the midterm evaluation, has strengthened their understanding of women’s leadership, emphasising the need to work across different levels, and allowing them to “look at women’s leadership from an holistic perspective” (Honduras respondent) and “focus more on what individual women need to strengthen in their roles as leaders” (Bolivia respondent).

Several country programme staff reported using the RHV theory of change and learning to influence and inform subsequent project and strategy design. The Director of OGB Nepal explained how they have applied the RHV methods in other areas of work, including disaster risk reduction and livelihoods, tripling the number of CDC groups, and have drawn on the RHV learning and theory to inform their strategic planning. In Armenia, RHV has resulted in a stronger emphasis on women, with a new strategic programme to develop the women in governance area of work initiated under RHV. The Director of OGB Tanzania claims that their current work on engaging women’s rights activists in the development of the new constitution has come about in part because of learning and spaces opened by RHV.

The influence extended in some places to regional level, with Nepal working with colleagues in the CIS region to share best practices and support the development of their gender justice programme. In the same vein, a previous meeting of RHV partners and external speakers in Cambodia has influenced and informed the Oxfam Asia region’s commitment to focus on women’s political participation in their Asia governance strategy. RHV has also been influential in the formulation of the Oxfam International strategic plan and gender justice programming, as one senior Oxfam International staff member explained: “[Through RHV] we have more examples of what kinds of leadership are required to achieve and sustain advances on women’s rights. This has been helpful for the Confederation thinking on transformative women’s leadership, formulation of our strategic plan as well as thinking on a new global program on VAW.”

7.2.3 Impact on the Political sphere

“There is greater openness of spaces for participation and public discourse, an increase in commitment and specific budget allocations, and an increasing consolidation of local women’s offices.”

Honduras case study interviewee
The theory of change recognises that impact on the political sphere - to legal frameworks, power structures and accessibility - is essential to reach the final objective of women’s public participation and influence. But it is also very slow and multifaceted. All of the projects except for Guatemala have outcomes expected in this sphere, and the evaluations do specify examples of changes in policies and quotas for women’s participation, increased numbers of women leaders and some movement towards more open and inclusive decision making, especially at local level.

**PP.1 Women leaders have an influential role in community and local governance.**

“100 WLG members have been elected to the District Zakat Committees. Other members (including 105 in the final evaluation survey) had been elected to various other Committees of their District Councils, again challenging the traditional patterns of male control in making decisions and allocating resources”.

Pakistan evaluation

As discussed in section 7.2.1, there are reported examples of new women leaders emerging at local level in R HV project areas in all focus countries, as well as others such as Tanzania and The Gambia and others. The influence of these women, and of their local groups such as WSAGs and LAGs in Albania and Armenia, CDCs in Nepal and the WLGs in Pakistan, has increased as a result, and there is evidence that they have been able to influence local planning, decisions and investments at least in some areas or domains.

There are fewer examples of emerging women’s leadership at district and national levels, notably **Pakistan**, where WLG members were elected to district committees, and **Nepal**, where partners claim that R HV helped to bring more Nepalese women to the Constituent Assembly, which now has one third women members.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of Albania, Armenia, Honduras, Nepal, Pakistan
- Case studies of Honduras and The Gambia.
- P2 above, and PP3/4 below for results and impacts of participation on local policies and investments

**PP.2 Women’s organisations influence public debates on measures to increase the participation of women in elections**

“The empowerment of women to demand compliance with the change [in quota] was to such an extent that when in the electoral process political parties only applied 40% women demanded explanations and they felt obliged to agree to meet the 50% target by the next electoral process.”

Honduras evaluation

A few of the RHV projects directly engaged in campaigning and lobbying to put in place quotas for women’s participation in governance, with some success. In **Honduras**, RHV partners contributed to the reform of the electoral law which establishes a minimum of 40% participation of women in internal elections and primaries for political parties, and of 50% for elections after 2016. The evaluation and case study found that this was
an important parallel strategy to empowerment and networking of grassroots women, providing both push and pull factors for women’s formal political participation and representation. In Nepal, CDCs successfully lobbied for gender and inclusion policies in health, forest, education and other line ministries, and secured that one village development committee implemented a 1/3 quota for women representatives, and a local umbrella organisation committed to a 50% quota.

Some impact has been seen on attitudes and inclusiveness of political bodies in non-focus countries as a result of work on other outcome areas. In Nigeria, the evaluation found that political parties and election management bodies are more open to dialogue and affirmative action for women. A mandatory policy is in place for the appointment of senior gender desk officers in all Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies. In Albania, women participating in RHV have gone on to lobby for quotas for women in community leadership positions, and in Armenia, on respondent claimed that “Our city mayor wants at least 3 women to be included in the Community Council.”

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Annex 1: 2-page summaries of Chile, Honduras, Pakistan
- Case study of Honduras.

PP.3/ PP.4 Traditional structures and decision-making forums in communities are more responsive to women's priorities. / Local governments make plans, budget and implementation processes more accessible; and increase investment in areas prioritised by women.

We have combined these two outcome areas, as we have not always been able to separately track impact on traditional structures and local government, especially as in many areas the two systems run parallel. For example, in The Gambia a tripartite system is in place in some areas, with religious (Sharia), traditional and State, or ‘English’ legal systems. This complicates work on the political sphere, as laws passed or ratified at national level may not filter down automatically into the other parallel systems.

There are many examples of local government systems becoming more accessible, notably in Indonesia where women’s participation and project activities have resulted in participatory budgeting taking place for the first time in villages in the project areas. An important result of this greater participation in budgeting and planning has been the closer scrutiny and accountability of local government for the delivery of their promises and plans. Women activists have held community decision makers to account, and now local MPs have to report on their engagement with citizens routinely. A similar experience was reported in Albania.

Greater participation and inclusion has had knock on effects on the prioritisation of investment into women's issues and concerns. This has been most noticeable and reported in Nepal, Albania and Armenia – where the project models were similar in grouping women together to prepare and engage with local budgeting and planning processes – and in Indonesia, Honduras and Guatemala, where local budget lines dedicated to women’s issues have been mobilised and redirected where previously they were being spent elsewhere.

For example, in Nepal there was a noticeable shift in public policy priorities towards poor, marginalised and excluded communities, especially women. 165 of the total 450 agenda items discussed in the four target bodies were proposed by women, of which 111 were implemented, allocating over £40,000 of public money to local service improvements such as free services for pregnant women, changes in opening times for firewood and fodder collection, toilet building and
sanitation infrastructure, and mobile clinic accessibility. CDC members have traced and returned misused funds to a total of over £11,000. In Guatemala three councils have implemented funds specifically for women, and 11 agreements were signed with local governments in relation to women’s demands. Funding for VAW projects is being decentralised as a result of grassroots’ women’s advocacy.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
- Case study of Honduras.

**PP.5 Laws, public policies and institutions better promote and protect women’s rights and priorities**

“The lobbying and advocacy efforts of RHV participants contributed to the passing of ground-breaking legislation concerning women. During the life of the Project the Senate passed the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill 2011, the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2010, and the women in distress and the Detention Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2011”

Pakistan evaluation

“The approval of the Domestic Violence Law in late 2009 marked an important milestone for the women’s movement in Mozambique and is acknowledged by all those interviewed … as a story of success of a civil society initiative. The text of the law that was approved mirrors very closely the draft text that was agreed and submitted by women’s organizations to the Parliament.”

Mozambique Effectiveness Review

In Africa, the RHV regional partner SOAWR has contributed to the ratification of the Maputo Protocol in a number of African Countries, working on this objective since 2003, before the RHV support began. RHV has supported SOAWR’s secretariat and more explicitly SOAWR’s members in 8 African countries to continue this ratification work, and push for domestication and implementation putting those rights into national law. Partners have been working with women’s rights coalitions to draft and lobby parliamentarians to pass women rights oriented bills such as the Women’s Act in The Gambia, and supporting legislation such as domestic violence bills in Nigeria and Mozambique. In Nigeria the coalition-drafted Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill has been chosen as the government’s preferred means of domestication of the protocol, and the supporting VAPP bill was passed into law in March 2013, with OGB, local partners and the RHV supported coalition lauded as major contributors to this process.

In another aspect of this work, RHV partners have had some impact in making public institutions more gender aware and sensitive, with gender focal points named in local areas in Indonesia and Nepal for example. In Tanzania, for example, RHV partners worked with the Police to raise awareness and shift practices around gender-based violence. This has resulted in the creation of a gender desk in all regional offices, and new operating procedures which guide the police in handling GBV cases. A GBV module has been incorporated into police training, and is being mainstreamed into the curriculum. In Nigeria RHV partner worked with the police on a policy review which resulted in a new gender policy for the Nigeria Police Force with substantial compliance with gender treaties, and the decision to admit women into the Nigeria Defence Academy.

For further details of impacts related to this outcome please see:
Effectiveness

This section examines the programme approach and theory, providing assessment of both the factors which enhance effectiveness, and the effective implementation of the approach.

This evaluation research has found strong evidence that objectives of increased women’s voice, influence and participation are best reached through an holistic approach addressing all three spheres. Section 7.2 shows that, overall, RHV interventions and contributions have resulted in some impact in all of the outcome areas, suggesting strong effectiveness of the approach. However, an assessment of the impact of individual projects on gender equality and the lives of women shows a less balanced picture, complicating the assessment of effectiveness beyond the aforementioned limitations.

During the life of RHV the conceptual framework and positioning has become clearer, based on what has been learned from the individual projects, and with the input of the mid-term evaluation and theory of change. We have chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme as we have the impact in relation to the approach (theory of change) articulated in, and partially adopted since the MTR - which we consider to be more relevant to future such programmes of work. However, it should be recognised that this new theory has raised the bar somewhat for judgements on effectiveness, and therefore we do not wish these observations to be considered a judgement on the success of the portfolio, which has delivered good results in relation to the resources expended, as noted in section 7.6 below. In this section, therefore, we analyse the evidence and learning from the portfolio, to explore the factors which promote greater effectiveness, and assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the programme approach.

7.3.1 Effective strategies for promoting women’s participation and voice

Analysis shows several important areas for effective work on women’s voice and participation, some learning from effective work, and some from challenges and limitations encountered.

7.3.1.1 An holistic approach to women’s participation and voice

"In the meetings, it was all men and then me, little Bertha. My chair was in the corner, outside their circle. I sat there and listened in meeting after meeting, wondering when I would be invited to speak. After a whole month had passed by without my saying a word, I finally went up to one of the leaders and asked him when they would let me contribute. He said 'Bertha... you have had a whole month to move your chair into the circle...!' That was my first lesson in politics: I learnt that not only can I not let them exclude me - I also mustn't exclude myself.”

RHV participant, Guatemala

The evaluation research has found that working on the three spheres in an integrated manner is effective, creating stronger impact on women’s lives, participation and voice. The above quote from Guatemala illustrates from a woman’s perspective why personal confidence and knowledge is needed to realise opportunities provided by changes to the social and political spheres. There are several examples of this integrated approach in RHV, from The Gambia where work on the three spheres at different levels built social capital and solidarity in order to translate ‘paper rights’ (in the political sphere) to ‘living rights’ (in the personal sphere). RHV Nepal organised and strengthened
women’s analysis and planning, which motivated women to actively engage in community structures, strengthened social cohesion and mainstreamed women in the local development process. A report on RHV’s role in passing the VAPP bill in Nigeria found that “The VAPP Bill’s approval is a powerful example of the power of collective action and the need for a toolkit of skills: legislative advocacy, public campaigning, grassroots activism, coalition building, communications and networking. A bulging address book is also essential.”

RHV staff and partners overwhelmingly agreed that it is important to address all three spheres, while recognising that the entry point and focus should depend on the organisation’s expertise and the national situation. For example a survey respondent from Uganda stated that: “interlinked strategies should be built to deliver on each sphere, however it is necessary to identify an entry point depending on contexts”. A survey respondent from Uruguay noted that “highly vulnerable women feel the impact of this work in the personal and social spheres first, and the political impact comes as a result of a long term, continual process.”

For example, RHV Albania did not directly position itself as a political project, but engaged in organising women to engage in local development planning and decision making. This made the project more accessible and approachable for women, one partner explaining: “I have organized activities before but women wouldn’t speak out in the presence of men…whereas this started initially as a small community, they were all relaxed and were talking about their issues, and it came naturally, not forced”. A local government respondent found this effective in reaching the political sphere in the long term, saying “the great thing is, they don’t see this as being engaged in politics until later. Politics is considered something partisan and left to professionals. Yet, a great change has happened in their mentality thanks to engagements with Local Action Groups.”

The feedback and research also showed the importance of integrating work across local, national and international levels. The Honduras evaluation summed this up: “One of the main learnings emerging from the project is the need to link the local and the national spaces. Local spaces are strategic because political decisions taken there directly affect the lives of women. But the National space is also key as it is where most of the main political decisions are taken. The power to influence this space ensures that public policies remain relevant to the needs of women”. This learning has emerged both from projects which have effectively integrated work across levels, and those who acknowledge gaps in their approach. RHV Nepal focused more on local structures, while Pan Africa considers that they could replicate the Nepal approach to compensate for their strong focus on national and regional level policy and campaigning.

7.3.1.2 Seeing change as long-term and social

“It takes ten years to build an organization, twenty years to build a movement, and thirty years before you see lasting impact.”

Ela Bhatt
It is not always practical or desirable for projects the size of RHV to attempt to address all three spheres equally and fully, at all different levels, but rather to make a strategic analysis of the context, opportunities and interim outcomes, in relation to the partners’ capacity, alliances and the RHV theory of change.

Given that increases in women’s voice and influence will happen over the long-term, the entrenched nature of the barriers and challenges, the work must be understood in long-term and collaborative terms. The Gambia case study found strong evidence of impact of NGO awareness-raising on the real lives, opportunities and choices of grassroots women. However, this was over a timescale of 10-20 years, and the result of many different interventions being carried out by different actors, with different objectives. Given this, the evaluation finds that truly effective strategies need to be designed in cognisance of the fact that RHV partners control only their part of something bigger, more complex, and longer term. A respondent from Pan-Africa explained: “While an organization might focus on where it can best make a difference it is necessary to work with others addressing the other levels of engagement so the change takes place in a coordinated manner.”

This has particular implications for work on advocacy and campaigning, essential strategic pieces of the larger change process, but beyond the scope of this single project (either global or national) or actor. Many of the activities in these areas appeared to be quite ad-hoc, whether training with prison officers in The Gambia, or a maternal health caravan in Uganda. These are all relevant issues and targets, but some lacked a clear process of prioritization. The Guatemala evaluation found that many activities lacked clear strategic connection to the objectives and planned results. A long-term - and contribution based - planning approach allows for focus on intermediate or interim outcomes to build the conditions for further change and impact. This might mean preparing the ground for bigger impact initiatives by building relationships, common agendas and messages, developing strategies and capacity and finding evidence. At Africa RHV learning meeting, partners recommended “Do not rush to get bill to parliament, spend time making quality inputs and getting widespread buy-in.” giving the example of Liberia, where strong momentum for advocacy was not matched by skills and strategy resulting in limited or negative results. The Ministry of Gender acknowledged that it was impressive for the women to gather so many people and successfully demand that their voices be heard, but “They come with good points, but the manner in which they do it is lacking. At most, they take to the streets with placards. They don’t know how to lobby at the house. ... they need to know the system and if they don’t, they need to find somebody who does.”

This also has implications for measuring and monitoring change, not least in relation to attribution, but also as regards the instability of changes in the political and social spheres. For example, the Armenia evaluation found that, while attitudes to women’s participation are changing, this is mixed and still not well embedded. Some young men respondents feel that they should control the movement of their wives and sisters, others are more open. Some women participants want to limit their participation to traditional realms, saying: “We don’t want to deduct men’s power. There are spheres like household and childbearing, where women are more aware. We want to make right decisions.” This suggests the need to ensure that projects are not one-off, isolated engagements but part of a wider process which can ensure follow up.

7.3.1.3 Women’s rights and power: constructive positioning

Some RHV projects find it challenging to explicitly position themselves as feminist or for ‘gender equity’, but it is important to be aware of the trade-offs in a less radical approach.
“Women’s bodies are a territory of power and appropriation – working against violence requires not only legislation but also deeper change in education, developing alternative masculinities, giving women power to raise voice in public, private and social spheres.”

Latin America RHV partners

The Raising Her Voice theory of change positions the projects within feminist theory, recognizing that entrenched male domination and power is the context for women’s limited participation and voice. This evaluation finds, therefore, that the natural ‘home’ for this type of work is with the national and global women’s movements, who are addressing these broader issues over the long term. Some of the strongest and most sustainable impact has been found where RHV has contributed meaningfully to the strength, collaboration and organization of CSOs working for women’s rights. The Nigeria evaluation tells us that: “the leveraging of existing platforms and interventions enhances synergy, transparency and unity of purpose specifically in the women’s movement and with civil society actors.”

When OGB are working on women’s rights in these contexts, they are becoming part of this women’s movement, however overt or coordinated that may be – they are social actors, not delivery mechanisms for aid. Their actions will impact on, add to and sometimes overlap with those of other actors, whether intentionally or not. For that reason, it is important for global civil society actors such as OGB to be aware and respectful of the on-going social change, what different actors are doing, their relative strengths and weaknesses and the most strategic contributions to this long term process. The RHV reflection paper on violence against women and governance programming acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of working in coalition, stating that RHV is most effective when: “There is country specific power mapping for effective alliance building and analysis to develop effective strategies to influence change. This can be explicit about the mutual benefits of working together”. RHV partners in Latin America consider it important to “make sure we do not talk on behalf of other women, but we help them to find and claim spaces, acknowledging the power of people expressing themselves. Find allies at all levels. Building bridges with international support and common cause.”

Bringing women’s organisations together is necessary and challenging. The range of issues affecting women, the politics and approaches, are so diverse that broad unity will require some compromises, and diversity may mean finding a low common denominator. The Chile effectiveness review found that the cross-party coalition for women parliamentarians did not easily engage women on the right, in the ruling party, and divisions were sharpened when the call for ‘more women’ became more explicitly a call for ‘more equity and inclusiveness’. RHV Bolivia has experience of building a diverse network of women, including rural indigenous and urban feminists, without losing focus. “It was a huge challenge to acknowledge each other and stop labelling. Women do not necessarily trust each other, so you need to build bridges to strengthen the demands of all women without discrimination. You need to build dialogue and an alternative vision of development, use cultural and artistic resources to promote the rights of women.”

Respondents in the Gambia and Chile noted that networking and collaboration had been facilitated by RHV partners because they were neutral, non-partisan actors who were not competing for space, or threatening. As mentioned in section 7.4.4, this can be an important role and added value of an organisation like OGB. However, being a neutral convener does not mean an absence of values and positioning in relation to gender and women’s rights. Oxfam has stated that it has women’s rights at the heart of its work, and should convene on that basis, without compromising ideals or values. This enables stronger and more effective partnerships, based on shared values and objectives, as noted in section 7.4.2. The Pan Africa review stated: “At the moment, the common denominator of all
coalition members is the focus on the Maputo Protocol as a means to an end of “protecting women’s rights”. If the members do not have a strong common (or at least compatible) approach to those rights, the coalition will not be able to become a “movement” with the potential to change mind-sets nationally.”

This is reflected in some of the national RHV projects, which fear that an overtly feminist, or even gender equality, positioning could create difficulties in developing constructive relationships with local stakeholders. In many countries, partners have mentioned how less aggressive and divisive language in relation to women’s rights has been more effective. Grassroots women in The Gambia had been turned off by previous projects and campaigns for 50/50 representation, but found the RHV approach qualitatively different and more engaging, with a focus on open and equitable governance for all. Partners in Nigeria found that work on the Protocol could tap into deep seated prejudices and fears, focusing on clear and open communication: “The Protocol is seen as giving undue ‘privilege’ to women and perpetrating Western ideas and culture on Nigerian women. For that reason, it is important to demystify the Protocol in a way that will assuage people’s apprehensions and fears.”

RHV Armenia chose not to present RHV as a gender equality project, considering that direct discussion of gender issues causes ‘an intense reaction’ in men. Instead the project took a more subtle approach so as not to damage relations between the partner and local men and male authorities. Similarly, in Albania RHV is not considered a ‘gender project’; per se, but is based on a model for local participation with strong benefit to women. This may be more effective at providing women the opportunity to gain experience of participating in decision making. However, it risks losing the focus on gender and transforming unequal power relations. The national evaluation does not disaggregate or assess the representation of women in the project, its impacts, and the types of decisions and investments made. Strategic linkages with other initiatives tackling gender inequality are harder to establish, and documentation on effective approaches to women’s participation is weakened. The impact of this is already evident, as the evaluation found that the LAG model is being replicated, but without an explicit focus on women: “Other initiatives are currently following suit, albeit not with a gender orientation.”

Overall, the evaluation research has validated the TOC, both as a way of evaluating the programme, and underpinning real changes for women’s lived rights, voice and participation. However, to apply it requires capacity, time for reflection.

7.3.2 Effective implementation

The portfolio structure and limited resources for conceptual leadership and coherence means that implementation of the evolving approach was emergent rather than proactive or directed.
The history and ‘identity crisis’ of RHV, described earlier in this report, have created an increasing conceptual clarity and coherence to work on women’s participation and voice. Over time the projects have increasingly been brought together, boosted after the mid-term review brought in the theory of change, giving an opportunity for projects to understand themselves in relation to a common theoretical framework. However, RHV is still fundamentally designed and resourced as a portfolio; separate projects loosely related under the common themes of gender and governance, meaning that there has been limited scope to fully adopt and implement the MTR recommendations and proposed theory of change.

The Global coordinator was able to push through changes in programme design, in particular in outcome areas and indicators, which rippled out to some projects more than others. Some projects, such as Pakistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Honduras, responded to the opportunity by reflecting on and adapting their programme approach as described further below. However, there was no obligation to internalise and embed the changes in individual country projects. A letter from the donor in January 2013 – as the portfolio was ending – approves the revised logframe which it notes ‘reflects the complex nature of your multi-country programme ... a reasonable approach to aggregating results across a complex programme where each is pursuing different activities.’ This is clearly a step in the right direction, a direction which can be more freely followed outside of the constraints of an existing and half-completed project.

At country level, there are many examples of the theory of change being useful to projects, to clarify ways in which changes to women’s voice and participation can happen, and effective and strategic ways forward for the projects and partners. The annual report to DFID summarised: “Since the MTR many projects have used the analysis to adapt and refine their programming, to redress the balance of work in the personal, social and political spheres. RHV partners in South Africa, Nepal, Pakistan, Honduras, Armenia and Guatemala have all shifted to a deliberate new engagement with political parties. Honduras, Bolivia, Nepal and Indonesia partners strengthened work on personal level, with analysis of intra-family power dynamics, divisions of household roles and expenditure as a powerful mechanism for exploring barriers”. This has been validated by RHV staff in OGB country programmes, for example in Uganda, “I used this in the development of the VAW project and influenced incorporation in the social rights programme”, or Armenia where “The RHV theory of change has laid the ground for our gender work ... County Strategy has been enriched by learning from the RHV network and country projects.”

Furthermore, the evaluation found that the theory of change has been influential and used outside of RHV, in other OGB programmes at national and regional levels, in processes of transfer and coordination with other Oxfam affiliates (SMS) and even outside of the Oxfam family. The theory has influenced the development of the new Oxfam International strategy, with a broad definition of women’s rights including governance, and in other Oxfam affiliates or regions.
These examples show how the theory of change, or programme approach, did generate clarity, change and promote effective delivery and advocacy for women’s voice and participation. However, this would be stronger in a programme of work – and working relationships - designed around the implementation of the theory, and outside of the constraints of a portfolio design and limited potential for investment in OGB capacity.

7.4 Efficiency:

*Overall, the portfolio achieved impressive results given the resources and inputs. However, limitations in the coordination mechanisms and human resourcing have compromised efficiency.*

“RHV was initially looked at as an add on programme imposed by the global office, however in its 4th year, the appreciation started growing and partly informed the development of our social rights programme, and the theory of change has informed the development of a new violence against women project.”

OGB manager, Uganda.

This section of the findings relates to the mechanisms of the global portfolio, beyond the efficiency of these systems to how they have affected the value that the overall portfolio was able to add to individual projects and partners. *Efficiency* relates the project inputs or investments - in terms of money, time and human resources - to the achievement of its planned objectives. It hinges on the *systems, skills and management arrangements* put in place in order to deliver the portfolio. This analysis is complicated by the nature of the projects, which are often well integrated into the wider work of the partners and OGB, with a significant overlap in the use of financial and human resources.

In general - given the level of funding, the scope of the work and the results achieved (summarised in 7.2 above) - we conclude that the portfolio has used its resources efficiently. However, the evaluation has also identified several issues in relation to the management and coordination.
mechanisms which have *implications for the efficiency, smooth running and added value* of the portfolio, which could be considered important learning for all parties in funding, planning and managing future initiatives.

Given the history and design of the portfolio, and as detailed in section 5.2, the evaluators have found a recurrent tension between contextualised, independent projects and overall conceptual coherence, with implications for collaboration and shared learning. This tension has been well managed, given the human and financial resources available at global coordination level. However, the evaluators consider that more progress could be made on testing and improving the underlying theory and approaches, given more resources for central coordination and greater conceptual leadership. Following a ‘theory of change’ approach - where different projects are working to a common framework (or theory) but adapting and implementing according to their own context and expertise – it should be possible to manage this tension without compromises in relevance, and provide facilitative leadership to enable partners to innovate and broaden their own work in this area. The evidence emerging from RHV post MTR suggests that the validated and tested theory of change becomes a valuable asset to organisations and actors working for women’s rights and participation more widely, which we consider to be an effective and efficient approach considering the complex and long-term nature of the changes sought.

Within the existing portfolio structure, the majority of financial resources are dedicated to partners and activities, rather than human resources and capacity within OGB. What’s more, the relationships between RHV global coordination, staff and their managers, and partners, were established with a strong focus on delivery and reporting of activities, rather than accountability to develop a test a theoretical approach to increasing women’s participation and voice. This means that, in practice, adoption of the theory of change has been voluntary, and as yet receives little support from senior management. The global coordination has been able to support partners to think through the implications, and has facilitated learning exchanges and meetings within the resources available, but there is no requirement for partners to enter into such a process.

Section 7.2.2.1 highlights some examples of Oxfam country programmes and teams who have worked with the theory of change to inform their RHV work and beyond. One notable example is Nepal, who state:

> “We developed our RHV monitoring format and check list in such a manner as to capture changes in all these three spheres. We always planned our review and reflection workshops with partners and community women based on this ToC and facilitated discussion and reflections on what changes occurred in personal sphere, how that change can facilitate or prompt change social sphere, how do social and political sphere interact, and how can the women catalyse the changes etc. The project approach and activities were also designed based on the ToC.”

Others have shown little change. At the global level, this makes it difficult to facilitate a process of theoretical development and testing across different contexts which this evaluation considers would be so valuable. Recent research and debate on the implications of complexity and emergence for programme management in the field of international development, of which OGB is an active participant, will have insights into the types of flexible relationships and accountability mechanisms to support this way of working.

**7.4.1 Competent partners or competent partnerships**

*Efficiency and effectiveness are greater where partnerships are strong, equal and mutually reinforcing.*
‘It’s like when your car that is stuck in mud: the commune and the community between them can’t push it out. With Local Action Group help, only then the car starts to move out. That’s how this partnership works’.

Albania local government respondent

‘Our partnership with Oxfam is great. We have a good and open working relationship which allows us to learn from each other. The Oxfam Women Rights Advisor is always accessible and available to provide support and assistance where needed. She is also one of the few donor representatives who actively participates and engages in our project activities, which serves as a plus!’

South Africa RHV partner

The design of RHV involves partners in the planning and implementation of the work, with support from local OGB staff to differing extents. In many of the projects the relationship between OGB and partners is trusted and long-standing, although in Africa partners were selected from SOAWR members and in some cases there was no prior relationship, or even OGB presence in the country.

The evaluation has found that the effectiveness and results of the projects has derived from the quality, commitment and competence of the local partnerships. This is evident in case studies of The Gambia and Honduras, where partners have taken the opportunity of RHV to broaden their work and engage more at the grassroots (The Gambia) and with women’s rights issues (Honduras). RHV staff in Bolivia noted that the strong and effective partnerships and alliances which underpinned the success and impact of their work was down to clear division of roles and clear rules of the game, reflecting that ‘to permanently agree why we are together, is the only recipe’.

The Nepal evaluation reported a consensus amongst OGB and partners that shared values on women’s rights was the most fundamental criterion for efficient collaboration and shared delivery. This was supported by an initial analysis by OGB of partners’ values, policies and practices related to women rights. Assessment of partners’ administrative and technical capacity was then done as a basis for developing partnership strategies and support. As a result, the evaluation found, partners and alliances successfully planned, implemented and monitored project activities, with annual plans informed by regular review and reflection meetings with OGB staff.

We found several examples of thorough context analysis and baseline research for project implementation increasing project efficiency. This allowed partners to invest relatively small resources where most needed and strategic. RHV partners in Nigeria conducted a baseline study to generate information on gender practices in the country, stakeholder capacities to influence gender mainstreaming and national gender policy frameworks. In South Africa, the RHV partner conducted a baseline survey and rapid assessment of the current national status of the Protocol, highlighting gaps in awareness, knowledge, understanding and commitment to implementation. This formed the basis for a participatory process with grassroots women to develop the conceptual framework for project implementation, recognising the complexities of women’s lives in an intersectional approach.

In Guatemala RHV implementation was handed over part way through to three local organisations who were originally project beneficiaries. Through a participatory process to review the management structure, OGB was able to ensure sufficient management capacity for the technical, administrative and financial implementation of the project. Altogether this was found to have a positive impact on the project’s relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as empowering and strengthening the management capacity of the partner organisations. The activities were more clearly adjusted to the strategic needs and interests of the organisations and their beneficiary
groups. This process of review and reflection should be considered good practice in management decision making supported by evidence.

At the RHV Latin American regional meeting staff reflected on power relations in partnerships, learning from the Guatemala example the need for genuine equality between partners. Initially a national NGO had considered the local organisations as ‘beneficiaries’, in a more utilitarian relationship. After shifting the dynamic, the local partners reflected that “We have learned from this experience that if an organization wants to work with us, we’re going to provide the proposal”. In the case of Bolivia, the RHV partner positioned itself as a political actor, supporting and strengthening the organic women’s platform, while respecting its autonomy.

While competent partners, with appropriate support, have been able to efficiently and effectively deliver results, the portfolio structure (and limited human resources) could not systematically ensure this. In some cases, partners have benefited greatly from considered and continued support from Oxfam. In others, they comment that OGB are flexible, or ‘not fussy’. Others reported that OGB support was insufficient, or too distant7. The RHV partner in The Gambia, who have no direct or previous relationship with OGB except as members of the SOAWR coalition due to the lack of an OGB presence there, felt that the management relationship had been unclear. At first OGB had tried to provide technical support, but the partner were already well experienced and perhaps better placed than OGB to advise on the work. Later the global coordinator provided ‘support and encouragement when needed’ which was better appreciated. The Director explained that: “It would have helped to have OGB locally as a listening ear, to sit together and look at impact, evaluate, plan and learn together. Sometimes you can be myopic, focusing on what you want to do, but it helps to step back and talk to others.”

There is evidence from some parts that the design process did not always require partners to develop new or distinct areas of work, and in some places RHV does not have a clear identity or theory of its own. For example, the partner in Chile explained that “We were told that the idea was not to fund a new project but actions that could not fit in other projects or were not properly funded. As a result, we never designed a project, it doesn’t have that logic. We never thought that we were accountable for a particular project, but only for the activities funded by RHV”. The assumption in this interaction between OGB and RHV partners was that shared values and objectives relating to democracy and active citizenship were sufficient to ensure that the work would meet the needs of both partners. While this works well where partners have trust and commitment to shared objectives, and there is opportunity and will to reflect and learn together, there are no structural checks and balances to ensure that the work of partners is focused on and related to the project theory or conceptual framework. The evaluators have found examples, such as Mozambique, where the partnership has not been so strong and effective, and the project outcomes and approaches are more difficult to relate to the theory of change. This makes it more difficult to facilitate or promote reflection and change within the partner organisations, the relationship does not go that deep.

The evaluators consider that this has meant missed opportunities for OGB to add value to the partners’ work, by providing a strong conceptual framework through which to understand their context and plan their work and contributions of each. Because of the particular history or the portfolio, and structural limitations of the design, in some cases support from OGB has been demand led, in some cases OGB is very remote and we heard of at least one case where their support was considered heavy-handed and inappropriate8. In another case, Mozambique, OGB decided to add

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7 1 in 4 of the RHV projects at the end of the 5 years had no in-country link to a OGB programme support resource due to 2 country office closures and 2 projects designed from the outset with remote management structures
8 There is concrete evidence of this type of relationship which we do not expand on here for issues of confidentiality.
another partner to fill gaps in project implementation, without any coordination with the existing partner or attempt to bring the work of the two into a cohesive whole. The Albania effectiveness review also found that OGB had not provided sufficient clarity in their partnerships, leading to the allocation of funds to capital projects difficult to justify in relation to the portfolio’s objectives of women’s voice: “Oxfam GB expectations might benefit from being more clearly communicated and key intents more expressly set out in project mandates to ensure everyone is looking from the same end of the telescope.” There are examples of this in Nepal, Guatemala and Bolivia amongst others, which could serve as examples of good practice in partnership building, to build on in future work.

7.4.2 Coordination, communication and learning

With limited resources, the global communication has juggled donor accountability and reporting for a large, complex project with shared learning and conceptual leadership with mixed results.

“Without the global coordinator, it would have been difficult for Uganda to sail through all the challenges that we encountered!”

RHV Uganda

The evaluation found that RHV managers in country programmes rate the support provided by the global coordinator very highly, as the graph below illustrates. Respondents regularly refered to the global coordinator as warm, approachable and accessible. For example, the RHV manager in Uganda stated that “The coordinator has always been available and also giving valuable support.” while Bolivia colleagues reflected that “The support has been proactive and wonderful, regardless of the distance and the language barriers. Communication has been superb and warm.”

Feedback from various readers that the simple findings presented make the 2 pie charts not very helpful….unless there’s more analysis underneath them that you want to share.

The global coordination function consists of one full time post with part time support for finance, programme strategy, a recently recruited learning and communications post, and extra ad hoc support for donor relations and fundraising. Initially the coordination role was to set up the coordination systems and structures, and with a change in personnel and the midterm review the focus has shifted to facilitation of shared learning and exchange of experiences, as well as communication of the findings and results to donors and wider Oxfam. The coordinator also adapted the main RHV logframe in 2012 to reflect the approach described in the theory of change, as mentioned in 5.3 above, and developed a learning strategy in collaboration with key RHV colleagues.

Since the midterm review there have been three regional meetings, and exchange visits between RHV projects, for example between Uganda and Nepal, and from OGB RHV staff in Nepal to a regional planning meeting for the Central Europe and Middle East region in Georgia. This was considered very valuable, and had a strong influence on the quality and innovation of approaches. For example, the RHV manager in Pakistan appreciated “building communication with other countries’ experiences, close learning about other models through exposure visits.” while the Liberian
colleague noted that “Through these discussions I had information on what other countries were going through and capture some learning along the way”.

The coordinator has also provided ad-hoc and demand-driven support and backstopping to RHV managers in OGB country programmes. RHV Nepal appreciated “Support in documenting the project and understanding its global scope. This is important to maintain momentum/ progress and feel part of something bigger.” RHV Albania also valued the opportunity to be part of something bigger, finding that the global coordination “coached [us] to meet not only the local but even global goals”. This builds a picture of good quality support and coordination within limited means and resources, focused on donor reporting and accountability, as well as shared learning and communication. Evaluated on its own merits it is very positive. However, given the broad scope of the work, the sheer number of projects being brought together, the scale of the need for coordination, facilitation and support, the evaluation finds that the amount / proportion of resources given to global coordination may compromise its efficiency.

The sections on impact and effectiveness suggest that the theory of change has been validated, and found valuable for planning and assessing work towards women’s participation and voice. Whether a portfolio or programme, this evaluation considers that the added value rests on shared learning and continual strengthening of practice. The theory of change could be a valuable resource for this, but this requires strong and facilitative leadership and investment in capacity and human resources, to test, collect evidence, reflect on and improve this theory. The coordinator has been making great efforts to provide support and facilitate shared learning, and also to persuade senior management within the organisation to support this process of learning and innovation in their own domains. However, she does not have the authority, mandate or time and resources to do this strategically across the board, and the coordination team requires stronger, formal links to organisational management to make the most of what RHV has to offer.

7.4.2 Scale, spread and scope: coordination inefficiencies of scale

One key factor in this over-stretching of the coordination role has been the scale and scope of the portfolio. The evaluation research clearly shows that, in order to add value, the coordination needs of the portfolio increase exponentially with the number of countries covered. Each country project requires a certain amount of support (directly or through dedicated OGB country staff) and generates more work in consolidating reports to the donor, and learning for external audiences. However, considering that an important aspect of added value is shared learning and exchange of experiences, this also requires increased resources and facilitation given more countries, people, languages, themes and approaches used.

Assessment of cases where exchange of experience has contributed to learning and enhanced programme quality, suggests that future programmes of work should seek to narrow the focus (geographically and/or thematically) and strengthen communication on common strategies, approaches and objectives. The type of geographical and thematic spread is very difficult to ‘manage’, and this creates challenges for the portfolio to add value to the individual projects, at least within the size of internal human and financial resources. A more organic approach allowing ‘centres of excellence’ to build up around committed and knowledgeable members of staff in different regions, could create more added value with less resource investment over the long term.

7.4.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

RHV has invested in reporting and evaluation in line with donor and OGB contract management requirements. However this has taken up large amounts of human and financial resources which could have been more efficiently used for reflection and shared learning.
The evaluation questions in relation to this issue asked whether the right information was in the right hands to make management decisions, and whether RHV learning was being accessed and used by different audiences. We have already discussed the value and limitations of the coordination function to support shared learning within the portfolio in 7.4.2 above.

The theory of change articulated in the MTR was widely appreciated by RHV partners and peers. In the survey 80% of the RHV managers and 75% of partners claimed either to “know it and it has been helpful to understand change” or “know it and it has had an impact on the management of the programme”. The new theory of change was also accepted by the donor, who requested that Oxfam reformulate the design of RHV to reflect it. However, as explained above, this was not fully possible, given the resource and capacity constraints, and the established working mechanisms and relationships, of the programme. It was not possible, or fair, to ask projects to assess their strategies, objectives and progress according to new criteria half way through, and as such there was no possibility to enforce accountability of projects to the theory of change. However it is evident that ways of thinking and talking about, and communicating the value of, the work have shifted in line with the new theory.

The efficiency and value for money of RHV depends to some extent on its impact and influence on stakeholders who can continue the struggle for equality of voice and influence. The global coordination team sit in Oxfam House in Oxford, alongside many of the thinkers, movers and shakers of the organisation. Increasingly, the learning and evidence from the projects has been produced and disseminated with these audiences in mind, and the coordinator has worked with the communications colleagues, bloggers, and related projects and initiatives to share the theory and learning. Tracking and validating the impact of this work would have been outside the scope of this evaluation, although there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that the materials have been well received and influential across the organisation\(^6\). Overall, we found that there is a palpable sense from in and outside the RHV team that the organisation’s thinking around women’s rights is expanding to include governance, participation and voice.

This suggests that the promotion of RHV learning has been effective. There has been tangible influence on Oxfam International’s new strategy, although the diverse and dispersed nature of the wider Oxfam family creates further challenges for influencing broader organisational thinking and direction, with separate strategy and management processes. One Oxfam staff member reflected that: “It strikes me that there is a lot to offer from RHV, and a greater engagement between RHV staff and staff working on women’s leadership from other affiliates would be very valuable in raising the profile of this work across Oxfam International\(^7\). There has also been a small amount of targeted sharing with UK/ international civil society, including members of the Gender and Development network.

The complexity and scale of the programme - with many layers of management and bureaucracy encompassing OGB in the UK, in countries and partners - created a burden of

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\(^6\) For the last 6 months of the project data on website use and downloads has been collected, although not available in time for use in this evaluation.
reporting which seems to have effectively run counter to the need to have the right information in the right hands, at the right time. The initial logframe and subsequent reporting requirements to DFID set a framework for understanding and communicating the work across the portfolio. While this logframe monitoring approach makes information more comparable, it has effectively reduced the quality, relevance and usefulness. Although the new indicators have been useful to relate to the theory of change, from the project perspective the monitoring and reporting mechanisms do not appear to have changed. The evaluator of RHV Honduras described an ‘engineering’ feat, whereby the partners plan and monitor according to their own systems and strategic objectives, and Oxfam RHV staff at country level report according to the RHV logframe, initially in ‘clusters’, and later according to outcome areas in the three spheres.

This disconnect has been a source of frustration to RHV staff, partners and donor alike. The RHV partner in The Gambia found the reporting extractive and time consuming, but an expected obligation for this type of relationship and ‘not as bad as some donors.’ Meanwhile, OGB country staff often had to request and reformat information from partners into the format for RHV reporting, finding that some learning and interesting information had no place and ‘a lot of things we could not capture’. The RHV Chile effectiveness review confirmed this, stating that the logframe being used for project monitoring included outputs and indicators which did not allow proper description of the results and learning from the work. “As a result, the logframe has been of little use during implementation and, although a reference, has not guided the analysis in the evaluation.”

Apart from the question of efficiency in use of resources, the reporting structure did not prioritise qualitative and substantial information about strategies, effectiveness and learning, and routine facilitation of reflection which would generate this was not found to take place across the board. This had an impact on the effectiveness of the projects and the added value of OGB and the portfolio structure.

This was evident in the global evaluation process, at both midterm and final stages, where a team of evaluators develop a meta-analysis based on 19 individual national evaluations. Over the two evaluation processes (midterm and final) we have found this system to be inefficient, with a large amount of time and resources spent in each country programme producing uneven quality of analysis. It has also resulted in blind spots (for example there is little insight into the relationships between partners and OGB, and OGB country and global teams) and lack of rigour in some areas. Finally, this system meant that the midterm and final evaluations relied on the fruits of continual data collection and monitoring by project staff and partners, but this was in large part weak because of lack of resources to support and deliver it.

The evaluation finds that the resources spent on this two tier system of national and global evaluations could, in retrospect, have been better used to create and facilitate spaces for reflection and exchange. This allows for real time evaluation and collective analysis of progress, relevant data, effectiveness and learning. Also, given the relatively small amount of resources received by each individual project and partner (see 7.6 below), two full evaluation processes is a large burden requiring high levels of organisational investment and time. A single evaluation process, with selective case studies or field research, and relying directly on project level monitoring and reporting to a common framework and high quality, would be more efficient and, probably, more useful.

Especially critical is the lack of attention to women’s voices in evaluating and monitoring the projects. There are some examples where projects have effectively engaged women in monitoring and evaluating their work, but these are not systematically applied or expected. For example, in Guatemala RHV partners developed formal accountability reports for their beneficiaries and local authorities as a positive example of transparency and corruption prevention, and social audit has
been used in some areas. Ultimately, allowing honest and open communication is more useful, and respectful of partners, acknowledging and helping to resolve challenges and problems in implementation or adaption of the project theory or framework to the context.

7.4.4 Oxfam’s added value

*Beyond managing RHV funding and reporting, OGB are well positioned to add value to the work of national civil society, including access to audiences, new relationships and technical capacity.*

In the evaluation survey, RHV partners clearly stated that they did receive appropriate support from Oxfam GB country programmes during the implementation of RHV. The primary role of national OGB staff appears to have been to provide an implementing mechanism to distribute and monitor the use of funds, and additional support was provided to partners in terms of capacity, knowledge and relationships, to different extents in different countries. Overall, OGB has committed £0.8 million of their own money in co-financing, as well as considerable staff time and additional funding leveraged from national budgets. In some cases, such as Nepal and Indonesia, OGB staff and offices have been very engaged in RHV, committing their own resources and time to ensure that partners were fully supported and the ideas developed and promoted. In others, OGB technical and conceptual support was demand driven or minimal.

According to the survey respondents from both partners and OGB staff, the primary benefit of partnership with OGB has been financial. This has enabled continuation and expansion of existing work on women’s rights: Pan Africa partners declared that RHV have given them the “opportunity for long term funding which enabled partners to focus on implementation of SOAWR goals,” while in Chile the funding provided “add on resources to drive the partner’s strategic objectives”. It has also provided some partners with freedom to take new directions and try innovative approaches: such as Honduras where “the mere fact of providing resources for those organizations already working on women rights to encourage public policies that benefit women is a great contribution”. In addition to providing resources directly, OGB support and partnership has also increased capacity for fundraising: in Nepal “some of the partners have also been able to secure some donor funding for small projects similar to RHV” and in Liberia “exposure to other opportunities for funding” was highly valued.

Beyond the funding relationship, responses to the evaluation survey unearthed several different areas in which partners feel that an organisation of the calibre and influence of OGB has, or could, contribute to their work. These include technical support and capacity for project design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation and addressing women’s rights and voice issues; long term, flexible and resilient relationships which can allow for a longer term, less reactive, process and attention to the bigger picture; access to audiences, debates and decision making spaces, at national and international levels; and sufficient convening power, relationships and neutrality to facilitate networking, shared learning and reflection.

There are examples from some evaluation reports of OGB making such contributions. In Albania, Oxfam took a leading role in the first year, gradually devolving responsibility for operation and direction to partners and women’s groups as their capacity grew, and taking an advisory and facilitation role. Local partners explained: “Oxfam came and asked what issues concern us. Then they asked us what we thought we could do about them.” In Nepal too, partners appreciated OGB’s proactive role in nurturing the partnership, mentoring partners to meet compliance and reporting standards, then supporting partners to take over co-ordination and strategic planning, facilitating reflection and strategic planning, and monitoring progress and impact. In Indonesia, quarterly
meetings with OGB gave partners the opportunity to build capacity for project management and integrate the project into their own structures. Partners surveyed appreciated the opportunity to learn from and share with peers in other countries, in particular to support strategic thinking and learn about new strategies and approaches.

However, the evaluation has also found clear evidence that the relative scarcity of resources invested in Oxfam internal capacity has restricted the potential for adding value and thereby the efficiency of the programme. The Nepal evaluation finds that the allocated OGB staff member was faced with overwhelming tasks and demands, from advice and mentoring to partners, monitoring of project activities, overseeing partner reporting and reporting to OGB and RHV donor, coordinating with key stakeholders and linking up with mainstream advocacy on women rights. This had an impact on the quality of reporting from the field, and limited the contribution OGB could make to partners and the on-going social change. Partners in Guatemala felt that there was insufficient training and technical support throughout the project cycle, and the use of tools for project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This was particularly marked in projects where OGB had no national presence, namely Chile, The Gambia and Mozambique, as key staff noted: “Mozambique, for example, could have been a much better project but no one from Oxfam was giving it enough attention”.

The Chile effectiveness review finds that, through RHV, OGB has supported the partner’s work in areas which are strategic over the long term, and often difficult to fund. But a clearer link to the broader programme, and more space for shared learning and exchange, would have made the contribution to partners’ work about more than funding. A survey respondent explained: “Some of the programme’s potentials may have been lost. I think OGB really trusted our work and we are really grateful but probably if we had had a stronger partnership with them, the impact of our work would have been greater.” Equally, at global level there was a clear sense of frustration that more resources were not available to support strategic thinking and action on women’s rights, participation and voice, given the overwhelming need to: “cover accountability aspects and project management”.

Given the long-term, multifaceted and social nature of RHV objectives, investment in civil society and in Oxfam’s own capacity – in terms of skills, relationships and strategic thinking – is essential, efficient and effective. As noted in section 7.1.4 above, this evaluation considers OGB a relevant partner to implement and manage this work if this brings the additional benefit of increasing its own capacity and commitment to work on women’s voice and participation, as an important player in international civil society and struggle for women’s rights. As such, we find that underinvestment in OGB capacity (to add value) is inefficient.

7.5 Economy:

There is not sufficient information across the board to make an assessment of economy, a key pillar of the value for money assessment.

“At the financial level, there is a satisfactory sense that the financial system put in place is effective and efficient. Nonetheless we could assess that there have been two co-exiting mechanisms for financial monitoring which has been confusing at times. One was reporting based on results established by the partners while Oxfam was reporting according to “clusters” established in the global programme”.

Honduras evaluation
This section requires an assessment of whether expenditures, including salaries, were appropriate to context and market rates. This global evaluation relies for this type of information and assessment on the national level evaluations and reports, where this question was not routinely asked, nor answered in comparable ways. As such it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of purchasing and pricing behaviours. In most cases the evaluations focus on what has been done, and achieved, without explicitly relating this to funds and other resources used.

Furthermore, the nature of this type of work, which focuses on supporting partners to expand their own work means that finances are often absorbed as core funding into partner organisations. While partnership agreements and relations do focus on organisational effectiveness and systems, beyond this we cannot easily assess the quality of the partners’ procurement systems, nor identify exactly what the RHV funds were spent on. Overall, it is difficult to see from the vantage point of the global evaluation how the links between resources, inputs and outputs are defined, tracked and measured.

Where there are assessments of economy, these are generally positive. For example, in Tanzania 83% of the evaluation questionnaire respondents said that “resources were utilized effectively”. The Armenia evaluation found that “expenditure is made very accurately.” With a market survey carried out before payments made for services or goods, finding the best quality for the lowest price, and the decision consulted with head office. In Honduras, the partners have “tried to manage austerely, with the greatest possible benefits... we always did more than the resources allowed. This was possible because of our commitment.” In several cases it was found that the use of local facilities was potentially more economical, for example the Indonesia evaluation recommended that training was more cost effective if held locally, and the Nepal report considered local level advocacy was less expensive and easier to follow up than national level policy advocacy processes.

Finally, in Honduras, Indonesia and Nepal, the evaluations found that partners had improved their own systems and capacity for financial management and economy, for example in Nepal “Most of the partners have revised their financial and administrative by-laws to make them more practical, user friendly, accountable and transparent.”

### 7.6 Value for money

*Overall, given the impact and resources of RHV, we can confidently say that RHV represents good value for money. However, a more detailed and nuanced assessment of value for money is not possible given the available data.*

Overall, given the information and analysis shared above in this report, we have found that RHV has contributed significantly to the achievement of the expected outcomes and changes, and this is particularly impressive given the relatively small amount of funding across such as large number of sites, partners and stakeholders. For this reason, we can confidently say that RHV represents good value for money.

Figure 2 below illustrates the relationship between overall inputs and outcomes in a simplified and visual way. This shows that the £5.8 million funding from DFID and OGB, split between the numbers of partners and projects and after global coordination costs, averages at just under £22,000 per partner per year, and just over £50,000 per project. The snapshot of the types of changes to which the project has contributed shows the relative weight of inputs to outcomes, while also demonstrating the challenges of this type of analysis given the complex nature of this type of change.
Figure 2: value for money assessment

**Political**
- 73% AU members signed the Maputo Protocol
- Uganda and Kenya ratified Maputo Protocol
- Anti-Women Practices Bill in Pakistan
- VAPP Bill in Nigeria & Women’s Act in Gambia
- Pakistan, 100 RHV women elected to district Committees
- More Nepalese women to the Constituent Assembly
- Honduras 40% quota in elections; 50% after 2016
- Nigeria senior gender officers in all Ministries
- Indonesia & Nepal gender focal points in local areas and in the traditional council of Liberia
- Tanzanian police shifted practices around GBV

**Social**
- New grassroots women networks in Armenia, Albania, Honduras, Nepal and Indonesia
- Armenia; new model of cooperation between women & local government.
- Bolivia more indigenous women in women’s movement
- Indonesia strengthened women’s collective voice across religious and ethnic lines
- Tanzania men’s attitudes towards women’s participation have changed (RHV areas)
- In Nepal 60% increased awareness of VAW in RHV areas
- Chile RHV installed women’s rights on the political agenda

**Personal**
- ‘RHV had made us aware of our power’ South Africa
- ‘Through the LAG, I had the opportunity to feel esteemed and important’ Albania
- ‘As a widow, RHV has really helped me to raise my voice so as to retain some of the things my late husband left behind for me and the children’ Nigeria
- 28 RHV Guatemalan women stood for local elections
- Pakistan; thousands of marginal women acquired civil registration
- ¼ of women participating in Gambian case study took up positions in village councils
- Nepal; women’s participation in local committees in RHV
- Nepal; 2000 women more confident to speak up in public areas (grew from 28% to 48%)

£5.8 million/ 5 yrs/ 19 projects* in 4 continents
(around £22,000 partner/p.a)

43 Oxfam staff
45 partners
410 coalition members

The commitment of hundreds of thousands of activists

Contribution to…

* 17 country projects plus 2 regional
That does not mean that there is not room for improvement, in particular in relation to the types of issues covered in the section 7.4 on efficiency and 7.8 on sustainability. Over the long term, investments in organisational capacity, systemic and attitudinal change may be found to be more sustainable and fundamental to the achievement of the broader vision of gender equality and women being heard in public spaces. This may mean that more investment (if necessary in fewer initiatives) may represent greater value for money. We also consider that a proportionally greater investment in the capacity of the coordination team to support, link and facilitate reflection and learning would represent greater value for money overall.

7.6.1 Challenges in meaningfully assessing value for money in complex interventions

However, beyond this top line value for money evaluation, more detailed and meaningful assessment is challenging for several reasons. DfID describe good value for money as “the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcome”, an assessment of the balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. An assessment of value for money is important, to ensure that the resources were applied in a way as to produce maximum value to key stakeholders. OGB too recognise the need to critically assess value for money, but on reflection have chosen not to adopt a standardised measurement approach on value for money, considering that this will not provide meaningful benefits to the organisation. In such complex, diverse and multi-faceted initiatives as Raising Her Voice, which aim to contribute to the work of many stakeholders and ongoing social change, linking inputs to outcomes is more of an art than a science.

DfID’s own guidance to analysing the different elements of value for money gives examples from fairly simple interventions such as training courses. However, the midterm review of RHV conducted sample assessments10 which showed that even when assessing the value of a training course, the inputs which contributed to outcomes are numerous, varied and interrelated. For example, after a training course provided by RHV partners in South Africa, a woman participant had increasingly raised her voice about violence against women and violation of women’s rights. However, the inputs were way beyond the costs of the training itself, as the effectiveness of the training was due in part to the process of needs assessment and participatory planning, research and analysis which led up to it, as well as the capacity, commitment and legitimacy of the partners to convene and deliver. So it is impossible to accurately define the inputs into that apparently simple activity. Given that RHV is contributing to ongoing social change processes and building on the core work of partners and country offices, this challenge is further compounded.

Beyond the significant limitation in relating inputs to outputs; as indicated in sections 7.3 - 7.5, robust data on the three pillars of value for money (as an assessment of the relationships between efficiency, effectiveness and economy) was not available across the board. And perhaps most challenging of all is the definition of value. This is strongly related to the design and implementation of the MEL framework, to ensure that the value is not considered in the achievement of an activity, but in the occurrence of change, progress towards the outcomes and final vision as expressed in the theory of change. In RHV, we found different understandings of what ‘success’ looks like, between partners and countries, and levels of management. For example, a respondent from the donor management team stated: “to me the success story in Pakistan would be enough to justify the entire investment of the programme”. This may not have been a sufficient indicator for other stakeholders.

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10 The midterm review piloted an approach to understanding VFM which took examples of strong impact on the expected outcomes, and tracked these back to identify the inputs. This exercise has not been repeated in this final evaluation, partly because of the overwhelming amount of questions and information to be prioritised, but also because the technique was designed for integration into the project planning and monitoring cycle, to be done through reflection with key staff and stakeholders, rather than by the external evaluators. In this way partners and project staff can reflect on how the project is going and key results, identify the effective strategies and inputs which have created successes, and in this way not only assess value for money but also feed the learning directly into project planning.
7.6.2 Ways forward for assessing value for money

Work to improve identification of the inputs into a process or activity, and to understand where to indicate and measure success, will be a strong basis for continual improvement of value for money going forward. The evaluation recommends that future such initiatives take as a starting point a theory of change to be validated across different stakeholder, then tested and improved, and to serve as a framework for regular reflection on progress, relevance and effectiveness. By carefully identifying the point at which success is measured (between activity and impact), and carefully tracking the types of interconnected inputs into the activities which contributed to such change, the assessment of value for money – and programme quality itself - can gradually be strengthened. This reflects the current organisational position and strategy of OGB, which is focusing on incorporating VFM measurement across all stages of project planning and implementation and within the impact assessment methods applied across their six global outcome areas.

Overall, in complex interventions such as RHV, value for money can never be accurately predicted, as not all of the same inputs have the same outputs in different contexts. This means that the focus should be on gathering information which can help to make more effective and sound decisions for investment in changes in women’s participation and voice. To this end, below we identify some other factors which appear to provide a strong basis for value for money interventions in this field.

7.6.3 Factors contributing to good value for money:

Despite these challenges, we were able to identify a number of examples that illustrate how the portfolio has created value beyond the investments made.

7.6.3.1 Creating value

“We get 100 funding, but make 300 investments in the community.”

RHV partner Armenia

“We have used RHV funds to capitalise something bigger.”

RHV partner The Gambia

“If estimated contribution of Aurat Foundation and Oxfam GB is reflected, the total cost of the project is 47% higher than actual budget for the project. This shows that both Aurat Foundation and Oxfam GB leveraged the resources provided by the project to generate additional value.”

Pakistan evaluation

Some projects were able to catalyse and mobilise co-financing, creating investments beyond the project scope. Concrete examples come from Honduras where the project successfully lobbied for allocation of 2% of municipal budgets to women’s issues, and Albania and Armenia where RHV groups mobilised local investment to match the project resources. In Nepal, the approach has created a multiplier effect, with outputs generating sustainable increases in women’s access to credit, training, funding and public resources as well as women’s retrieval and reallocation of misused local funds.

7.6.3.2 Investing in sustainable, long term change

“Everything we’ve done till now we’ve done using our resources. If the funding was more, we could implement more actions, campaigns etc.”

Albania RHV participant
Assessment of the results, efficiency and effectiveness of the projects and portfolio suggest some principles in creating value for money. These are described in more detail in the relevant sections above, but include strong partnerships; OGB capacity to implement and support gender equality work; and long-term and flexible commitments. Competent and trustworthy partners with effective systems, clear focus, relevant know how and knowledge of the context have provided good and cost-effective results. Equally, where OGB employ and build the capacity of committed and knowledgeable individuals to support the work, money is well invested towards the final goals of gender equality, and more value added.

Finally, assessment of the available evidence shows that small, short investments can be a false economy. There has been much frustration at the end of the projects because of insufficient capacity to sustain the initiative, build autonomy and self-sustaining processes and scale up. For example, in Nigeria a majority (87.1%) of evaluation participants considered that RHV responded effectively to women’s rights issues, but that a low level of resources was not cost effective, limiting the depth, reach and sustainability of change.

7.7 Equity

RHV was designed specifically to address inequalities in relation to gender and power, focusing on marginalised and poor women.

“We’d have been stronger if we had started out being more demanding for our work to be rooted in needs of the most marginalised women”

OGB Oxford

The sections on impact and effectiveness demonstrate that the whole portfolio has targeted engagement of and changes in the lives and opportunities of women. The Nepal evaluation remarked on the success of the project in engaging marginalised women: “women belonging to socially disadvantaged groups comprise a major chunk of the direct beneficiaries (participants in the CDC) of the project with dalits and janajatis accounting for 25% and 49% of the total direct beneficiaries respectively.”

However, during the research we found that many projects faced challenges in reaching the most marginalised women, and in tackling the issue of how representative individual women are of the totality of women’s experience and potential. South Africa RHV partners explicitly rejected the definition of ‘poor women’ as a target group, considering this reductionist and masking the complex social, economic and cultural realities and contexts in which women live.

Indonesia and Nepal both found that by engaging religious and social women’s groups older, married women (who suffer severe time constraints) could be exposed to the ideas and benefits of RHV. In other areas, the strategy was to engage active women, potential or actual leader, who could then be role models to inspire others. In The Gambia, partners first engaged women who are already active in local NGO groups, mothers clubs, income generation groups or study circles, who then are able to mobilise others.

Sometimes projects have taken the strategic decision to work with elites in the capital with the assumption that their successes will trickle down to marginalised women. This may be strategic in cases such as Tanzania, with a focus on implementation of legal frameworks by lawyers and politicians, or a tactic to make scarce resources more cost-effective. In Chile “the theory of change does not explicitly makes a class distinction among women and does not specifically include poor and marginalised women… When asked about it, most internal and external informants argued that, given that Chile is so stratified, the inclusion of poor and marginalised women (but also men) in the
political system is a real challenge. The big assumption, therefore, is that, at least indirectly, the inclusion of more women in the political scenario will end up also benefitting those poor and marginalised women”. However, this entry point risks elite capture, or losing the voice of poor women. The Albania effectiveness review found a strong element of self-selection among women, by design in order to engage women who could be active participants. The review found that in at least one project area LAGs did not function fully democratically, and might have been at risk of capture by local elites. LAG membership comprised a substantial number of women of professional standing such as businesswomen, teachers, nurses, lawyers and economists. Ultimately, the theory of change shows that it is important for changes to reach marginalised women, in their personal lives, and that real change in voice only happens when those women are directly engaged and confidence built. As such, future RHV projects would need to consider carefully the opportunities and limitations of targeting different groups, and recognise that reaching marginalised women requires intention and specific effort. Learning from existing projects suggests that, at all levels from grassroots to OGB staff, engaging champions who are committed to the cause of women’s voice and influence, and can spearhead empowerment and change processes rather than capture the benefits, is an effective strategy to promote equity.

7.8 Sustainability:

“RHV has ignited something in the women leaders – created motivation and inspiration that, for many, will continue after the formal interaction with the project and partners finishes. [They have] good relationships with the communities they represent – a strong social constituency which doesn’t depend on funds.”

RHV Asia regional meeting

"Now we look at things with our inner eyes. This is one change that will keep us going. We will not move backwards."

RHV Nepal participant

Sustainability can be analysed on two levels: how likely is the process itself to be sustained; and how sustainable are the changes which have been experienced. The sustainability analysis of each project has been covered in the national evaluations, though not the effectiveness reviews. At global portfolio level, sustainability is reflected in organisational commitment and lasting knowledge assets for the wider women’s rights movement. At national levels, the 2 page summaries capture the main findings of the evaluation reports in relation to sustainability, and a broader assessment is not viable, given the context specific nature of change. However, here we provide a summary of factors affecting sustainability, drawn from the learning of the projects, to provide lessons for future project design and continued support.

7.8.1 Changes to capacity and commitment:

Evidence from RHV suggests that some kinds of change are more integral and permanent, including changes in individual and organisational capacity, confidence and attitudes.

These types of changes have been observed in increased a) capacity for, commitment to and mainstreaming of women’s political rights in implementing partner organisations, including OGB; and b) capacity and self-confidence of grassroots women and activists to participate in the decision-making of their families, communities, and – to some extent – political parties and structures. Though more sustainable, these types of changes also tend to be slow and gradual, the result of multiple inputs and influences, and - as seen in The Gambia case study - are visible at the scale of society or community only over timescales of 10 years and upwards.
7.8.1.1 Increased capacity and confidence of women

“The acquisition of knowledge and awareness raising of women on their rights and the main mechanisms and procedures to claim them, and on the importance of participation in decision making processes, will be maintained once the project ends.”

OGB Honduras

“Women have been actively involved in community development works and are accessing local resources for community benefit. These women will not fall back. They will bring other women to their fold while moving forward. Similarly, the positive change in the attitude of men is more apparent at the household level and is likely to sustain and be reinforced in the days to come as the men in the family have begun to accept changing gender roles.”

Nepal OGB manager

Overall, we have found that changes to the personal sphere are likely to be sustainable. Many projects have acknowledged changes to the capacity and confidence of individual women as something that will outlive RHV. These changes happen from within; new knowledge which brings new expectations, new ways of thinking, new skills and awareness. However, the opportunity to act on this, to sustain the confidence and the relationships which facilitate action, depends on external factors including changes in the social and political spheres, and the economic sphere. The case studies of Honduras and The Gambia show that poor, marginalized women need financial support to be able to organize, mobilise and actively participate in public life. This is usually just funding for transport and accommodation, but in some cases may also compensate for lack of earnings. For this reason, in both cases the grassroots women activists felt that withdrawal of financial support for their groups would mark the end, until they could build up a more sustainable income source to fund their processes.

The Albania effectiveness review highlighted this issue, stating that low local capacity to sustain the initiative meant that RHV investments in capacity and groups were under threat: “The LAG coordinator now is not being paid, but is continuing to work so that the LAG doesn’t lose the links and faith of the community. We hope that soon LAGs will be able to function” However, in the long run, the reviewer asks: “Without donor assistance, will they get organized, run monthly meetings and most importantly, prepare proposals for financing successfully?“.

In effect, the lack of continued financing until proper sustainability and financial autonomy has been built is likely to have an adverse effect on equity. In Pakistan, although most WLG are likely to continue their activism after the project funding ends, the evaluation states that “the poorer WLG members and those who have been recipients of help from the women leaders are likely to find themselves unable to continue activities that require financial inputs.”

7.8.1.2 Institutional commitment and capacity

“[RHV has been] successfully incorporated into mainstream organisational goals and work [of partners]...This ensures that the intersectional approach to addressing challenges faced by women continues to be a part of what organisations do and will therefore continue to be implemented beyond the funding lifespan of the RHV project”.  

South Africa evaluation

“No question [women’s transformative leadership] is a priority for Oxfam ... we have had the rhetoric for a long time but in the last 5 years we understood we have to have some very concrete objectives attached to gender.”

OGB Oxford staff
"The investment in the theories of change will be a solid basis for future programme development and for fundraising at national level. The story gathering investments will continue to pay off as good examples of women’s political participation are hard to find."

OGB staff member

Section 7.2.2.1 includes numerous examples of how RHV has contributed to shifting the institutional commitment of implementing organisations, including Oxfam GB. Our research shows that this is key to sustainability; mainstreaming the approach to women’s participation and voice into organisations’ on-going work. A number of OGB country programmes are continuing to invest their own resources in continuing the work of RHV, or implementing women’s leadership and voice work. At the global level, several OGB respondents emphasised how RHV has contributed to sustainable changes within the organisation. Finally, on a broader level, increased conceptual and methodological clarity on how to intentionally and effectively engage in women’s participation and representation provides a strong, sustainable resource for the international women’s movement, and civil society.

Sustaining commitment and support

“Sustaining this change will be maintaining the priority status of RHV... Don’t let the next new thing minimise the importance of RHV in our leadership narrative”.

OGB Country Director

“This methodology requires more time and resources. Organising a group is not the same thing as providing training to women to enable them to organise the group. However, this is a project innovation that helps to build their capacities, allowing them to help to ensure the continuity of their organisation.”

RHV partner, Honduras

As noted in section 7.3.1, the advances made through 3-5 years of RHV investments are in general not well enough embedded or scaled up to be fully sustainable at this stage. Several of the national evaluations recognise that progress in organisational capacity and relationships, networks and women’s groups depend on continued funding and support. Where RHV has provided additional funding for partner activities the impact and value added may be less, as argued above, but the ownership and sustainability are likely to be higher.

In projects where new areas of work have been developed, such as group empowerment processes in Albania, Armenia, Indonesia, Nepal and The Gambia, or national advocacy coalitions in Nigeria, Liberia or Uganda, there is frustration about the lack of time, funding and capacity for building sustainability, developing autonomy and scaling up. In The Gambia funding was too little and too short-term to produce quantitatively significant results at grassroots level, or build a critical mass of activist women at the grassroots. One local chief explained: “The Pressure Group will play a major role in our community, the implementation will not be easy as some die-hard attitudes and practices are difficult to eradicate. The work needs a lot of dialogue and more understanding among the stakeholders.”

7.8.2 Support for social sustainability

“Community Councils became aware of gender budgeting and learned how to implement gender mainstreaming when designing the community budget. They collaborate with WSAGs and other active women in the communities. In target
communities the WSAG members are always present at the Community Council session when the annual community budget is being developed and discussed.”

Armenia evaluation report

As a result of RHV activities in some project areas, women’s rights actors are better networked, enjoy stronger and more supportive relationships, have greater capacity for joint planning and activities and more access to decision makers. RHV investment has boosted this change, but the resources to sustain it are local: motivation, will, skills and capacity is all in national organisations – there is ownership of the process.

In RHV Pakistan, for example, the national evaluation states that “around 70% of the 1,500 women leaders will maintain their involvement with the programme and with their groups after 2013.” This suggests that, “even if RHV concludes, the groups and networks established during the project will continue to function informally, as networks of well-informed activists who maintain the platforms they have constructed. The women members have internalized the idea and the value of a network that they can contact and expect to respond to a specific outrage against an individual woman or to support an idea.”

In general, the evaluation has found that changes in the openness and accessibility of political structures and relationships are more sustainable when integrated into local change and governance processes. For example, the Guatemala evaluation found that changes in ‘Public positioning of women’s agendas and specific rights at community, municipal and departmental level’ had been achieved and were unlikely to recede in the two Departments covered by the project. This is supported by work of the project in capacity building of local partners, and stronger networking with relevant public bodies and civil society organizations and public institutions. In other instances, this is also linked to the mobilisation of local budget allocations, and building of strategic alliances with duty bearers and opinion leaders.

7.8.3 Resilience to changing contexts

“The project’s achievements in relation to a conducive institutional environment (...) are vulnerable to legislative and political changes. Therefore, we cannot assure that they will be sustainable once the project has ended. It is still key to devote efforts and new strategies to secure these achievements.”

Honduras evaluation report

Some areas of change appear to be more fragile and vulnerable to erosion. Increases in the openness and responsiveness of public systems and officials or leaders, for example, can be vulnerable to changes in the environment, or individuals. The numbers and influence of women leaders, too, can increase through the existence of more role models and examples of women’s effective participation, but they can also be vulnerable to decreases if women are not supported, or come under attack.

For example, in Albania the idea to advocate for national government to take up the LAG model has been undermined in the short term, as the country’s accession to the EU has been delayed, or seeming less likely. This highlights political risks, and need for continued strategic engagement in pushing women’s participation forward. The effectiveness review also found that, although women are still keen to meet and plan together, their relationship with and access to local decision makers is vulnerable to decline without continued support for formal LAG processes and funding. Another useful example comes from Pakistan where OGB and AF successfully adapted the project to respond to the major changes in the governance structure that have occurred during the project’s lifespan. These include the abolition of the Local Government Ordinance (the legislation on which the RHV
project was originally founded), and the introduction of the 18th Amendment, which devolved the powers and authority of Federal Ministries to the Provinces.

Finally, a number of projects have made headway in passing new laws benefitting women or in making national governments subscribed to international protocols (Maputo Protocol). These changes are likely to be sustained, and are key steps in a larger process and forms the foundation for using judicial mechanisms to ensure that women’s rights are enforced. However, without denying the value of policy changes as a necessary first step, it is not in itself sufficient to ensure women’s voices are heard. The key challenge is to ensure that laws and policies become a tool for women’s empowerment and a force for freedom for women.

7.9 Replicability

As a portfolio, RHV is very diverse, the project approaches are very context specific and as such it cannot be considered a single approach which can be replicated. However, given that the emerging theory of change has been validated by the majority of stakeholders and the evidence so far, we strongly recommend that it be used from the planning phase of future projects to work on women’s participation and voice.

There are also many examples of effective strategies in section 7.5.1 which can be adapted and adopted by other projects. There is a lot of learning to be drawn on from the RHV portfolio, a lot of expertise which can support ‘replication’ in other areas. There is capacity in OGB, partners and coalitions/ women’s movement, which has been built through RHV and is a strong basis for replication, scale up and continuation – in this long-term social change process. For example, the RHV partner in The Gambia suggested that they could develop a training programme to share their learning, expertise and experience with other NGOs across Africa on implementing the Protocol and making paper rights real and living for women through grassroots activism.

8. Summary of Recommendations

“If you expect to see the final results of your work, you simply have not asked a big enough question.”

I.F. Stone

Rightly, through RHV, OGB is engaging in a huge and complex area of social change. Women are systematically deprived of power and influence, and this affects every aspect of all of our lives (as men and women). However, this requires a way of thinking, relating and acting which is quite different from historical development project approaches which planned for more simplistic and straight-forward interventions.

OGB is operating in an ecosystem, both dependent upon and impacting upon a variety of other actors: competing, supporting, collaborating or clashing, or sometimes all at once. It cannot plan to achieve its goal in a project lifetime, but instead must find ways to understand short term projects within a longer time span and much broader social change context. The recommendations here are intended to support that role and relationship.

8.1 Design:

8.1.1 A common theory of change:
The MTR introduced a theory of change which has been widely accepted and validated by the emerging evidence from RHV. Stronger conceptual clarity can provide different staff, partners and participants in the projects with a common framework to understand RHV, construct their own context specific initiatives, and find commonalities across projects to enhance collaboration and shared learning. We therefore recommend that:

- The RHV theory of change be the starting point for future projects and programmes designed with objectives of women’s increased public participation and voice. With open discussion, this can provide a unifying framework while allowing flexibility for responsiveness to context, opportunities and changes during the project life. From the outset of the design phase Oxfam and partners should discuss their roles in and contributions to the wider social change.

- In particular, this means that all future projects should consider and address the three spheres, as indivisible aspects of women’s participation and voice. While teams and partners in each context may need or wish to focus on specific areas of expertise or opportunity, following the ‘ecosystem’ metaphor, projects should balance work across the three spheres over the long term and bigger picture, even if indirectly through relationships and linkages. Work on the political sphere, in relation to legislation, should be understood in the long term in relation to tangible changes to women’s participation and voice, and not as an end in itself. Equally, women’s personal empowerment needs to be linked to the enabling environment for participation in the long term.

- The theory of change should be updated to incorporate findings reflected in this evaluation, and future evidence of how change happens in relation to women’s voice and participation. Issues arising at this stage include:
  - The role of men in creating an enabling environment for women’s participation, including work to engage male gender champions.
  - The meaning of women’s transformative leadership, whether it is a question of numbers of women in power or numbers of people in power actively working for women’s empowerment and gender equality.
  - Review of the opportunities and effective partnerships for strengthening public awareness and attitudes towards gender discrimination and women’s participation.
  - Examination of the extent and impact of women’s leadership in OGB and partners.
  - Including the area of institutional commitment and capacity (mainstreaming of women’s participation and voice) into objectives and long-term change vision.

- Future programmes of work engage staff and partners to validate and interpret the theory of change, given their own context, values and knowledge. This should be the starting point of development of new partnerships and projects.

- The current RHV theory of change represents a strong asset for the organisation in future women’s rights work, and should as far as possible be promoted amongst relevant and senior management staff to inform and influence the organisation’s policies and strategies around women’s rights.

8.1.2 A long term approach:
Contributing to long term change while working in a short term planning and funding cycle poses challenges for organisations such as Oxfam. Based on the theory of change, it is possible to plan and evaluate smaller, short-term activities without losing sight of the longer term, bigger picture.

- As recommended by the DFID fund manager, an inception period (suggested one year) should be provided before the start of large programmes of work such as RHV to allow for identification of partners and mapping of stakeholders, relationship building, validation and interpretation of the theory of change, planning and capacity building. This would enable strong mapping of the existing state of play and knowledge in relation to women’s
participation and voice, challenges and opportunities, and enable the partnership to build relationships and plan appropriate interventions in awareness of the wider ‘ecosystem’.

- Monitoring and evaluation systems should also recognize the need to evaluate progress in relation both to the short term objectives and goals, but also the longer term vision. More recommendations are found below in 8.2.3.

- Long-term partnerships are important to support sustainability, and ensure that OGB is supporting, not crowding out or undermining, other key actors in the ‘ecosystem’. While short term partnerships may be important for certain types of intervention or activity, where possible relationships should be bigger than the specific project and attention paid to building capacity for more strategic and long-term action. In particular, coalition building need to be conceived as a long-term commitment, to provide women more stable platforms to gain support and networking. This support should aim to build broader progressive women’s movement which can safeguard changes of programme, as well as encourage more autonomy and independence to relate critically with local/national governments, raise own funds, facilitate own analysis and planning process.

8.2 Implementation

8.2.1 Greater coordination and facilitation capacity

This evaluation finds that the proportion of resources dedicated to the global coordination function (15%) was insufficient and did not represent good value for money. Opportunities for OGB to add value to the work of partners were limited, reducing the effectiveness and added value of the portfolio structure. We recommend that future such programmes:

- Dedicate a larger proportion of the overall funds to global coordination and national OGB support staff, and recognize the need to increase coordination capacity in relation to the number of projects involved.
- The coordination team needs to include capacity/mandate to facilitate reflection and shared learning, communicate findings and results, and access organizational policy and decision making processes.
- Include a smaller number and range of countries and contexts to enable more effective facilitation of shared learning and common strategies. These may be countries with common issues, comparable features in relation to women’s participation, or in the same region or language group for example. The important recommendation is to think strategically about choice of countries, rather than following self-selection processes. By starting with fewer countries and projects, more investment can be made in developing and adapting the theory, building relationships and developing the capacity of key staff who can then become focal/resource persons to scale up the approach and involve more countries. RHV Nepal is an example of good practice in this regard.

8.2.2 Institutional capacity

Because of the importance and quantity of outcomes in the area of institutional commitment and capacity, this evaluation has found it necessary to report on this as a key outcome area. However, it has not been recognized as an outcome area in any of the RHV frameworks. We consider that this is important, as this represents sustainable changes in the ecosystem itself, of Oxfam as an effective actor and supporter of women’s rights to participation and voice, and of other autonomous civil society actors who make up the (informal) women’s movement. We therefore recommend that:

- Oxfam focus on building the capacity of its own staff to test and apply the theory, to provide support and networking, up to date knowledge and tools, access to spaces, contacts and relationships in the country and internationally. These are areas highly valued by partners (survey results), which require not only skills and knowledge, but commitment to women’s rights and voice, and an activist’s address book. Again, this has implications for the split of
funding, and we recommend that Oxfam invest a higher proportion of funding to its own staff capacity to add value to partners’ work.

- Institutional capacity and commitment to increase women’s voice and participation (mainstreaming) should be included as an objective of any future such project, and not just a means to an end. It should be planned, supported, resourced and monitored as such.
- Oxfam should systematize experiences and learning behind the choice of partners, to support development of partnership criteria.

8.2.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
The monitoring, evaluation and learning system should provide the information needed by donors to feel confident of correct and effective use of funds, and should also support quality programming and decision making, and the validation and updating of the underlying theory of change. For this reason, regular spaces for facilitated reflection are recommended to allow for effective consideration of progress, learning and implications for future programming.

- The monitoring and evaluation framework should be based on regular opportunities for staff and partners to reflect, also with participating women, on progress, effective strategies and emerging opportunities. Where possible, opportunities for collective interpretation of findings should be made, including representatives of participating women. Some examples of social audit from RHV projects can be used to build this practice.
- It is worth emphasising that MEL activities and frameworks should explicitly seek to include women’s voices. There is the tendency to focus on “numbers of women”, rather than “voices of women” and equally as important, analysis of by whom and to what effect women’s voices are heard.
- The theory of change provides a basis for evaluation and understanding progress, and partners and staff should work together to identify appropriate measures of ‘success’ from the beginning, revisited throughout the relationship. While the implementation of activities cannot in itself be considered ‘success’, neither can this be evaluated only in relation to the wider goals of women’s influence and power. Selecting relevant indicators in between the areas in direct control, and those which are completely outside of the sphere of influence of the project, requires facilitated collective analysis with different stakeholders, based on the theory of change. This will help to structure work to monitor and capture real changes and effectiveness of the work, and help stakeholders to feel more accountable to those indicators.
- Future programmes should build from the start a strategy for shared learning and exchange. The RHV strategy could provide a good starting point.
- We consider that the system of national midterm and final evaluations feeding into a separate independent global evaluation is neither efficient nor is it a good way to ensure consistent quality. Building on a system based on reflection and developing the theory, a unified global external evaluation process with ample case studies (perhaps with a ‘critical stories’ approach which recognise multiple perspectives and actors) would be more effective and efficient.
- The monitoring of value for money needs to be able to link outcomes to inputs and those to financial resources. It is important to build in ways to relate these elements together without losing the complexity and nuance of how change happens. Attention should be paid to developing a shared understanding amongst, and building capacity of, stakeholders who will need to make these connections.