WITHIN & WITHOUT THE STATE

LEARNING EXCHANGE COMMUNIQUÉ

Juba, South Sudan, 30 Sept- 4 October 2013

OXFAM

Within and Without the State (WWS) is a DFID-funded global programme running from 2011-14, piloting approaches to working with civil society to promote more accountable governance in fragile contexts. WWS is now working in four focus countries, South Sudan, Yemen, OPTI, and Afghanistan, using the approach of a 'social contract' between citizens and the state – and promoting platforms for engagement between them. WWS also has a strong emphasis on capturing and disseminating learning from the programme and over the last eighteen months has developed a Community of Practice and range of case-studies and activities to share its experience and learning.

Learning Exchange, Juba September/October 2013

The WWS Learning Exchange took place in Juba, South Sudan, from Monday 30 September to Friday 4 October. The emphasis of the workshop was on sharing experience, discussion, and reflection – which enabled participants to bring together their learning from the programme and explore areas for future development. The rationale for holding the workshop in a WWS focus country was to be able to share with WWS partners in South Sudan and enable participants to better reflect on what it means to work in a fragile context. Participants came from all WWS focus countries and the global team in Oxford, and also included staff from other countries and regions interested in governance programming in fragile contexts.

The Learning Exchange explored the following areas:

- **Sharing experience** of working with civil society to promote good governance from our four focus countries.
- **Exploring the relationship** between gender and fragility, and particularly the role of gender inequality as a *driver* of fragility.
- **Developing a gender strategy** and related activities to inform the final six months of WWS and the next phase of the programme, (2014-16, currently under negotiation with DFID).
- **Reflecting on the 'social contract'** model and examining its usefulness as a tool in governance programming in fragile contexts.
- **Learning from, and sharing with,** partners from South Sudan.
- **Looking forward** to identify a shared vision for the next phase of WWS.

- **Reviewing plans and activities** at country level and identifying concrete changes to improve practice.
- **Looking at ways to continue to reflect and learn** together, and to capture and share learning more widely across Oxfam and externally.

Key messages and learning:

The workshop captured a range of evidence and experience which will be disseminated in a number of learning products from November 2013, and is distilled in the key messages below:

Two years into the programme, WWS learning and experience enables us to say with confidence:

- **Effective governance programming** *is* **possible in fragile contexts** Experience from our four focus countries clearly demonstrates that it is possible to do effective governance programming in fragile contexts; and that such work is essential to tackling fragility, building stability and resilience, and overcoming poverty. Oxfam puts 'active citizens and effective states' at the heart of overcoming poverty; and even in a context where it is necessary for Oxfam to meet basic needs (because the state is unable or unwilling to do so), it is still *possible and relevant* to work on governance.

- **Civil society is an appropriate entry point** Working with civil society is an appropriate entry point to governance work in fragile contexts; but it is not *in itself* sufficient to promote good governance. Civil society (including CBOs, CSOs and NGOs which represent women and the poorest

and most marginalised), should be supported to *engage constructively* with duty-bearers to advocate for more accountable governance. Programme strategy may also include linking communities and civil society to other influential non-state actors and institutions – including elite groups, religious leaders, media, and the private sector.

• **The 'social contract' is an appropriate model**
In fragile contexts, where the state may be unable or unwilling to meet the needs of its citizens, traditional 'demand-led' advocacy (were citizens are organised and empowered to demand their rights from duty-bearers) may not be appropriate. The 'social contract' model enables civil society to *engage constructively* with the state, can avoid negative backlash from an authoritarian government, and encourages realistic expectations from both citizens and state.

The 'social contract' model promotes the idea of a contract between civil society and those at different levels of governance, where each actor has their own roles and responsibilities to fulfil and by engaging with each other they can work together to build a more effective state. The approach encourages *engagement and trust-building* between citizens and state; and emphasises the role of civil society in providing information, evidence, and even technical advice to help duty-bearers work towards pro-poor development policies.

• **Informal power-holders are important**
In a fragile state or context, significant power may be held by informal power-holders, including religious, tribal, or customary leaders, and others who are able to influence formal power-holders. Detailed power analysis is essential to explore the different types of power in a fragile context and where power lies; new approaches and ways of working are needed to build relationships with, and influence, informal power-holders.

• **Gender inequality is a driver of conflict and fragility**
Experience from WWS shows that women and men are impacted differently by conflict and fragility, but also suggests that gender inequality is itself a *driver of fragility*. In South Sudan, for example, high bride price fuels cattle raiding and conflict between tribal groups; and women's exclusion from public life and decision making in all fragile contexts means public policy does not adequately reflect women's experience or promote women's rights. Governance programming in fragile contexts should address both the impact of conflict and fragility on women, and how gender inequality itself fuels that fragility.

• **Building civil society capacity**
In a context where the capacity of civil society is weak and citizens are unaware of their rights or the obligations of duty-bearers, it is vital for Oxfam to work to *build the capacity of civil society*. Oxfam can draw on its long experience of capacity-building and many tried and tested approaches

(such as technical and organisational strengthening through training, mentoring, and accompaniment) can be adapted from development programming. Some techniques have proved particularly effective, including working through networks of civil society organisations; and focusing on the quality of Oxfam's accountable relationships with partners as a key to developing their confidence and capacity.

• **Change is possible – but takes time**
It is possible to achieve change in fragile contexts, but it *takes time and requires long-term programming,* as basic programme management is more complex and time-consuming than in more stable contexts. Often the process followed is as important as the outcome, as this may represent an important shift in expectations, confidence, or participation – which will be essential to creating good governance in the long-term.

Looking to the Future

• **WWS country programmes** have now adapted work plans to take account of new learning and approaches explored at the workshop.

• **Learning from the workshop** will be actively disseminated throughout Oxfam and beyond via this communiqué and other learning products (available from November 2013).

• **The global team in Oxford** will continue to develop the WWS Community of Learning and Practice to enable those interested in governance and fragility programming to reflect, share learning, and continue to develop practice.

• **DFID are currently considering** a continuation of funding until 2016, which should be confirmed by December 2013.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT WWS CONTACT AMANDA BUTTINGER, GLOBAL PROGRAMME COORDINATOR, LOUIE FOOKS, LEARNING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, OR CHRISSY CAMPOS DE OLIVEIRA, WWS PROGRAMME ASSISTANT.

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