



Local Partnership for Rural Development in Albania 2012/13

The 'Local Partnership for Rural Development' project forms part of the Oxfam GB Raising her Voice (RHV) portfolio, which aims to support and strengthen women's roles in shaping policy and local governance. Within these broad goals, RHV accommodates regional and country-specific adaptations and operating through partners in three rural areas of Albania, the project was designed to contribute to local development and advocacy by providing negotiation structures with national institutions through the introduction of Local Action Groups (LAGs). As a semi-formal institution, LAG processes and structures could impact local governance and decision-making and secure the involvement of rural women in activities. The project aimed to achieve this through formal Memoranda of Cooperation between LAGs established by the project and Local Government (LOG) Departments. The project was designed to address key aspects of governance such as citizen participation accountability and partnership, in order to ensure local development and investment decisions benefited poor women and men. At the local level these aspects were addressed through:

a) The process of wider participation of local communities through equal participation of women and men and stakeholders in the decision making;

b) Promotion of active partnerships among private and public agencies through establishing structures like LAGs which provide a sustainable model to better link the government with rural communities.

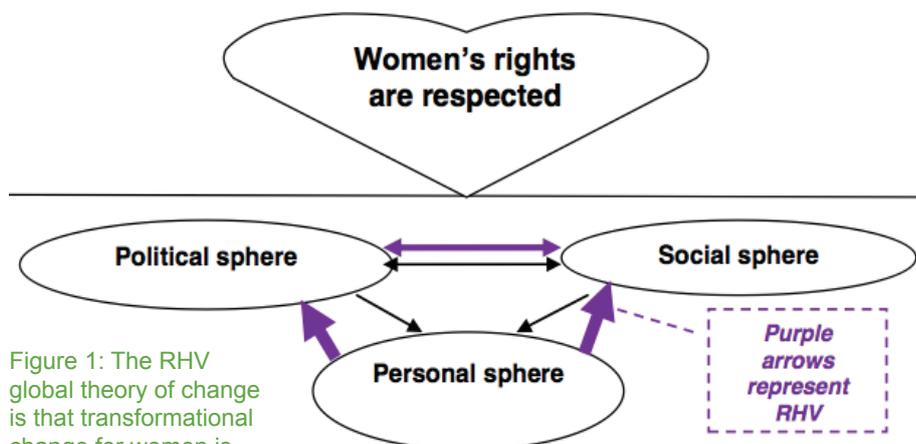


Figure 1: The RHV global theory of change is that transformational change for women is possible when there is positive change in three areas.

Photo credit: Jon Stewart/Oxfam

Evaluation method

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

Rating key: ● - Evidence supporting large impact; ● - Evidence supporting more modest impact; ● - Evidence of large impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - Evidence of modest impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - No evidence of impact

Results

At the local level, LAGs successfully enhanced existing local governance arrangements and gave the community, and specifically women's voices, a platform. The LAGs have gained good local support from a wide constituency and integrated successfully into existing governance structures. Project activities, such as training and capacity building, were instrumental in normalising the LAG-LOG partnerships, as well as bringing clear benefits to many stakeholders individually. This project has also seen LAGs bring real material gains to the community through planning and implementation of LAG designed projects. This points to the development of a beneficial LAG-LOG partnership in those areas and more widely demonstrates that LAGs may become an effective vehicle for community led decision-making in Albania. As a capacity building project, the intervention is considered to have fulfilled its role in terms of individual and institutional knowledge and mechanisms, but its influence on the wider policy landscape was severely diminished by the lack of enabling political developments. Stakeholders' main concerns centred on sustainability and financial support for LAGs in the short to medium term as a secure funding stream for LAGs has not materialised.

Outcome	Rating	Commentary
1. LOG decisions address LAG priorities and initiatives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 6 local government units provided co-financing for local investments of LAG. ii) LAGs were well equipped to participate in local decision making and to advocate for women's and community priorities. iii) The projects contribution to achieving influence on LOG decisions is considered high. iv) LAG- LOG cooperation is dependent on ability of LAGs to co-fund, which has not been secured.
2. LAGs have established a viable model for promotion of women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) LAGs have established a viable model for promotion of women in Albania. ii) Programme impact has been aided by the willingness of the community to embrace LAGs, legacy of Oxfam work with the community, the quality of the training, and seeing real material gains that have addressed community needs. Crucially women have seen that that they can influence policy making. iii) Impacts were attenuated by constraints on fulfilling the planned media and lobbying strategies, and the lack of progress in establishing LAGs in law and policy as a result of delays to Albania's EU candidate status.

Going forward

Oxfam GB's programme in Albania has phased out and transferred to QuoDev (Quality of Development), a national social enterprise working on development and poverty alleviation in the country. QuoDev were instrumental in supporting the effectiveness review process, and will apply the programme learning considerations as they continue to promote the LAGs model at national level and build the capacity of LAGs to seek funding. They also have a new project, 'Strengthening LAG gender capacity at the LAG Drini-Diber, LAG Adrijon-Vlore and LAG Maranaj- Vlore' under way. Finally, QuoDev have also supported the establishment of a webpage which provides a range of information on LAG activities and can be used as an innovative platform for LAGs to share their experiences and challenges with other stakeholders and partners.