

# PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS

'enhancing effectiveness through evidence-based learning'



## Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights: Sierra Leone 2012/13

This project aimed, firstly, to strengthen the capacity of community-based groups and national women's networks in raising awareness on women's property and literacy rights, and secondly, to advocate for greater participation of women in decision-making on property ownership and for a more enabling environment for women to exercise their property and literacy rights. The project was managed by a consortium of partners and implemented in four districts of Sierra Leone, of which Oxfam was responsible for implementation in Koinadugu and Kailahun Districts.

Under this project, 130 women leaders from communities in the two districts received training on women's rights issues, leadership skills and advocacy skills, and were then supported in carrying out awareness-raising and advocacy on women's property and literacy rights within their communities. They also received training on how to promote adult literacy, using the REFLECT framework. It is the impact of these community-level activities which is evaluated in this effectiveness review. The project also involved promoting women's property and literacy rights on local radio stations and providing capacity-building for district-level officials, as well as facilitation of national-level advocacy work: the impact of these activities is not evaluated in this review.

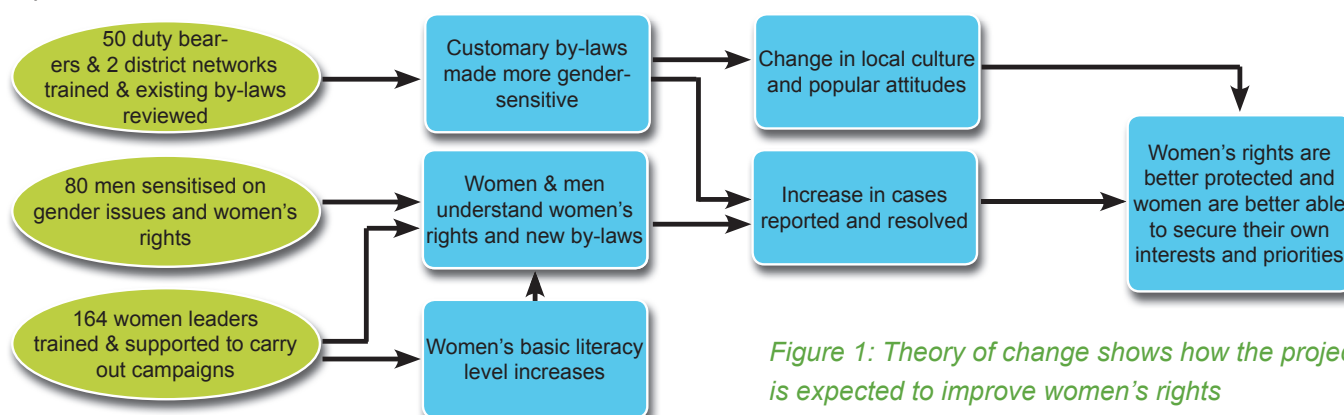


Figure 1: Theory of change shows how the project is expected to improve women's rights

## Evaluation method

The effectiveness review adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design, comparing a sample of women in the communities where the project activities had been implemented to women in nearby comparison communities. In total, 1,027 women were interviewed in Koinadugu and Kailahun districts. The survey questions allow the project's impact on various dimensions of women's empowerment to be evaluated. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching (PSM) and multivariable regression were used to reduce bias in making comparisons between the supported and comparison households.

In order to assess a multi-dimensional concept such as women's empowerment, Oxfam GB has adopted and adapted an approach which assesses several dimensions of women's empowerment, including women's ability to make and influence decisions, self perception, personal freedom, access to and control over resources and support from social networks.

**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

Outcome	Rating	Commentary
Overall measure of women's empowerment	●	Women in the project communities in Koinadugu District demonstrated empowerment in significantly more of the characteristics than did those in comparison communities. It is not clear that there is any such difference between women in the project and comparison communities in Kailahun District.
Dimension 1: Ability to make and influence decisions	●	There is little sign of a difference between women in the communities where the project was implemented and women in the comparison communities, in either district.
Dimension 2: Self perception	●	Evidence of impact on three of the eight measures - namely, attitude to women's political and education rights, and opinions on early marriage, although just in Koinadugu District.
Dimension 3: Personal freedom	●	There is evidence that the interventions had an effect on four of the six measures of personal freedom in Koinadugu district - literacy, personal autonomy, and attitude to violence against women. No evidence of change in Kailahun District.
Dimension 4: Access to and control over resources	●	No evidence of significant differences between the intervention and comparison women in measures connected to this dimension.
Dimension 5: Support from social networks	●	No evidence of significant differences between the intervention and comparison women in measures connected to this dimension.

## Results

The results provide evidence that the community-level activities of this project have resulted in significant positive effects on some characteristics of women's empowerment in Koinadugu District. In particular, women in communities where the project had been implemented expressed more positive attitudes towards women's political rights and gender equity in education and stronger opinions against early marriage and violence against women than did women in the comparison communities. Women in the project communities were also significantly more likely to describe themselves as able to read and write a simple letter, and expressed more positive statements about the amount of control they have over their work and their time.

Unexpectedly, fewer of the women in the project communities in Koinadugu said that they had ownership of or control over some land or property than did women in the comparison communities.

In Kailahun District, it is not clear that there is any difference in overall women's empowerment between the communities where the project was implemented and the comparison communities.

## Going forward

Implementation of the this project has now ended, but local partners are continuing to engage with the two district networks and to ensure that the training and campaign messages are consolidated. Informal monitoring of progress will continue, at least in Koinadugu District, where Oxfam is now implementing a rural water, sanitation and hygiene governance project. The partners also commissioned a 20-minute video to further promote messages on women's property and literacy rights.

*Photo credit: Ruby Wright*