

Oxfam Management response to the review of *Citizen Voice in Bolivia: Evaluation of women’s citizenship for change through intercultural forums in urban areas (Effectiveness Review Series 2013/14)*

Prepared by:	<i>Lourdes Montero</i>		
Contributors:	<i>René van der Poel</i>		
Signed off by:	<i>René van der Poel</i>		
Date:	<i>13 November 2014</i>	Country/Region/Campaign:	<i>Bolivia</i>

1. The context and background of the review

As part of Oxfam Great Britain’s (OGB) Global Performance Framework (GPF), samples of mature projects are randomly selected each year and their effectiveness rigorously assessed. The “Ciudadanía de las Mujeres para el Cambio desde Espacios Interculturales Urbanos en Bolivia” (Promoting women’s Citizenship for Change from urban intercultural spaces in Bolivia) project was selected for review in this way under the citizen voice thematic area.

The main goal of this project was to promote gender equality in the metropolitan region of Cochabamba through a number of actions aimed at strengthening the leadership and capacity of the women and institutions organised in the **Plataforma de Mujeres por la Ciudadanía y la Equidad** (henceforth the *Women’s Platform*) and coordinating their work with other related networks at regional and national level. Ultimately, it was expected that this would lead to greater participation and influence of women from Cochabamba in several political decision-making processes.

The review focuses specifically on investigating two concrete outcomes as identified by key stakeholders during preliminary conversations. The targeted outcomes were then validated in a group discussion during the field mission:

Outcome 1: The *Women’s Platform* of Cochabamba has contributed, with their committed and steadfast participation, to mainstreaming gender in the Departmental Statute of Autonomy.

Outcome 2: Proposals by the *Women’s Platform* incorporated into the political agenda of the municipality of Cercado.

2. Summary main findings and recommendations

Summary of main findings:

Outcome	Rating	Short Commentary
The Women's Platform of Cochabamba has contributed, with their committed and steadfast participation, to mainstreaming gender in the Departmental Statute of Autonomy	5	The organization's strategy to mainstream gender in the Autonomous Departmental Statute was found to be significantly effective. Evidence shows that the work of this women's platform was key to the achievement of this outcome.
Proposals by the Women's Platform incorporated into the political agenda of the municipality of Cercado.	4	At local level there is evidence that the organization has managed to include some of its traditional demands in local public policies. However, the contribution of the Project to achieving some of those political outcomes is not in all cases clear or conclusive.

Scoring key: Specific contribution of intervention

5	Outcome realised in full Evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution
4	Outcome realised in part & evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution Outcome realised in full & evidence that intervention made an important contribution
3	Outcome realised in part & evidence that intervention made an important contribution
2	Outcome realised in part & evidence that intervention made some contribution Outcome realised to a small degree & evidence that intervention made an important contribution
1	Outcome realised, to any degree, but no evidence that the intervention made any contribution

Recommendations:

- *Progress the introduction of gender equality provisions in the Departmental Statute of Autonomies: Devise clear advocacy strategy to lobby for development of other secondary legislation needed and for its implementation by identifying priority lines of work and starting to outline possible strategic roadmaps around them.*

The introduction of gender equality provisions in the Departmental Statute of Autonomies offer an excellent opportunity and a strong point of departure to work for translating those principles into real progress and improvements in the lives of the women of Cochabamba, but it is certainly a challenging task. This will require a clear advocacy strategy and constant lobbying by the *Women's Platform* in the development of other secondary legislation needed and for its implementation. Although the Statute text has still not been screened for its constitutionality and is therefore not definitive, it would be advisable to begin identifying priority lines of work soon and starting to outline possible strategies around them.

- *There is a significant outstanding need for technical training and capacity-building of both women in elected positions and women in management positions in order to translate women's presence in the public sphere into real substantive political participation – ensuring women in political institutions heard and more effective in decision making, and training in legislative and management issues that can guarantee demands for gender equity become implemented and materialised in specific projects and policies.*
- *Continue coordination with women in trade unions and social movements that have recognised political legitimacy, and coordination between women from urban and rural areas to advance towards a more plural and diverse women's movement.*
- *Work to improve the levels of awareness in men, and consider this more systematically in future strategies to build key alliances and increase sensitivity to important issues.*
- *Review the strategy in work with the multiple actors and political forces present in both Parliament and the town council to mitigate usual predominance of party discipline over other interests. One possible strategy suggested could be to begin working more directly with the structures of the different parties, and to seek strategic alliances at those levels of decision-making too.*
- *At local level data indicate that so far, the many achievements of the Women's Platform and IFFI in different decision making processes have not have not resulted in greater support or political institutional will for gender issues. This suggests the need to review the working strategy for the future and provides a good opportunity to make or revisit the current power analysis/map.*
- *Continue to implement lines of work to guarantee the Women's Platform's sustainability and independence for the future.*

3. Overall do the findings of the review concur with you own expectations or assessment of the project's effectiveness?

Yes! We definitely identified the project as being effective in reaching its expected outcomes. We acknowledge and agree that at the time of the mission the conclusion and recommendations made complete sense; we think that developments since puts some of the conclusions/recommendation in a somewhat different light as we will try to explain in other parts of this Management Response.

4. Did the review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project?

Yes. The review identified the strategy to mainstream gender in the Autonomous Departmental Statute be significantly effective.

5. Did the review identify areas that were particularly weak in the project?

No. The review did not identify areas that were particularly weak but did rightfully identify as a area for attention and improvement the need to define ex ante clear parameters that allow to attribute ex post the results and outcomes clearly to input and output of project activities; and of course to make sure that they are properly documented.

6. Summary of review quality assessment

We consider the quality of the assessment strong; the thorough desk study, followed by interviews with key stakeholders to identify specific review areas seems to be a good methodology to focus review time and resources which allows an “in-depth” look at certain aspects of the project; as these aspects are identified by various stakeholders and not exclusively by Oxfam nor the partner organization, they can be attributed a certain level of being a random sample of overall project quality and effectiveness.

The then followed methodology of interviews with key individuals and groups sessions and discussion in the field to validate findings that included a broad range of stakeholders and interest groups provides the necessary quality check on the review conclusions.

7. Main Oxfam follow-up actions

To identify those critical moments where Oxfam can provide specific added value. .

To support a broader national platform that includes not only the Women Platform but also other leading organisation on gender equality and women rights.

To use add an approach of loose, less institutionalised networks that allow to engage with social movements, unions and other expressions of civil society in addition to the more institutionalised NGOs on issues that motivate joint action.

8. Any conclusions/recommendations Oxfam does not agree with or will not act upon

We share the conclusions but as indicated we would rephrase the first recommendation:

RR:1 . We acknowledge that the introduction of gender equality provision in the Departmental Statue of Autonomies offer an excellent opportunity for furthering principles of women rights and gender equity in the lives of women in Cochabamba; however we also understand that this will be a process with a long term projection that needs to be lead by the women movement and specifically by the Women Platform; we suggest to include in the recommendation that it is the Platform that should take the lead on the follow up of this recommendation. On the other hand it is important to mention that as proof of their strength, leadership and maturity, the Women Platform (without economic support or other contributions from Oxfam) has already defined their advocacy and influencing strategy that includes specific priority action lines and defines clear responsibilities that have been distributed among the various stakeholders involved in the Platform.

**9. What learning from the review will you apply to relevant or new projects in the future?
How can the regional centre/Oxford support these plans?**

Based on the experience of the Platform in Cochabamba, Oxfam has escalated the experience to the national level and has supported a campaign to strengthen and build capacity in the candidates for the National Legislative Assembly on the contents of a national women agenda. This experience was supported and builds on the capacity of not only IFFI, but also of the Women Platform, IDEA International, Centro Gregoria Apaza, Centro Juana Azurduy and many others. As a result of this campaign, a favourable legislation was respected and adhered to which allowed that the newly elected National Assembly has 49% female representatives.

Based on its experience with the Women Platform, Oxfam has supported the establishment of a broader but also less institutionalised national network where agendas of the NGOs that specifically focus on issues of women rights and gender equality (Women Platform), join with unions and social movements like: the Union of Rural women “Bartolina Sisa”, the Association of Ecological Producers, the Federation of Domestic Workers, the Federation of Mining Cooperatives and others. Through this network these organizations and institutions of different characteristics can get together to work jointly on specific issues that emerge as opportunities in the context. A major achievement of this network approach was the elaboration of the articles of the “Integral Law of the Fight against Violence against Women”; this law had been proclaimed over one year ago but never entered into effect due to the lack of articles and resources; in addition the network achieved to convince the government to designate public resources for the implementation of the law.

Alliance building to further the women agenda and the agenda on gender equality and women rights include a series of strategies that need to adapt in line with the outcomes of thorough and permanent power and stakeholder analysis. We have learned of our experience with the Women Platform that we should not only focus on political parties or the political leadership. These are of course important as it comes to political capture and voting decisions in the legislative arenas; however, just as important (and sometimes even more important) is influencing of other stakeholders like the social movements, civil society organizations, church related institutions and movements, social and public media and – in some cases- spontaneous mobilisations of people in the street that react in a rather unorganised manner to certain issues of interest. Being able to respond quickly to these expressions of anger, fear, anxiety and others has proven to be key at the time of negotiations with the political powerbrokers.

10. Additional reflections

We consider that the context has experienced some significant changes in the past pre-electoral year in which the political representation of women has become one of the key issues in the political debate and has forced political parties to consider at all levels a major number of women candidates; as a result in the latest national elections the number of women representatives in both legislative bodies at national level has increased significantly and the Women Platform and within its scene IFFI have had a leading role. In this pre-electoral period the Women Platform with support from Oxfam managed to agree on a five point women agenda that was accepted by all women candidates. At the same time we need to be realistic and understand the limits of moving towards equal rights in a context of country characterised by political and also societal conservatism, especially in the field of sexual and reproductive rights; this is specifically so when we consider the issue of the de-penalization of abortion, an issue that creates dispute even on the inside of the women movement and the organizations that constitute the Women Platform

Although Oxfam in Bolivia has not identified the political participation of women as a standalone strategic theme in its new country strategic plan (2014-2019), in the underlying theory of change and its analysis about how change happens, Oxfam in Bolivia identifies women's empowerment and women's transformational leadership as key for change to happen. Therefore Oxfam in Bolivia puts active citizenship as its main approach at the heart of its strategy – through both organisational strengthening of key social movements and civil society organisations and strengthening of individual leadership within – as we consider that only through active citizenship we will be able to significantly contribute to the establishment of a more equal balance of power between citizens on the one hand and decision makers and government institutions at the other. The Women Platform has been identified as one of those key civil society organisations.