



Malawi

Accountability

2013/14

Building the resilience and enhancing the adaptive capacity of women and men to climate change and climate variability

This project has been implemented by Blantyre Synod Health and Development Commission (BSHDC) with the support of Oxfam, in ten communities in Blantyre and Balaka rural districts. The overall aim of the project is to enhance the adaptive capacity of women and men from Balaka and Blantyre districts to: increase resilience and adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate variability and change; reverse trends and factors that exacerbate vulnerability and reduce resilience to the impacts of climate variability and change; and improve community awareness and preparedness for future climate-change risks and impacts.

The project aims to achieve this by improving farmers' incomes and agricultural production to ensure reliable food supplies, by supporting them to grow more drought-resistant crops. It also promotes better land and water management, by developing irrigation systems and providing training in soil and water conservation techniques. By distributing livestock, diversifying crops, and establishing village savings and loan schemes, the project strengthens livelihoods and provides new ways to generate income. It also enables communities to identify climate risks earlier, prepare action plans, and understand and implement disaster risk-reduction measures. The project supports 100 villages in Balaka and Blantyre to improve food supplies and livelihood opportunities. It is also introducing innovative strategies to reduce the impact of extreme weather, including: training in irrigation techniques, soil and water conservation, and drought early warning.

Evaluation Design

Accountability Reviews seek evidence for perceptions of, and make judgments about, the degree to which a project meets Oxfam's standards for accountability. This is with regards to both Oxfam's mutual accountability in our partnerships, and Oxfam and partners' shared accountability to those it works on behalf of.

For details on evaluation design, see the 'How are effectiveness reviews carried out?' document, and the full report for how these designs were tailored by individual reviews.

Project date: April 2012 - March 2015

Evaluation: March 2014

Publication: November 2014

Results

	Oxfam's accountability to partners					Oxfam and partners' accountability to communities				
	Score	1	2	3	4	Score	1	2	3	4
Transparency	Oxfam			3		Oxfam/Partner			3	
	Partner			3		Community		2		
	Review team			2		Review team			3	
Feedback	Oxfam			3		Oxfam/Partner			3	
	Partner			3		Community			3	
	Review team			3		Review team			3	
Participation	Oxfam				4	Oxfam/Partner			3	
	Partner				3	Community			3	
	Review team				3	Review team			3	
Overall Accountability	Oxfam				3	Oxfam/Partner			3	
	Partner				3	Community			3	
	Review team				3	Review team			3	

Transparency to partners: Budgetary issues were reviewed thoroughly with partners' participation. However, some claimed project activities and finances allowed for their implementation had not been discussed with them before the project started. From the evaluators' view, the partner itself had not been sufficiently active to propose its ideas and suggestions in a timely and appropriate form. Thus, Oxfam should have given the possibility to all the partners to fully participate in the planning process.

Feedback to partners: *'[There was an] absence of feedback and complaints systems, but recognised the existence of an informal system of feedback through emails and when a need arises. In addition, funding agreements provide channels of complaint. Also, regardless of not having a formal system, feedback is provided. The best practice on feedback is to design and implement a system.'*

Transparency to communities: *'[The community had] limited knowledge of the project budget and how it is spent. Some communities know that they can demand this information, but they do not have the confidence to do so... [There is] limited openness of issues budget and sometimes limited information on the type of interventions to be implemented [by the partner]. Other than this, communities understand the objectives of the project and the project information is easily accessible.'*

Participation to partners: *'BSHDC and communities were consulted about the project, information is provided for project staff to use in making decisions, and vulnerable groups were identified. In addition, the partner and Oxfam operate joint proposal and budget development. The weakness on participation is because of unclear evidence whether women and men were consulted separately in the project development. ...Both BSHDC and Oxfam have a common agreement on how to implement the project. BSHDC also appreciated gender balance within the programme.'*

Key Commitments

The review has helped Oxfam in Malawi to revisit accountability plans beyond humanitarian programming. As a programme it has been noted that addressing accountability principles in humanitarian response has been done well, and very little on ongoing long term development programmes. The assessment also concurs with the internal audit carried out in August 2014 and identified areas where the programme needs to improve on accountability for both staff and partners. The main learning from this review is to treat both long term and humanitarian programmes as the same when it comes to accountability and application of accountability principles and standards.

The programme in Malawi will devise accountability strategies so staff, partners and communities are trained and aware of accountability principles, and how these are applied throughout the project/programme cycle. Clear strategies on stakeholder participation and transparency will be devised. These include community participation in project planning phases and decision making processes; communicating budgetary issues; and agreeing how partners amend project plans and budgets. Strategies on feedback and complaints mechanisms will also be devised. Communication strategies will be put in place to ensure two way feedback is provided at all levels. The project is due to close in March 2015, so prior to this an exit strategy will be devised and communicated to communities for sustainability of project work. The Oxfam Country Strategy in Malawi, starting in April 2015 will consider how to further improve accountability to partners and communities.

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