

Oxfam GB Project Effectiveness Review Management Response

Regional Director: *Olga Ghazaryan*

Country Director: *Grace Ommer*

Name of Project reviewed: *Syria Crisis in Lebanon*

Date: *21 March 2014*

Participants in the Management Response: *Chele DeGruccio, Nigel Timmins, Maria Ghazzaoui, Matt Rothero, Aleks Bursac*

Results:

Standard	Level of achievement	Rating
1. Rapid appraisal of facts within 24 hours of pre-defined trigger, plans in place and scale-up or start-up commenced within three days	Partially met	2/6
2. Coverage uses 10% of affected population as a planned figure with clear justification for final count.	Fully met	6/6
3. Technical aspects of programme measured against Sphere standards	Almost met	4/6
4. MEAL strategy and plan in place and being implemented using appropriate indicators	Half-met	1.5/3
5. Feedback/complaints system for affected population in place and functioning and documented evidence of information sharing, consultation and participation leading to a programme relevant to context and needs	Partially met	1/3
6. Partner relationships defined, capacity assessed and partners fully engaged in all stages of programme cycle	Almost met	2/3

7. Programme is considered a safe programme: action taken to avoid harm and programme considered conflict sensitive	Fully met	3/3
8. Programme (including advocacy) addresses gender equity and specific concerns and needs of women, girls, men and boys	Partially met	1/3
9. Programme (including advocacy) addresses specific concerns and needs of vulnerable groups	Almost met	2/3
10. Evidence that preparedness measures were in place and effectively actioned	Half-met	1.5/3
11. Programme has an advocacy/campaigns strategy and has incorporated advocacy into programme plans based on evidence from the field	Half-met	1.5/3
12. Evidence of appropriate staff capacity to ensure quality programming	Almost met	2/3
Final rating Equivalent to		27.5/45 61%

1. What follow-up to the review have you undertaken or planned (if any) e.g. discussion, analysis, workshop?
Findings of the review circulated widely amongst team for their information and forward planning. Steps taken to address several of the recommendations arising from the report, with key persons designated for actions in designated timeframes.
2. Overall, do the findings concur with your own expectations or assessment of the project/programme's effectiveness?
Yes
3. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project (ie large impact)?
Yes
4. Did the final results of the Effectiveness Review identify areas that were weak or very weak (ie no or very little impact)?
Yes

5. a) Is the reviewed project continuing? If yes, what actions are being taken in response to the weak areas identified in question 4?

Yes, the programme will continue operating in Lebanon for another three years per the Syria Crisis Response Strategy, and areas identified as weak will be actioned per the information provided in the recommendations section.

Section 3.2.3 Sphere Standards

Comment 1: Oxfam invested in Sphere training for some partners in October 2012 but the workshop has not been repeated since then with any of Oxfam's new partners. The partner staff interviewed for this evaluation cited water quantity indicators when asked about Sphere but were not aware of the wider relevance of Sphere. Only one partner interviewed possessed a Sphere manual and none knew that it was available on-line.

Recommendation 1: Ensure all partner staff involved in designing, delivering and monitoring the humanitarian assistance are aware of the humanitarian charter and relevant Sphere standards, indicators and guidance. This may be done in a workshop/meeting and reinforced through on-the-job support and coaching by Oxfam technical staff. Also ensure that partner organisations have at least one copy of the handbook in Arabic and know that it can also be downloaded from the Sphere website.

Management response: Agreed that this is a sound recommendation – given rapid scale up of activities and focus on implementation such capacity building initiatives have not been prioritized. Will look at when such a training can be facilitated for partners by end June 2014. Additionally, 50 copies of the Sphere handbook were ordered / delivered in January (in Arabic) and are being provided to partner staff.

Section 3.2.4 MEAL

Comment 1: To date there has been an over-reliance on structured questionnaires (for PDMs and baselines) carried out by MEAL staff.

Recommendation 1: Revise the MEAL plan and strategy to ensure it includes a variety of data collection methods and tools (such as PRA techniques: transect walks, mapping, observation etc.) and that these are used by all staff who regularly interact with beneficiaries.

Management response: Agreed and MEAL strategy was revised in November 2013 to reflect this recommendation.

Comment2: The results of all PDMs and focus groups are analysed by the MEAL team and provided to the technical staff of the relevant component, but it is not clear how these are used. No evidence was provided during this evaluation of technical team meetings or programme-wide discussions about monitoring results and how to apply the knowledge generated.

Recommendation 3: Establish ways of working (regular meetings, reviews, learning events for MEAL, technical and management staff) that ensure that monitoring processes and products are actively used in programme planning and implementation.

Management response: Agreed, and PDM findings are now being informed to adjust / adapt programmes during implementation as well as feed into new project design and proposal development.

Comment4: No evidence was provided during this evaluation of systematically reported site visits (through log books and other tools) although staff of JAK and SAWA confirmed that they visit all sites regularly.

Recommendation4: Establish and implement a simple system (weekly?) by which partners log activities and observations, and then report on these to Oxfam. Carry out and document spot-checks to monitor the cleanliness and functioning of toilets, for example, or the quality of water provided. These can be in the company of partner staff to help build trust and a culture of monitoring programme quality.

Management response: Given staff presence within partner offices this recommendation is being carried out on regular basis, with additional site visits by senior management. Will ensure proper documentation of such visits is actioned for future.

Comment5: The monitoring system of the protection component does not include information about the outcome of referrals. Also, as it is managed by the protection team rather than the MEAL staff it is rather disconnected from the main MEAL system.

Recommendation5: Revise the system and format to ensure that Oxfam can track the outcomes of referrals. While these are out of Oxfam's control, the organization should know if its referral work is effective from the beneficiary's point of view. Ensure mechanisms to share findings across all teams (without compromising confidentiality).

Management response: The protection team regularly follows up on status of referrals, though this action has been more recently put in practice given lack of staff recruited at time of this report. With the now fully staffed protection teams operational this has become more consistent practice.

Section 3.2.5 Accountability

Comment 1. The complaints hotline does not appear to be fulfilling its purpose. To date only two complaints have been received, despite distribution of leaflets explaining how and why to use it.

Recommendation 2: Have a 'back to basics' discussion on accountability among management, technical and MEAL staff on what Oxfam needs to do and know, and where the current weaknesses are. Explore with partners beneficiaries why the hotline is not being used (possibly through FGDs) and, depending on the results, make changes to it or consider alternatives. Remember that what works for one programme and circumstances may not work for another.

Management response: Circumstances beyond Oxfam's control have delayed the establishment of a toll free hotline for MEAL and is still pending. Recent updates from UNHCR indicate over 130 agency hotlines have been reported with slim minority actually operational. There is a national initiative to establish one hotline for all agencies managed by UNHCR for onward referrals to specific agencies in order to minimize confusion amongst the refugee population about who to call for what. In the meantime, the MEAL Officer has attended and will be briefing the rest of the humanitarian team on an ICVA facilitated workshop on Accountability, and the team is currently exploring alternate methods for complaints / feedback systems including potentially setting up complaints boxes at operational sites.

Comment 2. Some partners do not seem to understand what accountability means to Oxfam and seem to associate it only with a complaints hotline. The partners interviewed for this evaluation were not aware of either the Oxfam Code of Conduct or HAP standards. Although partner staff confirmed to Oxfam during this evaluation that complaints are given spontaneously during continuous interaction with beneficiaries, they do not systematically report these to Oxfam or meet Oxfam's expectations for feeding back to the complainant.

Recommendation 3. Dedicate time with partners to discuss accountability and Oxfam's commitments in this regard. Include accountability in the issues on which partners report regularly and systematically.

Management response: Agreed and this was initiated in a MEAL workshop held November 2013. Additional awareness raising on accountability continue to take place with partners during programme operations including in EFSL trainings, protection monitoring and during management meetings/visits.

Section 3.2.6 Partnership

Comment 1: It appears that the planned training in humanitarian principles has not place, which explains some of the gaps described above on Sphere and accountability.

Recommendation 1: As a matter of urgency, set aside time (either through a workshop or a less formal meeting) with each partner to explain the principles of humanitarian action and Oxfam's commitments to these. Analyse together how this influences the actions of each organization and encourage questions. Remember that these partnerships have been formed 'in a hurry' and that continuous capacity-building and trust-building are required.

Management response: Agreed, and this is a continual process.

3.2.8 Gender

Comment 1: A gender strategy has not yet been developed.

Recommendation 1: Prioritise this within the urgent tasks of the incoming gender advisor. It may be useful to hold a one-day workshop with partners, staff and ABAAD (given their specialist knowledge) to produce a strategy in a rich and participatory manner.

Management response: Agreed, and this was planned to be undertaken with the arrival of a regional gender advisor (as mentioned in above comments). Support in the interim is being offered by the Voice and Accountability project / gender hub.

3.2.9 Vulnerability

Comment 1: Some camps and sites where refugees are living seem more vulnerable than others to public health risks. It did not appear, however, that the planning for the new WASH programme was giving sufficient weight to vulnerability as a key criterion for scheduling installation of WASH facilities.

Recommendation 2: Discuss with partners the need to prioritise the most vulnerable, not what is logistically easier or more cost-effective.

Management response: do not agree with the above comment as Oxfam has targeted the most vulnerable communities in coordination with the wider WASH sector and UNHCR coordination mechanisms, hence our work in ITS sites and neglected geographic areas.

3.2.11 Advocacy and campaigning

Comment 1: It appears that many programme staff are not aware of the plans and achievements of the advocacy and campaigns component of the response.

Recommendation 1: Establish a system whereby all staff have access to information about current advocacy plans and the outcomes of previous actions. This could be a source of motivation and satisfaction for many operational staff, and it gives an opportunity for them to input ideas for future actions.

Management response: Agreed and with the arrival of new Campaigns, Advocacy and Policy advisors it has been agreed more information sharing and closer collaboration will be prioritized going forward, with regular updates to the programme team and vice versa to inform each others' work.

3.2.12 Staff capacity

Comment 1: There appears to be a low level of awareness of Oxfam's Code of Conduct among new national and international staff.

Recommendation 1: As a matter of urgency, communicate with all staff why such a Code is needed, ensure that they are alert to any possible actions (in their daily work) that go against it, and that they know the procedures for reporting any such actions.

Management response: Partially agree. This remains an on going area for continued attention, however, not only are staff required to sign the Code of Conduct with their contracts (and partners the non staff CoC) a session on this is provided during staff orientation. Additionally, an all staff team meeting was held in November 2013 where all staff were required to read aloud the CoC and Secretary General's bulletin on PSEA to ensure awareness and understanding of staff commitment to these principals.

3.2.13 Resilience

Comment 1: This evaluation was designed to exclude the standard on resilience because the current description of the requirements no longer 'matches' Oxfam's definition of resilience and needs to be updated.

Recommendation 1: Engage the Resilience Team in OH in a discussion about how the Lebanon programme could contribute to building resilience among refugees and host communities. This could result in a valuable case study on resilience to conflict, which is an area that Oxfam is currently seeking to understand better and on which to develop programming guidance.

Management response: Agreed and this can be actioned in the second quarter of 2014.

5. b) What actions are you planning in response to the Programme Learning Considerations?

As above

6. If the project/humanitarian response is ending or has already ended, what learning from the review will you apply to relevant new projects in the future? How can the Regional Centre and Oxford support these plans?

Not applicable