

**Oxfam Management response to the review of Women's Empowerment in Indonesia:**  
*Evaluation of Papua women's empowerment (Effectiveness Review Series 2013/14)*

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**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 Papuan Women's Empowerment project was selected for review in this way under the Women's Empowerment thematic area.

The overall objective of the project subject to evaluation was to improve women's awareness and participation in the decision-making and implementation of a large-scale national community-driven development (CDD) programme called PNPM MANDIRI/RESPEK. This was to be achieved by a combination of a grant programme – providing grants to women groups to organise women's capacity building activities (e.g. trainings on business economic planning, proposal writing, financial record keeping, vocational skills, gender issues, etc.) and a training of 50 local facilitators ('cadre members') whose mandate was to provide gender trainings to beneficiary women groups and local government officials. In addition to this the project provided support to women groups in designing the project proposals and in running the group activities. This project was funded by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF), supervised by the World Bank and implemented by Oxfam in six districts in Papua Province and four districts in West Papua Province, between May 2009 and April 2013.

**Evaluation design**

This Effectiveness Review used a quasi-experimental evaluation design to assess the impact of the project activities approximately four years after the implementation started. It involved carrying out a household survey of a random sample of 175 members in 23 PAWE beneficiary women groups. These groups were randomly selected from among all the 39 groups supported by Oxfam in Jayapura, Merauke and Biak-Numfor district. In addition, a random sample of 271 women from 23 women groups in neighbouring villages were interviewed and included in the study to function as a comparison group.

At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching was used to control for demographic and baseline differences between the households survey in project and comparison areas, to provide additional confidence when making estimates of the project's impact.

## 2. Summary main findings and recommendations

Outcome	Impact	Comments
Awareness of and participation in PNPB MANDIRI/RESPEK	YES	Women participating into the project are more aware of the PNPB Mandiri/RESPEK project. They are more likely to have applied to PNPB Mandiri/RESPEK funding and participated in village meetings where activities of PNPB Mandiri/RESPEK were discussed.
Vocational and entrepreneurial skills	YES	Women participating into the project are more likely to be participating in group activities and they feel more confidence about their group's skills activities.
Ability to make decisions and influence	NO	There is some evidence suggesting that intervention women are less likely to be involved in household decision making on expenditure and management.
Self-perception	To some extent	There is some evidence suggesting that women that participated into the project present higher measure of self-confidence and ability to overcome difficulties. There are no evidence suggesting changes in attitudes toward women's rights.
Personal Freedom	NO	Beneficiary women appear to be more acceptable towards domestic violence than comparison women, and scored lower on the freedom of movement indicator
Access to and control over resources	NO	There is no evidence suggesting higher independent income or higher ownership of strategic assets.
Support from social networks	To some extent	Women participating into the project present higher group enrolment than women in the comparison group.

### Recommendations

While the overall findings of the review are positive and in line with previous evaluations, there are additional lessons emerging from the results that can be applied to other projects of this type in Indonesia and elsewhere. The Indonesian country team and the project team in particular are encouraged to consider the following:

- **Future project design should define in advance how success looks, defining a clear definition on the concept of women's empowerment and which indicators to use for measuring it.**

This can be achieved through a gender power analysis, and defining a theory of change providing sensible and achievable goals, as well as explicit assumptions, risks and alternative strategies. During the project design the country team is encouraged to agree among all the stakeholders involved in the project on what success looks like, and how these indicators should be measured. Moreover it should define how change should take place, the appropriate methodology and identifying logistical constraints and geographical limitation. Particularly in context of complex projects with a multitude of actors, assumptions and risks should be made explicit in order to inform project learning for necessary changes in project activities.

- **Carefully consider the assumptions under which the project is going to be designed.**

Ideally the assumptions under which the project is designed should be grounded in research and evidence from previous projects, or a proper baseline should have been conducted of beneficiary groups and implementing capacity of the partners in the project. This evaluation is suggesting that some assumptions under which the project was designed did not reflect in the project's findings. For example, one of the assumptions of the project suggested that increasing knowledge and awareness in gender targeting women alone is an effective way to

promote gender equality. However, while there is evidence suggesting that the project increased awareness of the PNPM Mandiri project, the evaluation did not find evidence suggesting increase in: decision making within the household; changes in attitudes toward women's right; freedom of movements, acceptability of domestic violence; access to independent income or ownership of strategic assets. The project team is encouraged to explore the reasons behind the mismatch between assumptions and evidence found with the study.

- **Consider investigating the impact and mechanisms of change in future projects.**

The project employed a variety of interventions such as trainings, grand distribution, and awareness raising interventions. Understanding the relationships between the various project activities is important in being able to target resources in future interventions. To that end, consideration should be given in future similar projects to putting in place evaluation systems that will be able to differentiate the effects of different interventions, to allow the optimal combination of interventions to be established.

Programme and project staff is encouraged to consider how to integrate evidence and findings coming from rigorous impact evaluation with campaigns and advocacy interventions in order to scale up the impact of the project.

**Management response:**

1. The design of a project is crucial for its success, and this needs to include a proper analysis of the context and the institutional capacity to implement. The ambition level should be adjusted to that.
2. In the future we will add/consider the empowerment indicators in designing similar projects and use it for consistent monitoring and adjustment of approaches if they are not successful.
  2. The assumption used in this project, that training in Gender for women will have an impact to the changes in self-perception is proven to be untrue. For example, what do we do with women if we want to change their self-perception? One training is not enough, so the approach should be different, we need women support groups, support in the village, to include men in the project that should be subsequently well-planned if we want to create the intended change.
3. Impact can't be achieved if the entire set up is messy, and these are all the hampering factors. E.g. for all activity we needed to get an approval from Washington (refer to World Bank procedures) what caused severe delays in activities
4. In Papua women movement is rather strong, so the usage of selection of women in this program as well as the selection of sampling

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

Yes. We had 2 other evaluations being conducted by World Bank (donor) and an independent evaluator (The Indonesian Institute) and the results remain consistent with the result of this Effectiveness Review.

However, we discussed and identified that technicalities influenced the impact significantly, particularly in PAWE project case, such as project management, context, and the quality of the implementers/project managers. Huge challenges in Papua context should be taken into consideration- hence the assumptions in the theory of change are critical.

There are notes on the methodology of the Effectiveness Review. We disagree with the selection of random interviewers in the context of Papua and the lack of control over their work. As well as this, we found the questionnaires/the tool being used were ridiculously long (17 pages of questions - not per questionnaire, per person). We do not trust the outcome fully with 17 pages of questions for 446 women being questioned for hours<sup>1</sup>. All questions were actually asked by local students and we believe they might have had cultural difficulties asking so many questions in the personal arena especially questions around violence, relation between husband and wife and on access and control over resources.

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

Yes. The review similar to the other evaluations being previously conducted- highlighted the indication of increased participation, capabilities on practical/vocational skills both at individual and group levels as well as increased confidence level about their group' skills activities. While the World Bank team found no evidence of increased awareness and the likelihood to apply to PNPM Mandiri/RESPEK funding- this review showed the contrary, women participating into the project are more aware of the PNPM Mandiri/RESPEK project. They are more likely to have applied to PNPM Mandiri/RESPEK funding and participated in village meetings where activities of PNPM Mandiri/RESPEK were discussed.

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

Yes. We acknowledged that this project was a donor driven project, meaning they developed the proposal and without properly consulting Oxfam and the partner in Papua in the process. This showed a gap even before the starting of a project and provided a large space for misinterpretation of the project design.

What we highlighted here is the fact that the findings suggests that there is to some extent or no evidence of changing power relations between men and women, particularly at household level. This might probably not have been the aim of the project as the project was focussed on women participating in PNPM/Mandiri. For Oxfam though this is a fundamental area to address if we were to create lasting changes in the lives of women.

Involvement in household decision, acceptance/rejection towards domestic violence as well as higher ownership of strategic assets is the outcome of changing power relations and should be addressed during the implementation of the project and included in the interventions in the work with beneficiaries. This was however not the case and it happened only to little or no extent.

<sup>1</sup> NOTE from the evaluation team: the questionnaire took under an hour to administer

**6. Summary of review quality assessment**

There are notes in the methodology of the ER. We disagree with the high number of sampling selection (over 300) and the questionnaires/the tool being used as too exhaustive (more than 17 pages) per questionnaire per person, particularly in Papuan context. We assumed, this might hampered to certain extent the quality of findings- since the hired Lead Evaluator had been hired also as evaluator at Mid-Term Evaluation and Baseline (ex ante) Evaluation. Important as well, to consider the context, limited timeframe and budget that ER had for conducting review in a costly and risky area such as Papua.

A rather simplified version of impact evaluation with a small group of well trained interviewers that will be controlled might be an alternative option to consider.

**7. Main Oxfam follow-up actions**

- **Future project design should define in advance how success looks, defining a clear definition on the concept of women's empowerment and which indicators to use for measuring it.**  
Increase capacity to understand project cycle and to develop a sound theory of change and methodology to implement. In the case such as in Papua were partners capacity is low partners should be supported and trained on gender as well and budget should be included in the project design. At the organizational level we propose, to include women empowerment indicators in any women empowerment initiative.
- **Carefully consider the assumptions under which the project is going to be designed**  
Pre condition for success; a good baseline and an capacity assessment of partners; have knowledgeable team in place who understand the context; include reflection and learning mechanisms in the process, and set milestones need to always be checked
- **Consider investigating the impact and mechanisms of change in future projects.**  
To have an impact monitoring mechanisms as well as a mechanism to have regular reflections taking into account its findings (particularly as part of project MEL System). Based on findings adjust projects design during the project and inform and negotiate conditions with the donor.

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

None.

**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**

All the recommendations please refer to the action plan. We have adequate number of resources in the country to support this plan.

**10. Additional reflections**

The ER is a good framework- to define empowerment and indicators for any women empowerment initiatives to be used, but methodology should be adjusted to the context.

This is a governance project and the impact is measured at the beneficiary's level, but the impact in the government's official's level might create a ripple effect (or impact) at the beneficiaries level.