



One of Within and Without the State's partner organizations: a women's cooperative group from Rumbek, who grow vegetables and meet to discuss community issues. Photot: Richard Chilvers/Oxfam

INCLUSIVE PARTNER SELECTION

The process of selecting partners in a participatory way in South Sudan

Within and Without the State in South Sudan chose deliberately to include a wide range of people and groups in the process of selecting its partners, so that civil society groups would remain engaged with the programme even if they were not selected as implementing partners.

Within and Without the State is a five-year global initiative (2011–2016) funded by DFIDs Conflict, Humanitarian and Security programme. This has enabled Oxfam to pilot a variety of approaches to working with civil society to promote more accountable governance in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Oxfam is committed to go beyond humanitarian service delivery to work on strengthening governance in order to tackle the underlying causes of fragility. Outside agencies may have technical quick fixes, but active and organized citizens are the ones who must oversee the long-term changes which will transform society. Gathering evidence of how to make this transformation happen so lessons are captured and learned is a key aspect of WWS.

1 INTRODUCTION

Finding suitable partners to implement a governance programme in South Sudan was a real challenge. Finding people in a new country who had the capacity to take on such a project was something Oxfam grappled with. As well as the usual requirements for partners, Oxfam also wanted to be deliberately inclusive in the way it decided who would receive funding and training from Oxfam as partners. The aim of this was to ensure that the partners with the best fit to Oxfam's Within and Without the State (WWS) programme and the community's goals would be selected, but also that those who were not selected would still be supportive of the programme's goals and would be actively participating in developing civil society.

2 PREPARING FOR THE PROCESS

Round table meetings attended by 13 different civil society organizations (CSOs) were regularly held in Juba. Those CSOs which consistently attended these meetings (held to discuss issues facing CSOs in South Sudan) were deemed eligible to participate in the mapping and selection process to identify CSOs which could potentially partner with Oxfam.

3 TIME-SPAN

The whole process took about three months from start to completion.

4 GROUPS INVOLVED

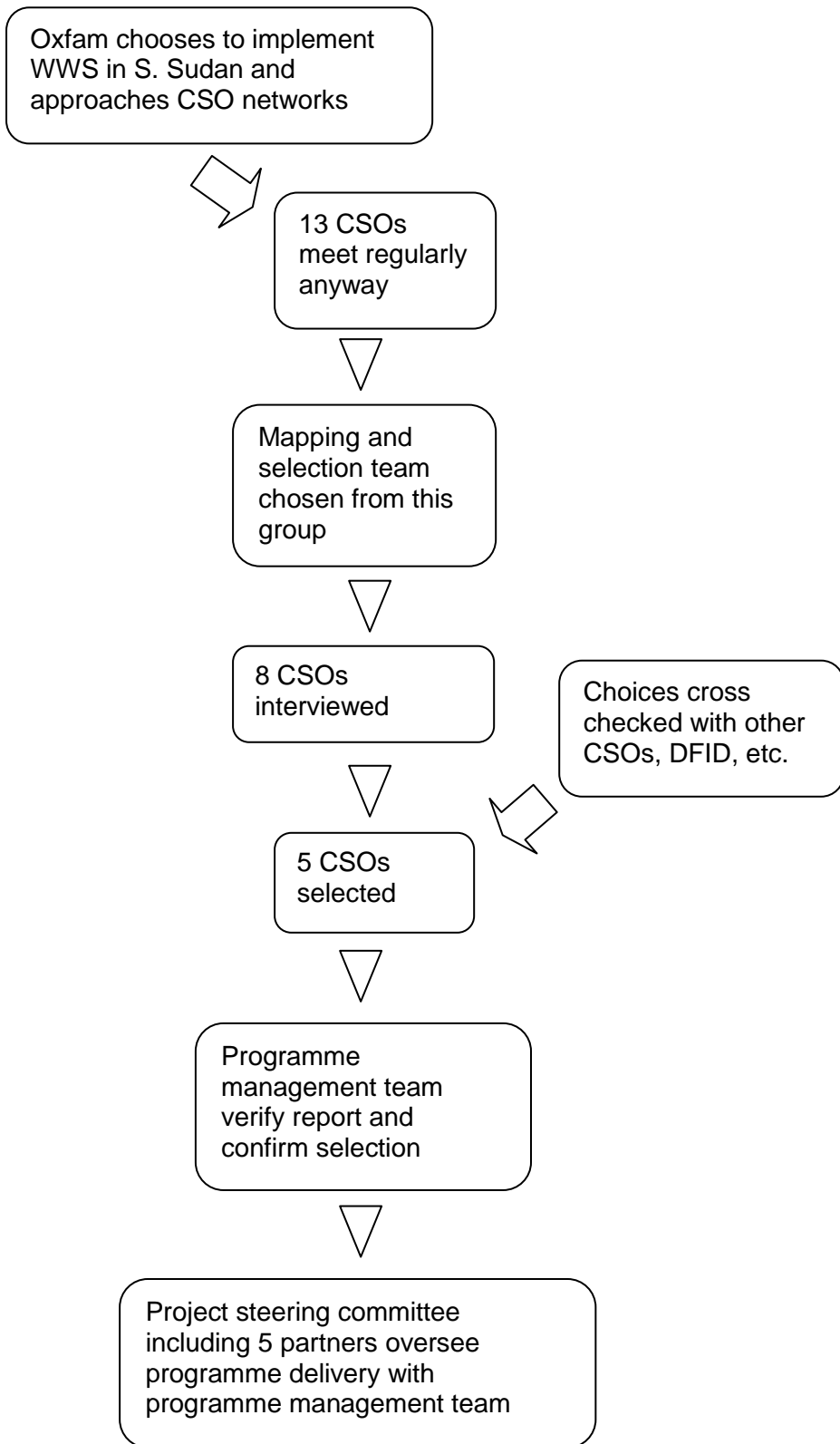
Group	
<i>Mapping and selection team</i>	CSOs nominated by the Juba round table with Oxfam staff
<i>Project steering committee</i>	5 selected partners and Oxfam staff
<i>Programme management team</i>	Oxfam staff who report to the project steering committee

AREAS OF OPERATION

Figure 1: WWS works in Lakes State and Central Equatoria State, South Sudan (areas highlighted in orange)



PROCESS DIAGRAM



5 NOMINATING THE MAPPING AND SELECTION TEAM

The mapping and selection team was nominated from among the 13 CSOs at the round table meetings. They were chosen by the other CSOs and supported by Oxfam staff. Oxfam then convened meetings to share the draft selection criteria that were developed to gather comments and feedback.

In order to decide which CSOs were best suited to work on the project, Oxfam's minimum requirements (governance, finance, human resources, programme management) were selected, with the addition of advocacy and funding. These were ranked from 1 to 5, with space for additional comments.

The mapping and selection team set out to interview 13 CSOs in Juba and Rumbek; however in the end, only eight were able to participate; six in Juba and two in Rumbek. The mapping and selection team then chose five potential partners to implement the civil society governance programme in South Sudan.

6 WIDER CONSULTATIONS

To validate the data gathered during the mapping, assessment and selection exercise, further meetings were held with youth and women's groups and relevant government institutions including the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and representatives of the counties involved. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in Juba was also consulted to triangulate participants' impressions of their service quality, values and commitment. Further CSOs in Juba and Lakes State were consulted, along with other INGOs such as Justice Africa, Pact Sudan and the National Civil Society Forum. These meetings were convened by the project steering committee.

7 AT THE END OF THE PROCESS

After the completion of the assessment, a report was prepared and presented to the programme management team. When the report was signed off, a copy was circulated to the rest of the round table members.

The process showed respect for the partners, both actual and potential. It demonstrated transparency and that consultation and accountability is both possible and important.

8 THE SELECTED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

It was decided by the mapping and selection team in consultation with Oxfam that the selected organizations would:

- facilitate direct dialogue between the citizen and the state to result in concrete changes;
- participate as an equal partner with Oxfam to develop and implement the project in an emergent process that recognizes the different directions in which projects may evolve.

As a result of decades of conflict, it was recognized that civil society would need proportionately more support. It was also recognized that organizations outside Juba would need greater capacity development compared with those from the capital.

9 THE PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

The project steering committee, constituted after the partners were selected, was made up of Oxfam representatives (from Oxfam GB, Oxfam Intermón and Oxfam Novib) and the five selected partners who reviewed progress and took decisions that the programme management team needed support on. Although the process of partner selection was initially meant to be facilitated by an external consultant, the programme management team advised that this could be internally led. The programme management team held meetings in Juba and also travelled to Lakes State to assess the selected potential partners there.

10 CHALLENGES

- Oxfam in South Sudan is heavily humanitarian-focused, so finding time for management to support the processes was challenging.
- The planned WWS intervention was new and outside the domain of the programme profile.
- Some CSOs were not entirely certain of the scope of the project and how they would actually implement it, because it did not have activities such as the distribution of food, seeds, tools, drilling water points, etc. that organizations are accustomed to in South Sudan.
- Despite having identified organizational capacity gaps, funding was not available to work on all the areas which needed improvement.

11 OUTCOME

The outcome of this process was to recommend five organizations as partners. A gender programme was set up to establish linkages with selected CSOs to mainstream gender in these organizations' interventions. The selection process provided unique perspectives that had not been picked up at the project plan stage. For example, the selection process advised that a civil society alliance that was meant to be a partner should not be engaged. This was based on the analysis that the alliance was politically aligned to the ruling party.

Once partners were selected, they were included on the project steering committee which held monthly meetings. This meant that the project was kept on track because the programme management team had to report back regularly. Sometimes however, the information was not adequately shared by the partner representatives, and not all Oxfam affiliates attended the meetings. Recommendations were made for areas of improvement.

The CSOs, including those not selected to implement the programme, continued to work together, for example in joint action around the controversial NGO Bill.

Rama Anthony, WWS's former programme manager in South Sudan, stated: 'In the past Oxfam simply picked partners because they happened to be present in the programme locations without a detailed process. The selection had no consultations and there was little room for Oxfam to be challenged. Throughout the selection process, it became apparent that Oxfam respected the partners and did not act like other INGOs did. This was considered unique because the selection process emphasised the institutional capacity development of the partners much more than delivery of activities, although this was important too. But many INGOs would only be interested in the implementation of activities.'

APPENDIX

Selection criteria	
Governance	<p>Does the organization have a strategic plan?</p> <p>Does the organization have a presence in all 10 states of South Sudan?</p> <p>Does the organization have women staff in board, management and support positions, and to what ratio?</p> <p>Does the organization have a dispute resolution process?</p> <p>Which NGO forums or alliances does the organization belong to?</p> <p>Does the organization have a website?</p> <p>What is the pay scale, and is there a pension scheme?</p>
Finance	<p>Does the CSO have a bank account with multiple signatories?</p> <p>Does the CSO have a financial system for tracking income and expenditure?</p> <p>Does the CSO set an annual budget?</p> <p>Does the CSO have procedures for expenditure and procurement approval?</p> <p>Does the CSO have financial reserves?</p>
Human resources	<p>Is the workforce mixed, and is there at least a 25% female to male ratio?</p> <p>Programme management</p> <p>How long has the CSO existed?</p> <p>Why and how was it established?</p> <p>Does the CSO have experience in assessments as well as monitoring and evaluation?</p>
Advocacy	<p>Does the CSO have an advocacy focus, and in which areas?</p> <p>Is the advocacy joined up and at both local and national levels?</p> <p>Does the CSO have any experience of advocating with government institutions?</p>
Funding	<p>How is the CSO funded? Who are its donors?</p> <p>Has the CSO applied for funding from the GoSS?</p> <p>Are funding streams sustainable and inclusive of core support, including capacity building and organizational development?</p>

It was decided that detailed information on partners' capacity gaps would be identified and this would be the basis for planning and designing the response of the project.

Partners selected for WWS I

Agency for Independent Media

Community Empowerment for Progress Organization

South Sudan Domestic Election Monitoring and Observation Programme

Sudanese Disabled Rehabilitation and Development Agency

African Partnership for Rehabilitation and Development

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This case study was written by Richard Chilvers and Rama Anthony. It is part of a series of papers and reports written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

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