

# EVALUATION OF THE 'MY RIGHTS MY VOICE' PROGRAMME

## SYNTHESIS REPORT

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Programme/project title/affiliate identification code	My Rights, My Voice
Geographical coverage	Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania, Vietnam, global layer
Programme/project lifespan	15 December 2011 – March 2016 (country level) 15 December 2011 – August 2016 (global level)
Programme/project budget	US\$11,368,677 (year 1 to year 3) + US\$2,882,910 (year 4 extension), including 10% co-funding from Oxfam
Funding agency	Sida (Swedish International Development Agency)
Main implementing agency	Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib
Period of implementation of the evaluation	November 2015 – March 2016
Organisation in charge of the evaluation	South Research, Belgium

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Afghanistan
CS(O)	Civil Society (Organisation)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCT	Global Coordination Team
GE	Georgia
LSBE	Life Skills Based Education
MA	Mali
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MRMV	My Rights, My Voice (programme)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NE	Nepal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Niger
PA	Pakistan
PC	Programme Coordinator
SC	Steering Committee
SGR	Strategic Gender Review
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
TA	Tanzania
TOC	Theory of Change
VI	Vietnam
YC	Youth Club
YAB	Youth Advisory Board
YAC	(Oxfam) Youth as Active Citizens

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background, evaluation objectives and methodology

'My Rights, My Voice' (MRMV) is a multi-country programme implemented by Oxfam GB, Oxfam Novib, Oxfam Quebec and their partners with the aim of engaging marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. The programme has been implemented in eight countries: Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania and Vietnam. The programme started in 2012 and was initially planned to end after three years; it was, however, extended by 15 months in six of the eight initial countries<sup>1</sup> and ended in March 2016, while some 'global layer' activities continued till August 2016. Sida funded the programme, including its extension phase, for a total budget of US\$14,251,587, including a 10% contribution from Oxfam.

The *overall goal* of MRMV was to achieve sustainable changes in policies, practices and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women, and to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Central to this overall goal were *four key programme outcomes* that were dependent upon one another and included in all country programmes. They are related to: (1) increasing young people's awareness of – and strengthening their voice in relation to – their health and education rights, needs and aspirations; (2) strengthening young people's and their allies' individual and collective skills, knowledge, confidence and resources to both organise and claim their rights in decision-making spaces; (3) ensuring that duty-bearers and those with influence engage directly with marginalised young people to improve access to and the quality of health and education; and (4) strengthening the capacity of Oxfam, partners and others to work on youth agency in country programmes, and the facilitation by Oxfam's global campaigning force of youth claiming and accessing better health and education. To support these objectives, the programme also had a global-level component to drive and support learning and innovation, to communicate good practice, and to influence and partner with global actors to deliver better outcomes.

The *main aim of this evaluation* was to systematically analyse the actual outcomes of the programme and its underlying working mechanisms against the proposed outcomes and MRMV's Theory of Change. An extensive analysis of the programme documents, interviews with key resource persons dealing with the global-level component of the programme, and field research in four countries have been the main components of the evaluation approach. For various reasons beyond the influence of the evaluation team and the client, the core evaluation team was only able to visit two countries (Vietnam and Mali). In two other countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan), a senior national evaluator conducted the fieldwork, with coaching from a distance by the core evaluation team. In line with the approach and philosophy of the programme, youth familiar with the programme were included in the field research as peer evaluators in three countries.

Several constraints challenged the smooth implementation of the evaluation process and the validity of its findings. These included: the low level of immersion of the core evaluation team in the complex realities of the country programmes; the shortage (in implementation reports) of outcome-related information; the complexity of the programme, with important changes occurring during implementation, which proved difficult to address comprehensively within the time and resources

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<sup>1</sup> Activities in Tanzania and Georgia ended after year 3.

available for the evaluation; and severe restrictions to information-gathering activities in Afghanistan and (partially) in Vietnam.

## Key findings

### Relevance and appropriateness

MRMV is a highly relevant programme. High quality preparation ensured that the MRMV aims, its choice of education and health as key areas of intervention, its design and approach were largely adequate in view of the specific needs of young (marginalised) people and communities. Some specific challenges of working with youth (high rotation among youth leadership, specific characteristics and needs of youth organisations) were explicitly addressed in the preparation phase. As such, the global- and country-level proposals provided a solid basis for programme implementation.

However, after four years of programme work, it is apparent that putting into practice the key principles of working *by and with youth* has been challenging. In addition, the ambition to work with marginalised youth was not clearly articulated, leaving it to the country programmes to find solutions – some more successfully than others. Furthermore, the complex interplay of empowering youth while at the same time striving towards inclusion of duty-bearers and care-takers in the programme strategy and approach has been overlooked to some extent. To the credit of the programme, the evaluation found that most countries have made substantial progress in dealing with these challenges.

### Key achievements of the programme

In most countries, the programme had to invest in substantial initial efforts to overcome barriers in order to work directly with youth and achieve their effective participation, in particular that of girls. As such, the recognition of youth (boys and girls) as actors in their own right, with specific rights, needs, aspirations but also capabilities, is considered the programme's first important achievement.

Most country programmes, quite logically, initially focused on developing knowledge, awareness and capacity of youth to articulate their needs and aspirations, along with raising awareness of the principles of a rights-based approach. Activities of this nature continued to be important throughout the programme cycle, which explains why a significant number of youth and allies have been reached (estimated at 522,000 in total, of which 80% were young people, with representation of women and girls reaching 59% in 2015), be it with different levels of intensity. The increase in awareness and capacity has in most countries prepared the way for the development of collective skills and resources of youth, whereby the promotion and consolidation of strong leadership (among boys and girls) and the promotion of independent youth organisations has been a key strategy. By the end of the programme, an estimated 699 children and youth groups had been established, of which 71 groups were set up in 2015. In total, 574 children and youth groups actively pursued their right to health and/or education in 2015. In these processes, the role of programme partners (Oxfam offices and programme NGOs) has been mainly to create adequate frameworks and spaces for the youth to undertake action and to provide, where needed, strategic and capacity-building support.

Achievements in terms of increased youth capacities have varied among the countries, which to a significant extent can be attributed to substantial differences among the countries *prior* to the programme. However, many of these achievements were innovations in their context and, as such, often impressed other stakeholders and society at large. Increased youth capacity at the individual and organisational level has allowed youth, often in close association with supporting NGOs and programme staff, to engage with government authorities (both at the national and local level), informal leaders, journalists, religious scholars, parliamentarians, getting them interested in MRMV

programme issues, ready to take part in dialogue and exchange and, in quite a number of cases, to openly endorse the advocacy and policy agendas of the young people. Based on available monitoring data, this has in 246 cases led to duty-bearers taking specific actions to improve access to and quality of health and/or education services for boys and girls, young women and men. However, the effectiveness of these efforts was constrained by severe resource limitations at the level of the authorities concerned. It was also hampered by the relatively short duration of lobbying and advocacy efforts, which to be truly successful require sustained efforts and engagement for a period longer than the programme duration.

It is important to note that the programme dynamics have in fact gone *further than* the actual programme framework focus on claim-making, lobbying and advocacy for the fulfilment of youth rights and needs; which also means they went ‘beyond’ the outcomes and objectives in the global programme framework. Indeed, country programmes have also invested in realising actual changes (in terms of fulfilment of needs and changed behaviour and practices) at the level of children, youth and their allies, in particular in the area of sexual and reproductive rights. These achievements often appear to be those most valued by the youth and care-takers.

The fourth programme objective – related to Oxfam’s strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and its global campaigning force to facilitate youth claiming and accessing better health and education – was not directly addressed in day-to-day implementation of the programme. While MRMV has been instrumental in increasing Oxfam’s internal capacities to work with youth and to develop complex multi-country programmes, the aim to include country programmes in a global campaigning efforts might have been overly ambitious for a programme as innovative and complex as MRMV. Country programmes have in fact focused mainly on in-country dynamics. In addition, it is important to note that the start of programme implementation coincided with Oxfam’s internal reorganisation towards a single management structure; in addition, at that time, experience within Oxfam of multi-country programmes was limited.

### **Contributions to longer-term impacts**

There is ample evidence that the MRMV strategy has had an influence *beyond* the youth who participated in the programme. Most country programmes have recorded, if not in a coherent way, important changes in the views and attitude of parents, who, for instance, have become open to discussing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues with their children, have allowed their daughters to participate in youth-led activities and liaised with authorities to protect the rights of their children. At the level of communities, probably the most fundamental change, reported in various countries, is that young people are now considered as important change agents and able to play an active role in decision-making processes at local and higher levels and to pursue change via their own organisations.

Linking the programme with the MDGs was an explicit aim during programme formulation. While contributing to the achievement of the MDGs hasn’t been a direct source of inspiration and motivation during programme implementation, it was found that MRMV has made a direct contribution to several MDGs: namely those related to access to education (MDG 2), gender equality and empowerment of girls and women (MDG 3), maternal health (MDG 5) and the fight against HIV/AIDs (MDG 6).

### **Overall efficiency of programme implementation**

Ensuring efficiency in the implementation of such a complex and innovative programme has been a challenging task; one which overall has been fairly well addressed. MRMV’s Steering Committee (SC) and Global Coordination Team (GCT) have been key in achieving this. At the early stages, programme management was successful in streamlining the views and perceptions of the programme actors,

and slowly but steadily internalising the values and objectives of MRMV at the level of the country implementation teams. This process was very important in making MRMV a programme in the full sense of the word, even given the specific characteristics and context of each country. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm and motivation of the GCT and SC could not overcome the fact that there were constraints to implementation. These challenges related to Oxfam's internal restructuring processes, the fact that GCT members were based in different geographical locations, weak development of the monitoring and learning function, the turnover in SC membership, and the programme's heavy administrative and financial procedures and requirements.

### **Quality of involvement of youth**

All country programmes have undertaken attempts to ensure, often via a trial and error process, increased involvement of children and youth. This has often been a challenging journey with different paces of progress; indeed, different forms and levels of participation of children and youth have co-existed within the same country programmes. There have been instances where local partner NGOs have struggled to create frameworks and spaces to optimise youth participation and involvement, and have instead continued to resort to traditional approaches whereby they remained in control of decision-making processes. However, there are clear signs that in virtually all countries the pattern of youth involvement has changed over time, going hand-in-hand with the development of stronger youth groups and organisations.

### **Added value of MRMV being a multi-country programme**

MRMV was explicitly conceived as a multi-country programme and over time has become such a programme in the full sense of the word; despite the very different contexts of the countries involved, they have all shared the same youth and rights-based philosophy. Country programmes have, however, continued to focus on in-country dynamics and issues, considering international exchange mostly as an interesting add-on rather than an essential component of programme work. The fact that there was a high level of socio-economic and cultural heterogeneity among the countries certainly played a role in this.

From an Oxfam perspective, there have been many benefits. Working together with different Oxfam members generated huge learning opportunities and healthy internal challenges (e.g. related to the implementation of multi-country programmes by various Oxfam affiliates), and triggered the development of capacities to work with youth.

### **Influence of the Mid-term Review and the Strategic Gender Review**

The field research has been unable to identify substantial evidence of the impact of the MRMV Mid-term Review (MTR) on further programme implementation (although there are strong indications of *individuals* having learned a lot via the MTR peer evaluation approach and, in a few cases, having introduced small-scale innovations in their country as a result). A key explanation for this is that the MTR report failed to address key issues included in the Terms of Reference (TOR); in particular, the richness of the peer review approach and much of the advice given by peer evaluators are not reflected in the report. Furthermore, opportunities were missed to translate some of the MTR's key observations and reflections into *operational* (i.e. country-relevant) recommendations.

The Strategic Gender Review (SGR), conducted complementarily to the MTR, was followed up by various activities. These included a programme webinar; so-called 'gender justice calls' with (mainly) the MRMV programme coordinators in five countries; and another webinar to discuss 'gender justice work in difficult socio-cultural and religious contexts'. These follow-up activities led to a range of actions in various countries. However, the effects of these efforts (in terms of their actual contribution to achieving gender equality) should not be overestimated, as the SGR (or at least the

follow-up actions it generated) came too late in programme implementation to make a significant impact.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability considerations were well addressed in programme design, both at the global and country level. A few strong key principles and strategic considerations were put forward that laid the foundations for developing a solid sustainability strategy, such as promoting ownership by youth, and the comprehensive attention to capacity building. On the other hand, specific sustainability challenges related to working with children and youth were *not* addressed. In addition, during implementation, sustainability was not systematically built in as a continuous focal point. It only became a key issue late in the process, when it was addressed via the organisation of workshops and the development of exit strategies, etc. In most cases however, the scope of these exit strategies and plans remained too narrow; often they could not (or not entirely) be implemented, due to lack of time and an underestimation of the complexity of implementing the actions needed to sustain programme benefits.

### **Main lessons learned**

**Multi-country programmes: interesting but challenging.** Multi-country programmes are conceptually interesting and challenging endeavours and might become an important instrument in future development cooperation. However, there are serious risks that they will face huge challenges in implementation, which can only partially be identified beforehand. A key factor of success is the development of a programme identity. MRMV succeeded in this by being firm on key issues (for example, the adoption of a rights-based approach and the focus on activities implemented *by* youth) while allowing country programmes the flexibility to deal with local priorities and sensitivities. This requires continued efforts, especially in the early stages, and capacity to operationalize key principles through sound and culturally appropriate approaches and strategies. At the same time, aims and ambitions with regard to multi-country programmes – in particular at the cross-country level – should remain realistic, particularly when the countries involved have highly heterogeneous social, cultural and institutional characteristics.

**Specific characteristics of youth programmes require specific measures.** Applying in practice the key principle of a programme *run by or with youth* is a challenge for many traditional development actors and should preferably be supported by a clear change pathway. In addition, a strategy and good practices should be designed to deal with the inevitable rotation in youth participation and leadership, caused by the simple fact that young people eventually become older and enter a new phase of life with other challenges and requirements. Finally, specific approaches need to be worked out to support youth organisations in the post-programme period, as they (unlike well-established NGOs) often lack the experience and networking capacity to ensure continued funding.

**The dangers of a ‘narrow’ rights-based approach.** While a rights-based approach (RBA) is without any doubt an appropriate approach for the promotion of youth rights and access to services such as health and education, its implementation should not focus solely on voicing and claiming these rights, as this does not lead to a transformation of power relations. Simply engaging with duty-bearers (as happened in many instances) does not in itself lead to altered power relations. In addition, the recognition and general acceptance (by duty-bearers) that young people have the right to particular services, does not automatically lead to the fulfilment of these rights and the improvement of conditions for youth. Limiting a RBA to voicing and claim-making (and to the corresponding responsibilities and obligations of the state) also risks not tapping into the full potential of youth and other actors (communities, care-takers and even duty-bearers) to work out and implement alternatives, and thereby missing the opportunity to strengthen their capacities and expertise correspondingly. This has been realised – at least implicitly – by the programme; in

virtually all countries, programme activities have also dealt with fulfilling important needs of the youth, in particular in relation to their SRH rights, despite the fact that such actions did not fall within the programme framework.

## Recommendations

The main recommendations of this evaluation are as follows:

- 1. Recognise the need to adopt an 'expanded' rights-based approach.** It is important to continue adopting a rights-based approach in youth programmes, but such an approach should be well adapted to local circumstances and to the needs and aspirations of youth, and should not be restricted to 'voicing and claim-making' directed at government and other duty-bearers. The approach should also include concrete and direct attempts to address the key needs of the youth.
- 2. Seek clarity and realism on the role and position of marginalised youth.** The inclusion of marginalised youth should always be part of the programme; however, it might be adequate to *start* by engaging relatively better-off youth, as they might have the greatest potential as agents of change, particularly in socio-culturally sensitive areas such as SRH rights and gender. Better-off youth also seem well-placed to devise approaches to engage marginalised youth in the later stages of the programme.
- 3. Redesign the approach to mainstream gender in the programme.** Mainstreaming gender in youth programmes faces particular challenges. Adequate gender mainstreaming should begin with efforts to make it completely clear that the aim of gender mainstreaming is (to contribute to) gender equality. The inclusion of gender equality as a specific programme objective is therefore strongly recommended. It should be accompanied by specific outputs and activities, the implementation of which can be closely monitored, making the achievement of the gender objective a realistic aim.
- 4. Operationalize strategies and approaches towards genuine 'implementation by youth'.** Guaranteeing adequate and genuine participation of youth and youth groups should be based on an adequate assessment of youth's capacities, but also on a very clear decision by NGO partners and Oxfam offices to empower youth by making them responsible for programme implementation. Any tensions or dilemmas in this regard should be made explicit from the very start of the programme, whereby the legitimate institutional interests of NGO partners should be acknowledged and become part of programme strategies that allow win-win solutions.
- 5. Continue with the development of multi-country programmes, but remain realistic about what they can achieve.** When designing multi-country programmes, it is important to delineate which added value is aspired to, and later to ascertain whether such added value has been achieved. Key to a successful multi-country programme is the quality and success of the individual country programmes within it, that should serve as a basis for broader exchange, learning and (maybe) regional impact. Before engaging in cross-country learning and exchange, country programmes should first invest in country-level learning with youth, their NGO partners and other actors. It is further recommended that multi-country programmes involve countries with similar socio-cultural characteristics (including a common programme language), as this will offer broader and more cost-effective opportunities for cross-country learning and exchange.

- 6. Simplify financial and administrative procedures.** Multi-country programmes are by default rather complex. Explicit efforts should therefore be undertaken to avoid excessive financial and administrative requirements which lead to overkill in terms of rules, regulations and policies, with inefficiency of programme implementation an inevitable consequence.
- 7. Recognise the need for a longer programme duration.** Similar future programmes should avoid implementation periods of less than five years, as the type of changes aspired to require substantial time to materialise and ensure benefit sustainability. This is particularly the case when the programme includes fragile countries or countries with low levels of institutional development (as is the case for most MRMV countries).

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and evaluation objectives

MRMV is an innovative multi-country programme that has been implemented by Oxfam GB, Oxfam Novib, Oxfam Quebec<sup>2</sup> and their partners, and aimed to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. The programme worked through partner organisations and directly with marginalised children and youth, their allies, and duty-bearers. It was based on a holistic and contextualised vision of children's and youth's rights to health, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and education in eight countries: Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania and Vietnam. The *overall goal* of MRMV was to achieve sustainable changes in policies, practices and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women, and to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Central to achieving this overall goal were *four key outcomes* which were formulated in the programme proposal. These key outcomes were dependent upon one another, and all MRMV projects worked towards them:

1. To increase young people's awareness of, and strengthen their voice in relation to, their health and education rights, needs and aspirations.
2. To strengthen young people's and their allies' individual and collective skills, knowledge, confidence and resources to organise and to claim their rights in decision-making spaces.
3. To ensure that duty-bearers and those with influence engage directly with marginalised young people to deliver better access to, and quality of, health and education.
4. Oxfam, partners and others have strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and Oxfam's global campaigning force facilitates youth claiming and accessing better health and education.

The MRMV programme started in 2012 and was initially planned to end after three years. The programme was, however, extended by one year in six of the eight initial countries.<sup>3</sup> It formally ended on 31 December 2015, although some 'global layer' activities will continue until August 2016. Sida funded the programme, including its extension phase, for a total budget of US\$14,251,587, with a 10% contribution from Oxfam.

At the time of this final evaluation, the current six MRMV countries were wrapping up the implementation of activities for the fourth year. The **main aim of the evaluation** is to systematically analyse the actual outcomes of the programme and its underlying working mechanisms against the proposed outcomes and the MRMV Theory of Change (TOR, p. 3).<sup>4</sup>

The **specific objectives of the evaluation** were defined as follows:

1. Stimulate reflection and learning among country offices, partners and youth groups, including learning from failures and challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> Oxfam Quebec was involved only to a limited extent in the Niger component of the programme.

<sup>3</sup> Activities in Tanzania and Georgia ended after year 3.

<sup>4</sup> Annex 1 presents the overall TOR for this evaluation.

2. Review and validate the achievements reached under each outcome as presented in the MRMV annual reports (and underlying documents such as quarterly monitoring reports), the Mid-term Review and Strategic Gender Review.
3. Validate the Theory of Change of the MRMV programme and its underlying assumptions. This means describing the process of how changes in policies, practices and beliefs have been achieved, and analysing this against the Theory of Change, including the underlying assumptions.
4. Develop concrete recommendations for future programme and project development on youth and for multi-country programmes in general.

This document presents the synthesis of the evaluation findings. It is based on the findings obtained via a document review and fieldwork in four countries (Afghanistan, Mali, Pakistan and Vietnam). Separate country-level reports were written to document the findings for these four countries.

## **1.2 Structure of the report**

The next chapter presents the evaluation approach, and chapter 3 provides a short description of the MRMV programme. Chapter 4 is concerned with the relevance of the programme. Chapter 5 is the most important part of this report and discusses the main outcomes achieved. In chapter 6, the programme's contribution to long-term improvements in the situation of youth and children are discussed, and chapter 7 looks at the quality of programme implementation. In chapter 8, the sustainability of programme benefits is assessed. Chapters 9 and 10 present the main conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. EVALUATION APPROACH

### 2.1 Overall evaluation approach

#### Inception phase

The evaluation process started with a one-day inception workshop attended by three members of the MRMV Global Coordination Team (GCT) and two members of the evaluation team. The discussion yielded important results in terms of deciding on the evaluation approach, such as the need to actively involve youth representatives in the evaluation process (e.g. as peer evaluators), the need to ensure the integrity of the youth involved as resource persons in the evaluation process, and the main focal points of the evaluation. In line with the TOR, the GCT requested that the evaluation team clearly document its approach and methodology, and indicate the limitations to the validity of its findings.

An evaluation framework was developed and subsequently discussed and validated. A standard country visit plan and an overall timeline for the implementation of the evaluation were also agreed. This foresaw four country visits, to be conducted in the period 15 November 2015 – 15 January 2016. The country teams were to deal with the evaluation framework in a flexible way and to contextualise it according to the local situation and the country programme characteristics.

#### Documentary analysis

The documentary analysis studied both programme-level documents, documents related to programme implementation in the eight programme countries, and some web-based documentation (full list in Annex 3). This analysis covered all programme countries and used the evaluation framework as a major guidance. For each country, a summary report was drafted. These informed the four field visits and, in the case of the four countries that were not visited, also informed this final synthesis report.

#### Field research

Four countries were selected for field research (see TOR). In the inception phase, it was decided to recruit, in so far as the budget allowed, a junior national evaluator who would assist the international evaluator in each country evaluation. In addition, youth who were already familiar with the MRMV programme were included as peer evaluators. The role and position of both national and peer evaluators were defined prior to the field research. Several considerations inspired the inclusion of both national and peer evaluators. First, and most obviously, their involvement allowed for better understanding of the local context and also ensured better communication with youth (in the local language, where necessary); this was considered to be crucial in view of the rather conservative environment in which many country programmes operated and the often sensitive issues dealt with. The inclusion of local evaluators was also an effort to build local capacity in evaluation.

For various reasons, most of which were beyond the influence of the evaluation team and the client, the core evaluation team could only visit two of the four countries. In the two remaining countries a senior national evaluator eventually conducted the field research, with coaching from a distance by the core evaluation team of South Research.

- *In Vietnam*, the field research could be largely implemented as planned and according to the desired approach, via a team composed of an international senior evaluator, a national junior evaluator and two peer evaluators. Two members of the GCT team participated in the field visit.
- *In Pakistan*, the initial set-up had to be adjusted as the Pakistan authorities did not grant a visa to the international evaluator within a period of two months after submission of the visa application; it was then decided to recruit a national senior evaluator, who conducted the fieldwork with four peer evaluators. As the Pakistan evaluation was initially planned as the pilot evaluation, the delay in its implementation also meant that the initial plan could not be adhered to.
- *In Mali*, the field visit was initially cancelled because of the terrorist attack, on 20 November, on a hotel in Bamako; eventually, the field visit was able to take place in December under certain conditions limiting the mobility of the evaluator (in the event, these limitations did not significantly influence the evaluation process). A few days before the start of the fieldwork, the national evaluator had to withdraw for health reasons, meaning only the international evaluator and nine peer evaluators implemented the research. A member of the GCT team participated in the field visit.
- *In Afghanistan*, the field visit was cancelled for security reasons a few days before the international evaluator's scheduled departure. It was decided that the national (senior) evaluator alone would be in charge of the field research. Due to very strict movement restrictions, even within the capital, no peer evaluators could be included in the evaluation team.

While *the four field evaluations* were each conducted on the basis of the same evaluation framework, and their results drafted along the same format, there were notable differences in the instruments used at field level. These can be largely attributed to the differences between the country programmes (e.g. characteristics of beneficiaries: rural versus urban; adolescents/young adults versus children), the composition of the country evaluation teams, the restrictions related to conducting fieldwork, and the relative preference of the evaluators for particular tools and instruments, in particular related to outcome assessment.

The unexpected course of events in three of the four countries illustrates the difficulties encountered with implementing development work in fragile states. This requires a high level of flexibility among all actors concerned, but also inevitably leads to some level of inefficiency in the evaluation process as key activities needed to be postponed, repeated or reviewed.

For the four countries visited, a standalone country paper was written by the evaluators in order to increase the utilisation of findings by in-country stakeholders.

### Synthesis phase

The synthesis phase consisted of drafting a first version of the synthesis report, based on the evaluation reports of the four countries visited and on the four country reports drafted on the basis of the documentary analysis only. The draft synthesis report was circulated within Oxfam and subsequently discussed with the GCT. A webinar involving Oxfam's current and former MRMV staff was set up to disseminate and discuss the key results of the evaluation. The report was finalised after the webinar.

## 2.2 Challenges in the evaluation process and validity of the findings

As mentioned in the previous point, the evaluation process faced substantial challenges in terms of its planning, organisation and implementation. The many unexpected events inevitably impacted on the efficiency and quality of the evaluation process. In addition (and partially as a consequence of the organisational difficulties), the evaluation has been confronted with important methodological challenges:

- First, the core evaluation team was only able to conduct field visits to two of the eight programme countries. They were able to learn a great deal during these visits, but at the same time realised the importance of field visits as an essential complement to documentary analysis. While the work of the two national senior evaluators who solely conducted the field research in Afghanistan and Pakistan was fully communicated with the core evaluation team through frequent and extensive Skype exchange, there inevitably remains a gap in the depth of understanding at the level of the core team, which impacts on the quality of this synthesis report.
- The inclusion of peer evaluators in the evaluation approach has been positive, but was at the same time demanding for the senior international evaluators who, on top of their own workload, had to prepare the peer evaluators for their task, monitor the quality of their performance, trouble shoot when necessary and follow up their activities.<sup>5</sup>
- The main focus of the evaluation has been on identifying the main outcomes of the programme with the aim to derive lessons; however, the extensive progress reports available did not provide much outcome-related information. This was, in the first instance, a major limitation in the attempts to identify lessons from the experience of the four countries that were *not* visited.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the resource limitations of the evaluation<sup>7</sup> and the explicit desire to work with young people as peer evaluators (with no or limited evaluation skills and experience) did not allow for extensive research related to the programme outcomes,<sup>8</sup> as such, most outcome-related findings are rather qualitative and indirect. Quite logically, the indications with regard to the programme contribution to impacts (both at the individual and broader level) are at best illustrative of what might constitute major impacts of the programme.<sup>9</sup>
- Other generic methodological challenges included the rather complex MRMV programme framework, its often imperfect (e.g. partially overlapping outcomes, ‘outcomes’ that are actually outputs) in-country translation, the differences among the country programme frameworks<sup>10</sup> and, within each country, the change in the main objectives and approach, in

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<sup>5</sup> Luckily in Vietnam and Mali, members of the GCT were able to provide valuable support to the international evaluator in this regard.

<sup>6</sup> Some nuance can be added, in the sense that outcome-level reporting improved towards the end of the programme period. However, this never grew into a comprehensive effort to assess and describe the outcomes achieved by the programme.

<sup>7</sup> The final budget of the evaluation (not including transport, board and lodging, and expenses related to the peer evaluators) amounts to approximately 0.47% of the MRMV programme budget; it should be noted that expenses related to infrastructure and equipment are minor in MRMV.

<sup>8</sup> This was also because substantial training and guidance of these young people was needed, which limited the time available for the senior evaluators to conduct regular evaluation research.

<sup>9</sup> The TOR requested that the evaluation focus on outcomes and did not ask for an impact assessment; however, some indications of impact were found and have been included in this report.

<sup>10</sup> See introduction to chapter 5 for more details.

particular (but not only) between the initial three-year programme and the one-year extension period.

- While MRMV is certainly to be considered as a ‘programme’ in the full sense of the word, the evaluation found many differences between the country-level programmes (and even within the same country programme) in terms of activities, approaches and also performance. This means that for many parts of the programme no clear-cut conclusions could be made, as some countries (or specific partners) performed better than others. As such, important parts of the report constitute a mixture of both positive and negative findings related to the same issue. This might give an impression of ambiguity; rather it reflects an attempt to describe a complex and multi-faceted reality.
- Finally, each country evaluation had to face a few particular constraints which may have affected the validity of its key findings. These include: severe restrictions to information-gathering activities (Afghanistan); the presence of a member of the State Intelligence Service during data collection in one province (Vietnam); difficulties in reaching out effectively to final beneficiaries because of lack of preparation and inadequate timing<sup>11</sup> of the field visit (Mali); and the cancellation of the visit to some programme areas due to security concerns and a strike by the airline company (Pakistan). As a consequence, there was limited coverage during evaluation visits of programme working areas, as well as limitations on the number and diversity of evaluation sources, and a need to rely substantially on country offices and partners to select the evaluation’s resource persons.

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<sup>11</sup> The mission was scheduled just before the Christmas holidays, leading to limited availability of some resource persons. Schools included in the programme were also in their exam period, meaning the availability of teachers and youth was limited. These consequences of the inopportune timing were well known before the start of the field research, but there was simply no alternative period available.

## 3. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE MRMV PROGRAMME<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1 Programme objectives

The overall goal of the MRMV programme was to achieve sustainable changes in policies, practices and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women, to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The programme was implemented along a programme framework containing four objectives that were each broken down into two outcomes. The four key objectives were as follows:

- **Objective 1:** Children and youth are more aware of their specific health and education rights and have more confidence to voice their rights, needs and aspirations in a manner that strengthens equality. *Under this objective, in the period 2012 – 2015 an estimated 522,858 people were reached, of whom 416,201 were young people.*
- **Objective 2:** Children, youth and allies (parents, educators, health staff, other care-takers,<sup>13</sup> civil society organisations (CSOs), etc.) have improved individual and collective skills, knowledge, self-confidence and resources to organise themselves to equally claim rights in decision-making spaces. *Under this objective, by the end of 2015 an estimated 699 children's and youth groups were established in cooperation with 497 community-based organisations; close to 500 youth groups have defined a shared agenda and partner up with allies.*
- **Objective 3:** Duty-bearers and influencers (ministries, politicians, donors, international institutions, parents, teachers, health staff, religious leaders, NGOs, etc.) engage directly with marginalised children and youth, and deliver better access to and quality of health and education. *By 2015, 399 cases were recorded of local, regional and national duty-bearers recognising MRMV youth groups. 246 cases were reported where duty-bearers took action as result of MRMV lobbying and advocacy efforts.*
- **Objective 4:** Oxfam, partners and others have strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and Oxfam's global campaigning force has supported strategies that facilitate youth claiming and accessing better health and education. *Highlights under this objective include the annual organisation of international learning and exchange events, youth participating in policy processes at the national and international level (46 cases), the development of MRMV Facebook pages (one for each country, one global) and the inclusion of children and youth in decision-making structures of MRMV.*

The programme has been implemented through two interrelated and complementary components: eight standalone country programmes, and a global programme meant mainly to drive and support programme learning and innovation.

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<sup>12</sup> The content of this chapter is taken from key programme documents including the programme proposal and the country completion reports.

<sup>13</sup> 'Care-taker(s)' refer(s) to those individuals and/or groups that have specific responsibility for children and youth, including guardians, parents and others charged with duty-of-care responsibilities.

## 3.2 Country programmes

Key characteristics of the eight country programmes can be summarised as follows:

- In **Afghanistan**, MRMV has empowered young people to claim their rights to quality health and education. In the first three years, the project worked with four partners in Kabul, Balkh, Daikundi and Badakhshan provinces to support young people to demand policy changes and improvements in health and education services, and to increase the capacity of CSOs to lobby for child and youth rights. Youth groups at the community, district, provincial and university levels provided a platform for young people to increase their knowledge of youth rights, lead community activities and engage with duty-bearers.  
In year 4, the project concentrated on improvement in education services and building youth capacity to lead community volunteering and advocacy initiatives. There was a particular focus on strengthening youth dialogue with political institutions and supporting out-of-school girls to access formal education.
- In **Mali**, MRMV has empowered young people to claim their rights to education and SRH. In the first three years, the project worked with a coalition of partners and a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to raise young people's awareness of education and SRH rights in three districts. An e-learning platform and confidential text-messaging and online service strengthened young people's SRH knowledge in schools and youth groups, while advocacy initiatives held duty-bearers accountable for the quality of essential services.  
In year 4, the YAB evolved into a national youth association – AJCAD – which became the main implementing partner. The project focused on strengthening youth capacity to define the advocacy agenda and lead campaigning activities, on integrating the e-learning platform into the national curriculum, and on collaborating with Oxfam's child marriage and education projects.
- In **Nepal**, MRMV has empowered children, youth and young mothers to claim their rights to SRH and to health services that meet their needs. In the first three years, the project worked in three districts with local partners and the national-level Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), supporting young people to voice their needs and increase accountability within the health system. 'REFLECT' method-based Child Health Committees and Community Discussion Classes supported young people to increase their knowledge and to campaign on health and SRH rights, while radio programmes and forum theatre were used to raise awareness among communities.  
MRMV worked with youth and duty-bearers to identify child marriage as the key focus in year 4. Extending its work to one further district, the project empowered young people to work with community stakeholders to raise awareness of and prevent child marriage.
- In **Niger**, MRMV has empowered children and young people to claim their rights to education and SRH. In the first three years, the project worked with partners in Say, Téra and Torodi departments to support young people to improve their knowledge of education and SRH issues, and raise awareness among their peers. Youth groups provided a space for peer-to-peer discussion and engagement with community leaders, while edutainment initiatives raised awareness and increased support. Radio debates were a strong platform for advocacy and transforming social attitudes to break taboos on SRH.  
In year 4, the project developed initiatives to build young women's confidence and support them to lead campaigns. Advocacy work was scaled up to the national level by strengthening youth networks between regions, creating a YAB and facilitating engagement with the National Youth Council, youth parliaments and government duty-bearers.

- In **Pakistan**, MRMV has empowered young people to claim their right to SRH and to make informed decisions about their lives. In the first three years, the project partnered with Women Empowerment Group (WEG) and major media outlets to increase awareness of youth's right to SRH, in nine districts. A mass edutainment campaign sought to change social attitudes to SRH issues and lobbied for SRH rights to be integrated into the education curriculum, while a YAB and a Steering Committee of prominent religious leaders informed project activities.

In year 4, MRMV partnered with the youth-led organisation Chanan Development Association (CDA) to ensure meaningful youth participation. Young people formed district youth clubs in four districts to discuss and campaign on SRH issues, and collaborated with partners and Oxfam staff to implement project activities.
- In **Vietnam**, MRMV has empowered children to understand their rights and to communicate with decision makers to shape an education that meets their needs. In the first three years, the project worked with the youth-led organisations iSee and Live&Learn, and several government bodies including the Department of Education and Training, Youth Unions, Women's Unions and People's Councils in the three project provinces of Lao Cai, Dak Nong and Ninh Thuan to support children – particularly girls and ethnic minorities – to improve their access to education, using innovative edutainment and ICT initiatives. The programme promoted an Effective School Governance (ESG) model encouraging dialogue and accountability between children, parents, schools and local authorities through participatory approaches.

In year 4, MRMV integrated a youth-led approach into its project delivery in two provinces, supporting young people to implement initiatives with children in project schools and to develop youth-led campaigns. There was also an increased focus on gender equality and girls' specific needs and rights regarding education.
- In **Georgia**, MRMV supported over children and young people to voice their needs and drive policy changes to protect their right to healthcare. The project worked with two partners and the Public Defender's Office (PDO) (the country's health ombudsman) to promote child and youth health-rights among IDPs in the post-conflict regions of Samegrelo and Shida Kartli. A network of 30 youth clubs raised awareness and campaigned for changes on health care, while Youth Forums provided a platform for youth leaders to share their experiences and influence policy-makers directly. Doctors and CSOs were trained to identify child health-rights issues and bring them to the attention of the PDO, while parents were engaged through media campaigns and community meetings. The Georgia MRMV project completed after three years.
- In **Tanzania**, MRMV supported school students to demand quality education through democratically elected school councils. The project worked with five partners in Arusha, Dodoma and Ngorongoro regions to empower students to understand their rights, win community backing and hold schools and authorities to account over education quality. The project created and strengthened student *barazas* (councils) in 80 schools as democratically structured, gender-sensitive platforms enabling children to influence decisions on education and their school environment. Students were trained in leadership skills, given information on their right to education and supported to develop monitoring tools, while teacher mentors supported *barazas* in each school. *Baraza* champions built joint policy-positions and developed campaign materials to lobby decision-makers for educational improvements at regional and national levels. The Tanzania MRMV project completed after three years.

### 3.3 Global programme

Individually, the country programmes described above were not dependent upon each other for the achievement of their specific objectives. However, MRMV endeavoured to add significant value to these individual country programmes by bringing them together as a 'global programme'. The purpose of this global programme was to build an overall programme that was greater than the sum of its parts, for example by creating opportunities for national and transnational capacity building of partners, promoting networking, learning and ongoing sharing across countries, linking national-level partners with regional and global actors to strengthen efforts for change at both the national and global levels, continuously distilling and sharing good practice for improved impact both within Oxfam and with other actors, driving forward innovation and programme quality, and ensuring effective programme management oversight and accountability.

Core functions of the global programme included:

- **Cross-programme learning and innovation.** The primary function of the global programme was to enhance programme learning and innovation to ensure that the greatest possible impact is achieved in the country programmes. As noted above, while the individual country programmes shared a core approach, each one was unique. It is this diversity (of stakeholder engagement, methodologies, tools, technology, etc.) between country programmes that was considered a fertile ground for cross-programme learning. Country programmes, and in particular national partner organisations, have been facilitated and supported to learn from the experience and knowledge of other country programmes and partners, in order to drive forward innovation and programme quality in their own work.
- **An Innovation and Programme Development Fund,** as a specific tool to enhance learning. As programme learning and innovation are often hampered by a lack of flexible funding, a specific fund was put in place that could be used to implement new activities, approaches, or technology during the lifetime of the programme.
- **Programme communication and influencing.** To ensure that MRMV has an impact beyond the bounds of the individual country programmes, the global programme was committed to capturing key lessons and producing programme practice communication products (including case studies, toolkits, methodologies, etc.), that can be used to influence the investments, programme policies and practices of Oxfam and other key stakeholders including (but not limited to) donor agencies and other development agencies
- **Effective programme management and accountability.** Overall programme oversight was ensured by a Steering Group composed of the senior programme managers of Oxfam Novib, Oxfam GB and other key stakeholders. The day-to-day global coordination, the development of global programme initiatives and support to the various country programmes was the responsibility of a Global Programme Manager. A financial manager, Communications and Programme Officer and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) advisor completed the Global Coordination Team (GCT). Within each country, a Country Programme Co-ordinator was responsible for communicating and coordination with the Global Programme Manager on the implementation of their respective country programme. Each country programme had its own programme governance arrangements to ensure delivery and accountability for the programme.

## 4. RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAMME

*The assessment of the relevance of the programme essentially asks to what extent the programme aims, design and approach were adequate in view of the needs of young people and their communities. Most decisions on the aims, design and approach were taken during the preparation phase and, if needed, were adjusted during implementation.*

As a rule, the country-level programmes were well prepared. While the specific approaches may have varied, they all included mapping exercises of local actors, baselines (not necessarily conducted before or at the actual start of the programme, sometimes even considerably later<sup>14</sup>) and good analyses of the situation of children and youth with regard to education and health. Gender issues were considered in these initial analyses.<sup>15</sup>

More specifically, the analyses of conditions in the health and education sectors were well conducted, with particular attention given to the specific needs and constraints of girls and young women. The focus on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) has been highly relevant everywhere; this can be considered as a major achievement of the programme as addressing SRHR was not an easy option, in particular in countries with highly constraining socio-cultural conditions. The situation with regard to SRHR was also well documented, at least at the level of youth. In some cases (e.g. PA<sup>16</sup>), the SRHR needs of care-takers were also addressed by the programme. The adequate attention paid to the situation of girls and young women meant that some country programmes explicitly selected local partners that focus on working with women.

In terms of the country programmes' intervention strategy, the principle that youth prefer to engage via their own forums and organisations was clearly put forward in the programme design document. This principle has, however, not been consistently adhered to everywhere, probably because understanding key principles differs from knowing how to put these into practice. At the time of the programme inception, few concrete examples of such programmes existed. Furthermore, the strategy of promoting and supporting a so-called YAB (Youth Advisory Board) was followed in some countries, with mixed results. It is not entirely clear the extent to which NGO partners were committed to implementing this approach; some of them were able to learn by doing, while others continued to fear loss of control and influence. In some countries (e.g. NI), NGO partners remained firmly in the driving seat, while in other countries (e.g. MA), there has been a gradual increase in the role and influence of youth-led organisations, without this development being wholeheartedly welcomed by all NGO partners. In Afghanistan, NGO partners initially faced difficulties in liaising effectively with youth because of the negative perceptions of some people towards NGOs; substantial initial efforts therefore had to be undertaken to gain the confidence of key stakeholders, such as parents. In Pakistan, the programme drastically changed its approach after the third year, by opting for a strategy of 'doing with and by youth',<sup>17,18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This was because of security considerations or lack of capacities.

<sup>15</sup> See below for more details.

<sup>16</sup> In the remaining part of the report we will from time to time refer to the situation in specific countries using the following abbreviations: AF for Afghanistan, GE for Georgia, MA for Mali, NE for Nepal, NI for Niger, PA for Pakistan, TA for Tanzania and VI for Vietnam.

<sup>17</sup> The first three years of the programme in Pakistan consisted mainly of a major so-called edutainment campaign focusing on various groups (care-takers, 'gatekeepers') and aimed to contribute to social change by creating an enabling environment for adolescents to claim and take up their SRHR.

<sup>18</sup> The quality of youth involvement and the relation between youth organisations and NGOs will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 7.2.

To conclude, it can be stated that the MRMV aims, design and approach were largely adequate in view of the needs of young people and communities. That said, a few critical remarks can be made with regard to the programme design *at country level*:

- While ‘marginalised’ youth was said to be the main focus of the programme (e.g. it is included in the programme’s overall objective), there have been few systematic efforts to analyse the *specific* situation of marginalised youth (in terms of how their situation is different from, for instance, the situation of youth from better-off families). Some countries (e.g. VI, GE, NI, NE) addressed this issue by focusing on marginalised *areas* (e.g. areas with a high presence of ethnic minorities, in the case of Vietnam), without always undertaking further attempts to focus on marginalised groups *within* these areas.
- The lack of focus on the specific situation of marginalised youth means that in some countries at least (AF, NI), there are clear indications of programme activities that ignore the specific constraints of poorer youth, who for instance have no time or resources to participate in the activities, or prefer support for income-generating activities over working on health and education issues. In fact, there have been few attempts to assess and monitor the socio-economic background of the youth that have been effectively reached via the programme, of youth taking up a leadership role, etc. Exclusion of poorer young people from MRMV might in fact have been more significant than has so far been realised.<sup>19</sup>
- Thinking more broadly, the extent to which implementation of a consistent rights-based approach is compatible with the ambition to (also consistently) focus the programme on (the needs of) marginalised youth is questionable. While the relevance of a RBA is beyond any doubt, it often implies repeated efforts, often over a long period of time, before actual access to the rights is achieved, in particular in countries with strong socio-cultural norms and/or low levels of democratic freedom. One might wonder whether the RBA is the best option when working (at least in the first instance) with *marginalised* youth; when the aim is to achieve results via a ‘programme by youth’ approach, it should be possible to rely in the first instance on well-trained and educated youth, who often will not be found among marginalised groups. Apparently, this consideration played a role in the planning process in some countries, which also included outcomes that were meant to fulfil *practical ‘day-to-day’ needs* of the youth as a complement to work on the rights of youth.
- As mentioned above, adequate attention was paid to gender in the preparatory stages; in particular, the analysis with regard to SRHR clearly describes the constraints faced by girls and young women and the prevalent harmful social practices. However, this sound analysis has, as a rule, not been well translated into programme design and approach. Programme implementation has focused essentially on ensuring equal participation and access for girls and boys (and young women and men) to programme activities, thereby assuming that such balanced access would be sufficient for contributing to the empowerment of young women and girls, and to gender equality. While equal participation in activities is important and essential in strategic activities such as leadership building, it is not sufficient to ensure a sustainable contribution to gender equality. As indicated also by the Strategic Gender Review, the lack of specific gender objectives (with clear indicators that can be consistently followed up) and the lack of a gender mainstreaming strategy at the level of both the programme framework and the implementing partners (including youth organisations<sup>20</sup>), and correspondingly limited capacity

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<sup>19</sup> Note that in some programmes (e.g. MA), attention was given to youth with specific needs (HIV-infected youth, youth with physical impairments), but this does not alter the overall picture. Generally speaking, however, there is no comprehensive information on the socio-economic position (in absolute and relative terms) of the youth reached via the programme.

<sup>20</sup> The Strategic Gender Review noted that youth and youth organisations considered gender inequality as something existing primarily at the level of their parents and society at large, not within their own organisations, Final evaluation of the My Voice My Rights Programme – Synthesis report

with regard to gender, meant that little progress has been made in terms of addressing, in particular, *strategic* gender needs.<sup>21</sup>

- The initial analysis might have focused too narrowly on the needs and constraints of youth, whereas in some areas (e.g. SRHR) care-takers and duty-bearers who are key in addressing existing problems also have specific needs and face constraints to adequately fulfilling their role in relation to youth. This might have led to the exclusion of or insufficient attention being paid to these groups (e.g. the limited attention paid to parents in MA) in the programme strategy and approach, at least in its early stages (in some countries, this was addressed later). Finally, the analysis related to SRHR, while for obvious reasons was focused on girls and young women, seems not to have sufficiently taken into account the specific SRHR needs of boys and young men.

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groups and relational patterns. While the programme offers many examples of more balanced gender roles, there clearly remains a blind spot among youth and youth organisations about how they too are a product of their society and develop relational patterns along societal norms and traditions.

<sup>21</sup> See also chapter 7.4, which discusses the influence of the Gender Strategic Review. One important exception is Vietnam, where a specific gender objective was added.

## 5. MAJOR OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

### Introductory note to this chapter

MRMV has a programme framework (attached to the TOR in Annex 1) that guided programme implementation. This framework contains four objectives that were each operationalised in two outcomes; for each outcome, at least one and mostly two or three indicators were formulated. The analysis presented in this chapter will be conducted taking this set of objectives and outcomes as its major reference. Related to this framework, a few important remarks need to be made beforehand:

- The four programme objectives do not have the same weight; objectives 1 and 2 focus mainly on youth (boys and girls, young women and men) and are key to the programme performance, whereas objectives 3 and 4 are considered to *support* the achievement of the first two objectives.<sup>22</sup> In addition, objective 4 has only been addressed to a limited extent. Hence, it is obvious that programme implementation in most countries (with PA as an exception in the first three years) and therefore also data collection and analysis during the evaluation process, has been geared more to the two first objectives, without ignoring 3 and 4 as ‘enabling objectives’.
- The formulation of the programme objectives (as stated in the programme framework) was rather heavy and broad, often containing different issues within a single objective, which are sometimes located at different levels in the Theory of Change chain; in addition, there is overlap between some objectives. Most probably, this rather heavy formulation of objectives is the consequence of a participatory planning process that aimed to incorporate the views of the various stakeholders involved.
- The indicators included in the programme framework, while mostly adequate, have not been used consistently during programme implementation, among other reasons because outcomes at country level did not necessarily coincide with those at global programme level.
- Programmes at country level had the freedom to develop their own results framework within the realm of the global programme framework. All programmes but one have done so – rightly in our view – to address local views and priorities. However, the formulation of country programme frameworks has nonetheless shown similar weaknesses as the global framework in terms of heavy and overlapping outcomes. Understandably, these results frameworks do not fully coincide with the overall results framework, so it has sometimes been a challenge to assign results at country level to the outcomes of the overall framework. In order to include the achievements attained at country level, the overall framework outcomes have therefore sometimes been interpreted more widely. This applies in particular to country-level objectives that have actually gone ‘beyond’ the focus on rights, to work towards the actual *fulfilment* of the specific health and education rights of children and youth.
- As mentioned earlier, the programme has not been able to consistently develop its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework beyond the activity and output level. Quarterly reports are very elaborate but focus merely on activities and outputs, notwithstanding the fact that a reporting format was used which specifically requests reporting on outcomes. As a result, and despite the fact that some improvements were noted towards the end of the programme, reporting on actual changes remains scarce and is not systematic. **This means that it has been impossible for this**

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<sup>22</sup> This evaluation found out that the relationship between, on the one hand, objectives 1 and 2, and, on the other hand, objectives 3 and 4, has been rather dialectical: support has gone in both directions.

**evaluation to clearly assess the depth and breadth of the changes** (in terms of changed policies and practices) envisaged by the programme.<sup>23</sup>

## **5.1 Objective 1: Awareness of the specific health and education rights of children and youth, and capacity to voice these rights<sup>24</sup>**

Broadly speaking, this objective has been the most prominent within the programme, which is understandable as increased awareness and knowledge is a prerequisite for the capacity to voice rights and aspirations, which in turn is a condition for effective action to claim these rights and eventually have them fulfilled. That said, some country programmes have not limited themselves to developing knowledge, awareness and capacity to articulate needs and aspirations, but have also invested in obtaining *actual changes (in terms of changed behaviour and practices)* at the level of children, youth and their allies, in particular in the area of SRHR. The evaluation considers this to be an indicator of adequate flexibility of the programme, as it is very difficult (and in our eyes not particularly relevant) to maintain a ‘pure’ RBA without trying hard to get these rights fulfilled.<sup>25</sup>

Before we start to present the findings of our analysis, it is important to mention that in some countries the programme had to invest a great deal in efforts to overcome barriers in order to achieve effective participation of youth (AF) and/or to involve girls (in particular as leaders) in the programme (AF, NI, TA), or even to overcome orchestrated campaigns to kill efforts to promote SRHR (PA). Crucial as they were, these activities in some cases required much time and resources before the conditions were met to ensure smooth programme implementation.

### **5.1.1 Awareness and knowledge of rights of children and youth to health and/or education**

At country level, various strategies have been followed to increase youth’s awareness of their health and education rights. In some countries (NI, MA, PA, NE; in AF in the initial stages), many activities focused on increasing knowledge and awareness of youth (and in many cases, also of parents and teachers) with regard to education and/or SRHR. Several strategies were followed to ensure adequate diffusion of awareness and knowledge, e.g. the training of youth leaders as trainers who were expected to pass their knowledge to others; the training of peer educators in the context of cooperation with schools (e.g. MA); a broad-based edutainment campaign aiming for social change and involvement of religious and political leadership via the media (PA); or the work via 25 associations of ‘*mères éducatrices*’ (educating mothers), who were trained to provide information on gender-based violence and some specific SRHR aspects (NI). In general, youth leadership-building has proved an effective strategy in spreading awareness and knowledge; experience gained elsewhere that has shown peer-to-peer communication to be an effective approach (in particular in relation to sensitive issues such as SRHR), has been confirmed by the MRMV programme (NI, GE, MA, TA, AF, PA).

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<sup>23</sup> Pakistan is an exception in this regard, as at the end of the edutainment campaign a professional consultant (from Gallup) was hired to assess the effect of the campaign.

<sup>24</sup> The outcomes and sub-outcomes of the programme often constitute lengthy formulations with many elements that each have their own importance. While such formulations are an illustration of the care with which the outcomes were designed, this makes them difficult to manage in monitoring and evaluations. We therefore have opted for shorter and simplified formulations; the complete formulation of outcomes and sub-outcomes can be found in the programme’s results framework included in Annex 1.

<sup>25</sup> One of our major lessons learned will deal in depth with this issue.

**Box 1: Awareness of youth rights in Pakistan**

“I was unaware of my own sexual and reproductive health rights before getting involved in the *Justuju* intervention. I was unaware of how I could make myself safe from social diseases such as HIV/AIDS, child sexual abuse, and other issues related to youth.”

*A female district youth council member, Peshawar, Pakistan*

Slightly different approaches were found in Nepal and Afghanistan. In Nepal, Child Health Committees and, above all, Community Health Committees (often run by highly motivated women) were key in spreading knowledge and awareness at community level. In Afghanistan, the focus was on youth, with awareness raising on child and youth rights being combined with training on advocacy and how to organise in youth groups. In addition, in Afghanistan (and also in Nepal), the capacity of youth was built to monitor health and education activities at community and district level, and to identify community needs in these domains.

Radio programmes (in several countries: NI, MA, PA, NE) dealing with rights to education and SRHR, both made for and by youth representatives, are widely claimed to have substantially contributed to higher levels of awareness and knowledge, not only among youth but also among care-takers (particularly parents) and duty-bearers. In particular, in the socio-culturally sensitive area of SRHR, which for a long time has remained unaddressed in the public domain, radio programmes (often combined with the use of other media) have proven to be an excellent means to contribute to changes, not only in knowledge and awareness but also in attitudes (and probably practices) at broader levels. Use of media via a comprehensive approach was actually at the core of the Pakistan programme for the first three years. This proved effective in bringing SRHR to the attention not only of youth but society at large; these efforts have also created a platform to go beyond knowledge and awareness raising towards actual changes in policies (see below).

The development and comprehensive introduction at school level, in Mali, of an e-learning platform on SRHR deserves to be mentioned, as it might constitute an interesting instrument in the future – elsewhere in Mali, but also in other countries. This platform was developed on the basis of experiences in neighbouring countries with the active participation of youth, and the approach included the training of teachers and peer educators in schools. By the time of the field visit, the platform had been introduced in a limited number of schools only, which had limited its outreach. However, in the meantime the authorities have decided to use the e-learning platform nationwide, so there is a strong possibility that it will become part of the curriculum at national level. In addition, some other organisations (NGOs, schools) already use the platform, and young boys and girls themselves use a simplified version via their mobile phones. In several countries, youth started replicating the trainings and awareness-raising sessions in their communities. Also in Mali, an SMS text-messaging service and website have been developed, enabling young people to ask questions related to their SRHR. The interest of the youth in using and promoting these platforms is a strong indication of their effectiveness.

Another original approach was developed in Nepal, where women-led door-to-door campaigns were organised to spread awareness, particularly among women, on SHRH issues. These campaigns also helped to build women’s confidence to speak publicly on health issues.

Finally, Vietnam is a special case as the programme was targeted at schoolchildren aged 6-15 years. The evaluation confirmed the findings of the documents that most children (both girls and boys), using innovative ICT among other tools, gained substantial knowledge and understanding about children’s rights, and that this also happened at the level of their parents, teachers and school heads.

In some countries (MA, PA, NI, NE), the programme has also used specific tools (e.g. brochures, theatre plays, concerts, radio programmes, wall magazines) to communicate with communities and enable youth to go beyond awareness raising and engage in concrete actions (including conducting advocacy) related to the fulfilment of their rights. Some countries (e.g. MA and PA) also focused on strategically

important groups such as journalists, who consequently ensured more and better reporting on the rights of youth and on sensitive issues such as SRHR.

Overall, it can be concluded that efforts to raise knowledge and awareness have been largely successful. Groups addressed by the programme have effectively raised their knowledge and awareness, which not only implies that the programme has addressed an important need, but also that the ways in which it has done so have been largely effective. The main challenge, at least in some countries, seems to have been in effectively including allies (in particular, parents) in the approach. In some countries (PA in the second phase, MA), parents have been largely ignored or were not effectively reached, and youth in particular have indicated this lack of parental involvement as a major constraint to programme success. Other countries (NE, AF) have been more successful in this regard. As such, it has been largely left to the young people themselves to address SRHR issues in particular with their parents, which has not always been easy (e.g. for boys in PA, MA).

### 5.1.2 Capacity to articulate needs and aspirations on health and/or education

Efforts to achieve this outcome were closely related to those undertaken to achieve the previous outcome (focused on awareness and knowledge), which can actually be considered as a first progress marker towards the effective articulation of needs and aspirations. More specifically, virtually all countries undertook efforts to promote and develop child or youth groups and leadership among the youth. Special attention was given to female leadership, e.g. by ensuring equal participation of boys and girls in leadership training courses and providing specific leadership training for girls. These efforts mostly proved successful, as illustrated (for example) by the success of girls in elections or in accessing leadership positions within schools (TA, MA, VI) and youth organisations. In Nepal, a young female leadership forum was set up, aiming to bring female youth together and provide them with capacity-building support to become female leaders of CSOs.

Overall, the emergence and consolidation of strong leadership has been substantial in the programme and has often impressed other stakeholders, care-takers and duty-bearers alike, but also the NGOs involved in the programme.

Overall, there are clear indications of the effectiveness of the programme in terms of 'needs articulation'. In Afghanistan, the fact that youth managed to monitor and assess the quality of healthcare services and demand access to quality services is a clear indication of their capacity to articulate their needs and aspirations. Besides investing in leadership training programmes, most countries (including NI, GE, TA, MA) have also explicitly invested in the set-up of youth groups or youth councils (NI, MA, GE, AF, TA, PA in year 4) and YABs, in that way strengthening youth's capacities to speak in public, write memorandums, organise youth forums, etc.

#### **Box 2: A peer educator experience of Mali**

"Together with 11 other adolescents (six girls, five boys), I have been trained two days by FAWE (local partner NGO) to become a peer educator. The training covered issues including SRHR, the use of the e-learning platform, gender-based violence and early marriage. After the training, I created a group of 10 peer educators in my school to start education in the school. We shared our knowledge with our peers, not only in our school but also outside. In the beginning, this was not easy, but little by little we improved, also because of the support of FAWE.

"This voluntary work has been an important experience in my life. I was happy to share my knowledge with my sisters. My parents have been very positive towards my commitment and told me that when they were young, such activities did not exist. They also said that my work would help my peers to avoid making the mistakes that many of their peers made as adolescents."

While youth groups/clubs seem to have functioned adequately and many youth leaders have shown impressive capacities and performance in reaching out to their peers, schools and youth clubs, attempts to create and sustain well-functioning YABs (or similar structures) have not been conclusive and have sometimes failed (NI, GE). This is most probably because they were not initiated from below, or because YABs were simply too ambitious in view of local capacities and programme progress. However, in countries with a tradition of youth organisations (MA, PA), such attempts have been more successful.

In Vietnam, it was found that nearly half of the children interviewed by the evaluation team shared the messages on child rights with their peers and parents.

### 5.1.3 Actual changes in behaviour and practices

In many countries, substantial evidence has been provided that increased levels of awareness, knowledge and articulation of needs and aspirations have *directly* led to important changes in behaviour and practices at the level of youth, but also among care-takers and even duty-bearers.<sup>26</sup> While such changes are not explicitly included in the programme's results framework, they are too important to be ignored. We therefore added this additional sub-chapter to briefly describe the changes achieved. The most important changes can be summarised as follows:

- Overall, the increased capacities of youth enabled them to act as *wider* (i.e. beyond the education and health sectors) change agents in their society (AF, NI, MA, PA).
- Increased knowledge and awareness often resulted in improved skills and self-confidence among youth with regard to managing their adolescence and SRHR, so that they feel better prepared to face the challenges of life, take informed decisions and build their future (NI, MA, PA). Without any doubt, this change has also led, albeit indirectly, to young people contributing to the achievement of some of the MDGs.
- In Pakistan, one of the programme outcomes (phase 1) was that care-takers who listened to radio talk shows would not only increase their knowledge but would also discuss SRHR rights within their families; another outcome mobilised them to support the campaign on SRHR education. Both outcomes have materialised to some extent, according to the evaluation findings.
- Also in Pakistan, efforts to engage in dialogue with religious and political leadership on the basis of the edutainment campaign, led to the adoption of a child marriage restraint bill in one of the programme provinces.

#### **Box 3: Becoming confident in Vietnam**

"One day, Ngan and I went back home after class, at 5pm, a little bit late as usual. Suddenly I heard a big voice from Ngan's house. Her dad beat her because she came home late and did not cook in time. It was not because she was hanging out [that we were late], but because she had a late class. I came closer to her dad and tried to explain this to him, but he did not listen and told me to keep away. I said that if he violated children's rights I could call the police. I tried to explain more to him about children's rights. [I said] if he continued to do that, I could have called the local authorities. Then he understood and promised not to do it again, and that he would take care of Ngan. I was so happy then."

*Student from Ha Huy Tap Secondary School, Vietnam*

<sup>26</sup> Some but not all these changes will be addressed under chapter 5, which deals with the longer-term improvements brought about by the programme in children's and youth's environment.

- In Vietnam, activities in schools related to child rights have not only raised awareness among care-takers and duty-bearers, but have also encouraged parents to participate more in school activities and management, and to support teachers. Their and the teachers' efforts have made schools more child-friendly and pleasant, impacting positively on school results. At the family level, there was evidence of children more freely raising their needs with their parents and the latter responding positively; however, this positive picture was not homogeneous, as many cases of parental misbehaviour (e.g. physical violence towards children) persisted.
- In Nepal, many Community Health Committees have grown into institutions where women engage in a self-empowering process enabling them to address important problems in society that affect their lives.
- Actions at the local level to question the quality of education have, in some cases, led to direct improvements in education access and quality (AF, TA) and to the specific needs of girls in schools being addressed (TA).
- Changes in knowledge and awareness led to changes in the views, attitudes and practices of parents and more broadly at community level, with regard to girls' education (NI, MA, NE), early marriage (NI, MA, NE, PA), female genital cutting (MA) and other issues related to SRHR, such as responsible sexual behaviour.

## 5.2 Objective 2: Use of improved skills to claim rights to health and/or education in decision-making spaces

In the MRMV programme dynamics and underlying TOC, this objective follows the previous one, in the sense that improved awareness, knowledge and articulation are considered as prerequisites for *collective* action.<sup>27</sup> This has also been the underlying assumption of the programme strategy and TOC, as the objective refers to *improved* individual, collective and organisational skills. That said, it is important to be aware of substantial differences between the countries in terms of the level of organisational strength among youth *prior to the programme*. In countries (such as Mali and Pakistan) where youth organisations already existed, the programme had less need to invest in creating the adequate organisational conditions for change beyond the individual level.

### 5.2.1 Strengthened organisation to claim rights to health and/or education

Within MRMV, various ways of organising to claim rights have emerged, which are often country-specific and anchored in local practices and traditions. In *Niger*, the approach of defining action plans at the level of so-called community youth groups (*fadas*) grouped into larger youth spaces (*espaces*) has proved an excellent tool for organising local action. In many cases, however, lack of resources seems to have impeded effective implementation of youth's action plans. In *Georgia*, regularly conducted Child Health Rights Forums provided important opportunities to analyse existing policies and to promote and claim health rights, including via local media. In *Tanzania*, the model of *barazas* (student councils) was promoted, whereby young leaders and especially girls were empowered to speak out and raise issues related to their schools, and in that way to increase the level of democratic functioning of the barazas. In *Afghanistan*, much effort was undertaken to establish functional youth groups at different levels (community, district, provincial, university network) and train their leadership. This approach was successful, as strong networks were created in which youth shared knowledge and learned from each other; in many cases this boosted the young people's morale, and mobilised high levels of energy and commitment towards positive change. Youth groups also started to address specific problems, in some

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<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that they also *directly* contribute to important changes in the lives of young people, as demonstrated under 4.1.3.

cases beyond the boundaries of the health and education sectors (e.g. youth advocated for the rehabilitation of roads).

In *Mali*, youth organisations already existed before the start of the MRMV programme, but the programme also managed to include talented youth leaders in its activities. A new youth organisation called AJCAD emerged (partially as a consequence of programme action); it quickly grew into a full programme partner working alongside partner NGOs, and became one of the leading youth structures at the national level. The role of the programme seems to have mainly been to create adequate frameworks and spaces and to provide resources for the youth to undertake action, both independently and working closely with the programme's NGO partners. In addition, AJCAD leaders said they learned a lot from MRMV about how to improve their lobbying and advocacy, which now is based on solid evidence.

In *Pakistan*, during the first three years of the programme the main focus was on a mass media approach, with less attention given to alliance-building and organising the youth. As well as having made an impact on society at large, this approach provided the groundwork for gaining allies' support in organising young people in youth clubs during the second phase (year 4 of programme implementation). In total, 32 clubs were formed in the second phase, with equal representation of girls and boys. Second-tier organisations with a democratically elected leadership (in the form of district youth clubs) also evolved, and aim to continue their activities after programme closure. These structures were clearly on their way to being owned and steered by the youth, who were also able to overcome restrictions placed by parents on their daughters' participation.

The work with children in *Vietnam* inevitably required specific approaches to optimise children's organisation and, accordingly, participation in the programme. Specific platforms were developed (such as children's clubs, child forums, gameshows, TV programmes) allowing children to raise their voice and share their views and concerns with parents, teachers, local decision-makers and the wider public.

### **5.2.2 Increased capacities to agree on and voice a shared agenda in open and closed decision-making spaces**

An analysis of the achievements in all countries pointed to a variety of initiatives taken. In *Georgia*, coordinated action on International Children's Day succeeded in bringing together key decision makers (including the chair of parliament, several ministers and key journalists) to discuss the effectiveness of existing policies and potential for improvement. In *Pakistan*, the edutainment campaign was partially designed to mobilise care-takers to support a campaign and a petition on SHRH education. More than 500,000 people signed a petition calling for youth-friendly policies and an improved education system. In the fourth year, the youth clubs and district youth clubs had grown into forums and spaces where youth were able to discuss, design and implement initiatives to pursue their rights. In *Afghanistan*, youth joined forces with other actors to lobby governors to provide support for youth resource centres. They also engaged in assessing the quality of health and education services, lobbied for the ratification of the National Youth Policy, and often worked with officials to find solutions to local needs and problems.

In *Mali*, the various spaces for claiming youth rights have already been referred to above. An important achievement in this country was the lobbying and advocacy campaign for quality education, in the period preceding the presidential and legislative elections of 2013. At that time, the programme was instrumental in creating a common platform, including key CSOs, that designed effective tactics and tools to approach the government and make it more aware of the importance of quality education. The campaign's influence led to quality education gaining a more prominent place on the political agenda. In *Nepal*, continued advocacy work resulted in over 1,600 young women being elected into key positions on local decision-making bodies.

**Box 4: Increasing capacities of youth organisations to access services in Afghanistan**

One of the youth members from the Ashtarlay district of Dai Kundi established a youth union that changed into an NGO after fulfilling the formal registration requirements of the Ministry of Economics. This NGO is currently implementing youth development projects and is providing new job opportunities for youth.

From the fieldwork interviews, it was clear that targeted youth members are mobilised and doing volunteering work such as university-enrolment preparation, road rehabilitation, small dam rehabilitation to generate electricity, tree plantation, sports events, education competitions, and collecting funds to support medical treatment of patients. The trained youth group members now act as role models, and other youth group members who did not participate in the programme look up to them and are also keen to be trained, to get involved in decision-making structures and to take part in volunteering activities.

In *Vietnam*, specific approaches were developed to genuinely address children's needs and give them a voice. Children were consulted when the 'School Work Plans' were drafted. 'Dialogue' events, in which children had open discussions with other stakeholders (community heads, school directors, teachers, parents) proved effective in bringing major issues to the forefront. The platforms created at school level were, however, not consolidated at higher levels (e.g. via collective representations at district or higher levels). Every year a district-level child forum was held, but the issues taken up on these occasions were not translated into policy proposals and policy changes.

The radio programmes referred to under 5.1.1 and implemented in several countries (NI, MA, PA, NE, AF, TA) should not be considered only as a means for increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding. In reality, particularly where youth have been in charge of the radio programmes, these have grown into spaces where (often with the open support of other stakeholders, including parents and sometimes even duty-bearers) authorities have been challenged as part of a broader effort to claim rights to health and education.<sup>28</sup> The effects of these, often continuous, efforts are difficult to assess (except in a number of cases where local authorities immediately reacted on reported problems), but in the countries mentioned above, radio has become an important and generally acknowledged means to convey youth messages and to call for changes in attitude and behaviour. In addition, the fact that youth played a key role in these programmes has often reinforced the society's perception of young people's potential as agents of change.

In several countries (MA, NI, PA, AF), MRMV has been instrumental in promoting social networks and interaction as a means for communication and exchange among youth at the local, national and even global levels. While the effects of improved communication and exchange could not be adequately assessed, youth has at least improved ways of mutual communication on topics they consider important in their lives. Finally, text messaging, street theatre and 'skits'<sup>29</sup> have been used both to assist youth with particular questions about SRHR and other topics relevant to youth (MA) and to influence wider public opinion (PA).

<sup>28</sup> The recently conducted evaluation of the Nepal component of the programme found that radio shows have increased accountability and played an important role in linking communities with national-level duty-bearers.

<sup>29</sup> A skit is 'A short, usually comic dramatic performance or work; a theatrical sketch. 2. A short humorous or satirical piece of writing' (Free Dictionary).

### **5.3 Objective 3: Increased engagement and action of duty-bearers and influencers with marginalised children and youth**

This objective is clear and so is its connection with the two previous objectives. To some extent, it can be considered as an illustration of the effectiveness of the youth's organisation and claim-making with regard to their health and education rights. Specific challenges in assessing this third objective relate to its heterogeneity at the level of the duty-bearers and influencers targeted, as these are located both at the national, intermediate and (very) local level, depending on the actions undertaken by the youth. A second difficulty relates to assessing the quality of consultation between duty-bearers and youth: to what extent are these consultation processes authentic and are youth preoccupations genuinely taken into account?

#### **5.3.1 Increased recognition of duty-bearers and influencers of boys and girls, young women and men as a valid constituent**

In *Niger*, the programme succeeded in gaining recognition and obtaining formal official support, as substantiated via several declarations and the presence of authorities during key programme events. Community and religious leaders acted in similar ways. On the other hand, implementation reports suggest that the programme's initial objective, i.e. to promote changes in the curriculum to enable young people to become aware of their rights to education and SRH, was quickly abandoned. Towards the end of the programme, youth structures intended to get their interventions included in local development frameworks.

In *Nepal*, lobby initiatives ensured healthcare issues were brought to the fore during local elections, so that many issues were included in political manifestos. In addition, the programme has been very successful in getting 1,600 young women elected into key positions in various local decision-making bodies; in many places, strong women's groups have become a force to be reckoned with in local politics. In *Afghanistan*, the recognition of youth as an active partner in dealing with community issues has been one of the important outcomes of the programme. Efforts have been successful in various ways, e.g. the inclusion of youth in the formulation of the country's youth policy, and the constructive dialogue between provincial and district officials, service providers and youth to discuss problems related to health and education; many officials now invite youth group representatives to all major events organised by government authorities. In more general terms, progress has been noted in the participation of youth in decision-making structures at various levels of society.

#### **Box 5: Youth organisations being recognised as a stakeholder in policy formulation (Afghanistan)**

Youth committee members were invited to take part in discussions and consultations regarding the new National Youth Policy. Youth representatives advocated to incorporate health, education and other (youth) rights into this policy. The Minister's council approved the National Youth Policy in August 2014; the implementation strategy is currently under development and implementation will start around mid-2016 (according to the fieldwork notes). Furthermore, an agreement with the Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy (from the Ministry of Education) was signed, and stated that students can be enrolled in formal schools after taking the literacy classes organised by the programme and passing the exam organised by the Ministry of Education.

*Mali* has a strong tradition of autonomous youth action, so the recognition of youth as actors in their own right had already to some extent been realised at the time of the programme start-up (at least in the capital city of Bamako, where most programme action has taken place). However, the strong performance of youth on various occasions has made many duty-bearers become more aware of the potential of youth as change agents.

In *Pakistan*, the edutainment campaign (years 1-3) did not specifically target political decision makers, but worked hard with religious leaders to obtain their support for the changes advocated, in particular in the area of SRHR. The approval of the LSBE (Life Skills Based Education) curriculum was achieved following a major advocacy effort with the government. In addition, 13 religious leaders from different religious backgrounds started to include SRHR issues in their weekly sermons, which generated a lot of interest and willingness among the wider public. Furthermore, the campaign strategy aimed to realise a shift in public opinion towards the inclusion of SRHR in education, via a combined set of actions directed towards the public at large: radio talk shows, a media award for investigative journalism, journalist training to report on sensitive issues, high-profile concerts, etc. Part of the strategy was to obtain public support from public figures, but also to include key authorities such as the High Education Commission. Even so, the strategy in Pakistan has *not* been a strategy focusing explicitly on duty-bearers. Overall, there was a significant increase in occasions where government authorities, journalists, religious scholars and parliamentarians openly engaged in programme events and endorsed key campaign issues, e.g. in favour of SRH education for adolescents.

#### **Box 6: Edutainment campaign in Pakistan**

The drama serial 'Kis Say Kahoon' (Who should I speak to?) was the main tool in the edutainment campaign, which alone reached an estimated 1.5 million people with awareness-raising messages. It tactfully touched upon communication challenges that young people face when growing up. The play challenged taboos and highlighted the vital role of parents in the healthy upbringing of their children, and the need for open and frank communication with them. Areeba Mohsin presented an online review with the title '**5 Reasons Why PTV's Kis Se Kahoon is a Youth-based Drama That Hits the Mark!**' on Reviewit.pk, which received 59 comments. One of these reads as follows:



Coolbluez · a year ago

I call this drama as 'Drama of the century'. No more crying, hopeless, helpless women but actually girls who trust themselves and can go beyond boundaries to prove their strength. Love PTV. I'm so glad to see PTV showing diverse content and am looking forward to visit Pakistan soon and watch this play on actual TV with my family than to sit and watch alone on Youtube

In *Vietnam*, attempts were made to enable schoolchildren to voice their views and get answers to their questions, e.g. via mailboxes, child forums and TV programmes. Efforts to get more teachers and parents involved in managing school budgets did not really materialise, but they did get a bigger say in other governance issues, such as activity planning and follow-up. For instance, at one school, the school head and vice-head provided information on the overall budget and expenditure during the annual school planning. However, expenditure details were not discussed with teachers, parents and students, even though this is crucial in order for the school to be socially accountable. Teachers claimed that they could ask for these details but in reality never cared to do so.

#### **5.3.2 Increased action of duty-bearers and influencers taken to improve access and quality of health and/or education services**

A health campaign initiated by the *Georgia* programme, that focused on the need for the government to invest in healthcare, persuaded the government to allocate resources to address specific health problems, including establishing a leukaemia centre. In *Nepal*, similar efforts led to the authorities granting funds for the establishment of a community centre. Several other issues brought to the attention of government officials have been addressed and have led to improvements in healthcare infrastructure and access to funds for local actors. In *Tanzania*, efforts to get the *bazaras* model (which was mainstreamed in two provinces) adopted at the national level seem not to have materialised, though neighbouring schools not included in the programme started to adopt the model and asked for support from MRMV's implementing partners. In *Afghanistan*, authorities reacted positively to the results of the youth's assessment of healthcare services, by taking adequate measures (including firing

unprofessional nurses) or granting requests for support (e.g. for literacy and computer training). Youth and officials also worked together to identify needs and problems and to hold local officials responsible in the event of lack of quality services. The authorities also included the integration of recommendations of the youth in the National Youth Policy.

**Box 7: School authorities heeded calls for improved classroom amenities**

- “I wondered about the lack of equipment to study chemistry and physics. In the children’s forum ‘Listen to the children’s voice’, I raised this issue but the teachers said that they could not afford the equipment. Only one year later, the teachers provided some equipment. I felt very happy but there was still not enough equipment so I still faced difficulties in studying these subjects.”
- “I wanted to study IT in my school because students can study this in other schools. All the students in my class wrote a letter which we put into the mailbox to ask about this. The Principal asked us to wait for the provincial-level [meeting] to raise this issue. The education managers said that in 2015 we could study this subject, and now we can. Similarly, once I asked for a new writing board because it was too blurry when writing on the old one. The teacher discussed this with the school management board and after that, we had a new one.”

*From interviews with students from Nguyen Van Linh Secondary School, Vietnam*

In *Mali*, a broad and strong advocacy campaign for quality education, as part of the ‘Education for All’ movement, put this issue at the forefront during the election campaign and succeeded in getting a manifesto signed by many political candidates. The campaign continued after the elections and focused on budget monitoring, among other issues. Later, the campaign lost its momentum because of problems with the local partner in charge of its coordination, and because of the MRMV programme directing its efforts towards the integration of the e-learning platform on SRHR in the national curriculum (see above). Key figures from the Ministry were involved in this process and the government has recently taken the decision to include the platform in the curriculum.

In *Pakistan*, duty-bearers were only indirectly targeted by the major edutainment campaign that aimed to enhance changes at the level of youth, public opinion and care-takers in first instance, but the edutainment campaign was complemented with other activities targeting government officials (including activities related to the approval of the LBSE curriculum). As such, these changes also required government support in several ways to put the curriculum in place. Such support, however, became more difficult to secure after a coordinated attack, orchestrated by conservative circles, against the programme action around SRHR, notwithstanding the fact that the programme succeeded in designing and implementing a good mitigation strategy to withstand the attack. As such, the programme noted some important achievements, such as the adoption of a child marriage restraint bill in one province, investigative reports made by journalists on LSBE issues, especially on early marriage, sexual abuse of children and gender-based violence. However, in general, more advocacy efforts are needed to ensure consistent and prolonged action from the duty-bearers targeted.

**Box 8: Excerpt from the Sindh province (Pakistan) Child Marriage Restraint Bill**

*“Whoever, being a male above eighteen years of age, contracts a child marriage shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to three years but shall not be less than two years and shall be liable to fine.”*

While effective school governance was the overall objective of the MRMV programme in *Vietnam*, the programme did not undertake efforts to ensure the participation of teachers, parents and students in a review of the school curriculum (e.g. to remove gender stereotypes from school resources or to address specific issues related to the needs and priorities of particular ethnic groups), even though there was

actually an opportunity for their participation in this.<sup>30</sup> Some changes in school governance at the level of individual schools (particularly the participation of right-holders in the school activities, and the introduction of original ways to give voice to children via child forums and mailboxes) on the basis of the MRMV experience did, however, take place at local level. At the national level, MRMV – along with other local and international NGOs – managed to lobby successfully for the inclusion of a chapter on child participation in the revised the law on children, and for the development of a national programme on child participation; this mentions specific tools (as used by MRMV) to enhance child participation, such as child forums, student journalist clubs and mailboxes.

#### **5.4 Objective 4: Strengthened capacity of Oxfam and partners to work on youth agency and support youth action in country programmes**

*This fourth objective has for the most part not explicitly been addressed in the day-to-day implementation of the programme, and is only rarely discussed in implementation reports and other programme documents; only one country programme has included this objective in its own results framework. Given that, in our understanding, this objective is situated at the ‘above country’ level, we will only focus on this level in our analysis below, although much capacity building at partner level has occurred implicitly during programme implementation. As such, there is some overlap with the topic dealing with the (possible) advantages of MRVM as a multi-country programme (see chapter 7.3 below).*

*It is important to recall that the main thrust of this programme has been at the country level, despite initial ambitions (in particular at the level of the Steering Committee) to go further. This also applies also to the lobbying and advocacy experience that young women and men have gained via their involvement in the programme within their respective countries, often in close cooperation with the Oxfam country offices and programme partners. The same applies to the second outcome: as evidenced at various places in this report, substantial learning has taken place (in terms of acquiring knowledge, experimenting, using specific tools and instruments) within the countries (as above) to ensure better quality youth engagement across the different types of activities undertaken.*

##### **5.4.1 Increased experience of young women and men in relating to each other and in connecting to campaigners at global level**

Experience within MRMV (being an innovative programme) has shown that this outcome was too ambitious, notwithstanding the efforts of the programme Steering Committee and the GCT to get it realised, and abstractions made from some individual success stories, which should not divert us from a more global assessment. Several rather fundamental constraints ensured that no tangible results could be achieved. First, it should be realised that finding a match between campaigners and development workers (even those adopting a RBA) is *always* a challenge: their cultures, perspectives and priorities are often different, aside from the fact that both campaigns and major programmes such as MRMV have their own dynamics that might rarely coincide. In addition, it was virtually impossible to find a campaign theme or focus that could be interesting and relevant to all eight MRMV country programmes, each with different focal points, approaches and weight attached to lobbying and advocacy. Third, country actors were at best open to and interested in being informed about and learning from each other’s experiences, but never showed a real and continued interest or ambition to engage in global campaigns beyond the country level.

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<sup>30</sup> Interviews with the NGO partners of Oxfam Vietnam indicated that the national education policies do have scope for curriculum adaptation at the district level (for example, if the district has a high proportion of people from ethnic minorities).

A more realistic approach has actually been developed within the programme, with the global capacity-building workshop on advocacy in Nairobi, in which youth from the programme countries participated and a basis could be laid down for youth-driven advocacy *at the national level*. In addition, ad hoc inclusion of MRMV work in global campaigns provided good results, in as far as there was a good connect between the global campaign and local dynamics, and win-win effects could be achieved. Finally, the use of the peer review approach during the Mid-term Review was meant to encourage cross-programme learning; it produced some effects in a few cases, but most learning seems to have been limited to the level of the individuals participating in the review.

A particular experience in Vietnam constitutes an exception to what has been stated above. The collaboration and advocacy of Oxfam, local NGOs and INGOs, using MRMV's experience and achievements, has been helpful in specifying a chapter on 'child participation' in the revised law on children, and the development of a national programme on child participation. A few other 'matches' occurred (e.g. with Mali, because of the inclusion of a strong youth movement in the programme), but these were more of a coincidence rather than the result of a deliberate strategy.

#### **5.4.2 Increased knowledge and tools of Oxfam and partners to engage youth and children in programmes, campaigning and decision-making spaces**

According to different sources (in the countries and outside), the GCT and its Programme Coordinator in particular, were successful in the early implementation stages in streamlining views and perceptions of the programme and getting these internalised at the level of country implementation teams. As a result, a process of informal learning from practice and exchange was generated, which eventually grew into a kind of MRMV learning community, to which people connected voluntarily. However, little evidence has been found of these positive processes being consistently translated into organisational learning, and few results have actually been achieved at the 'above-country' level. An exception to this seems to be the role which MRMV has played in the genesis of the YAC (Oxfam Youth as Active Citizens) initiative (see below), an attempt to better coordinate, within the Oxfam family, several efforts related to youth that all worked along the same principles. MRMV, by virtue of its large experience and organisational strength, has been a strong factor in the YAC take-off process.

All in all, most probably, Oxfam has been too ambitious in trying to promote, at the global level, learning processes to better engage children and youth in programmes, campaigning and decision-making spaces, maybe because this ambition was formulated at a time when organisational conditions within Oxfam were not (yet) that conducive. In addition, opportunities might have been missed, e.g. there was limited use of electronic platforms (beyond the Facebook page and the website) where not only youth themselves but also Oxfam and partners could exchange their experiences with the programme, and present tools and approaches they had developed, etc. (see also chapter 7.3). But to be successful in promoting learning, such exchanges among countries should have in-country dynamics as a starting point. Such learning dynamics existed in several countries, but tapping their learning potential so that other countries could benefit proved to be demanding. There are plenty of examples of cross-country learning events and exchanges, but little evidence has been found of their actual effects in terms of organisational and programme-level learning. Organisational change (in terms of changes in organisational vision and behaviour) is indeed a huge challenge that would have required extra and continued resources. Neither has there been much ambition, at country level, to engage in learning processes with other countries on a *continuous* basis, apart from actively participating in the annual exchange events organised by the programme.

Apart from what has been stated above, substantial progress towards the achievement of objective 4 (or a similar objective) can most probably only be realised when *strategic partnerships* between Oxfam and local partners (both NGOs and youth organisations) are gradually developed. This implies collaboration beyond the boundaries (in terms of content and time) of one particular programme. Many of the programme partners actually had a history of working with Oxfam, but mostly on a programme

basis. A strategic partnership requires another way of working than the present pattern, which mostly is limited to requests from the North to the South to provide inputs for campaigns designed in the North, without much added value for the Southern actors.

Finally, resource persons from Oxfam itself state that MRMV has led to a lot of reflection and learning within the Oxfam family on working with youth, which Oxfam staff members have been able to use in other contexts.

## 5.5 Other programme achievements

There is much evidence that the MRMV programme produced important spin-offs with other Oxfam programmes and initiatives such as training courses, roundtable meetings etc. (e.g. in GE), and generated important learning for the development of similar programmes in various Oxfam programme countries. In addition, Oxfam staff at several levels stated that there has also been a lot of global-level learning within Oxfam as a whole.<sup>31</sup> Within MRMV, tools were developed to engage with youth, and research carried out in collaboration with the University of Sussex led to the creation of a 'checklist' for engaging youth. Further, case studies were produced both at country level and more broadly to document good practice in working with youth. Finally, within Oxfam, MRMV is often referred to both as an example and a catalyst for other multi-country programmes and initiatives. These include YAC (Oxfam Youth as Active Citizens), which was created during a workshop in Istanbul in mid-2015 that brought together 60 people (youth, Oxfam staff, partners) from 25 countries, including a significant number of representatives of the MRMV programme.

Similar effects could be noted at the level of participating NGO partners and youth-led organisations, for which the MRMV programme often provided precious learning and an opportunity for expertise development that could be used in the context of other programmes (e.g. in MA).

## 5.6 Assessment of achievements in view of the initial planning and overarching Theory of Change

Apart from Theory of Change (TOC) schemes and logical frameworks (with different levels of specification) developed in some countries, such as Mali, the MRMV programme has developed a so-called 'global programme framework', a logic model and a corresponding 'narrative TOC'.<sup>32</sup> When comparing actual implementation with the content of these documents, one can conclude that there is a high level of convergence between the 'theory' and the realities on the ground in the eight programme countries. This should not be a surprise, as the formulation of the TOC was an iterative process in which the experiences gained through the implementation of the programme were gradually incorporated.

When comparing actual achievements with the TOC, the following can be concluded:

- In terms of the strategies displayed in the logic model, it can be stated that the five strategic clusters of the model are broadly present in programme implementation. Elements that are less prominently included are: (1) the use of research as a basis for policy advocacy and, above all, (2) the lack of clear approaches to scaling up innovative models and connecting local experiences to global expertise and campaigning initiatives (see also 5.4 above).

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<sup>31</sup> As the fourth objective was relatively less important, the evaluation paid comparatively little attention to it. For changes within Oxfam, no external resource persons could be consulted.

<sup>32</sup> The logic model is included in Annex 5.

- The global programme framework and logic model also reflect the way the programme has been to a major extent implemented over the four years, with strong emphasis on awareness raising (objective 1 of the results framework) at the start, followed by youth gaining skills to articulate their rights (objective 2) and, thereafter, duty-bearers engaging with youth and taking specific action (objective 3). While certainly true to a major extent, this ‘linear’ interpretation of programme implementation also simplifies the actual course of events, as – for instance – awareness-raising activities have continued till the end (which is understandable in the sense that new people have continually been reached) and, in some cases, duty-bearers were approached from the very start so as to create more favourable conditions for dialogue or to allow the set-up of youth groups (AF).
- A similar conclusion can be formulated in as far as the short-term outcomes are concerned: most of these outcomes have been achieved, at least to some extent, in the programme, with the exception of part of the last outcome mentioned: *Young women and men have gained experience in connecting to campaigners at global level who support their ability to claim their rights to health and education*. An important nuance should, however, be added here in the sense that the ‘short-term outcomes’ of the logic model cannot really be considered as ‘outcomes’ in the sense of *effects* (in terms of changes in policies and practices) of an intervention, but rather as outputs which as such do not entail a change.<sup>33</sup>
- The level of achievement of the longer-term outcomes (as stated in the TOC) is difficult to assess (for reasons mentioned earlier), and most probably varies greatly from one country to another. Longer-term outcomes which are ‘close’ (in the TOC chain) to the short-term outcomes seem to have been achieved to a major degree (such as: *young people can articulate their aspirations to ...*), whereas those that are further away are only very partially achieved (in particular the outcome: *A sufficient critical mass of duty-bearers and influencers take specific actions to improve access and quality of health and/or education services for boys and girls, young women and men*). This is even more the case for the last, longer-term outcome (*Oxfam, partners and others’ increased capacity and understanding of youth agency from country programmes is successfully linked to global campaigning to strengthen young people in claiming and accessing better health and education*), the achievement of which has already been compromised by the fact that at lower levels, outputs and short-term outcomes have not been achieved.
- The TOC narrative contains, at the end, a section related to Oxfam’s distinctive competence and added value, which states, among others, that both Oxfams in charge of programme implementation have over time developed significant expertise and capacity with similar programmes, and developed the ability to drive change from the local, to the national, and to the global level. As such, Oxfam would be very well placed to implement the programme. As has been highlighted above (see analysis related to outcome 4) and will be substantiated more in detail in the next section, Oxfam has only been partially able to use this distinctive competence.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the actual mobilisation of expertise has varied; in many countries, the quality of the implementing partners has actually become the main factor in determining the quality of implementation.

In addition to the findings presented above, it is important to mention the following:

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<sup>33</sup> The DAC Glossary of key terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management defines ‘outcome’ as ‘*Intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention*’. Change is related to the effects of an intervention. The same glossary defines ‘effect’ as ‘*Intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention*’ and ‘outputs’ as: ‘*The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.*’

<sup>34</sup> This is dealt with more in detail in chapters 7.1.1 and 7.3.

- There are many ways of presenting a TOC. The MRMV representation remains very close to the (linear) intervention logic of the programme and actually adds little to this logic. Other TOC representations have tried to go 'beyond' this presentation of the logic by, for instance, including key assumptions or key characteristics of the approach in the scheme. It can be considered unfortunate that the programme TOC (at least its representation<sup>35</sup>) contains no assumptions or risks. Their inclusion could have increased the value, usefulness and actual utilisation of the TOC, as the representation of dialectical relations (instead of the simplified linear relationships in the present scheme) among different actors and factors would have provided a more adequate illustration of the programme's challenging change paths and the complexities of working with youth.
- It is important to note that the evaluation has found little evidence of the actual use of the TOC during programme implementation, monitoring and the mid-term evaluation. Reports on implementation do not refer to the TOC, and neither the partners nor the programme team seem to have explicitly used the TOC in their programme management. The actual focus on implementation issues (at the expense of focusing on longer term objectives) might provide an explanation for this.

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<sup>35</sup> The TOC narrative contains a section with well-formulated assumptions which could have been included in the TOC representation.

## 6. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PROGRAMME TO LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN

As mentioned under 1.4, programme monitoring largely focused on activity and output levels, and programme reporting therefore could not systematically, but only illustratively, report on outcomes. With the exception (to some extent) of the evaluation of the Pakistan programme (after three years), there have not been coherent efforts to empirically document longer-term improvements in the environment of youth and children. As such, the improvements indicated below mainly deal with examples and cases that local programme actors consider as *illustrative* (and not necessarily representative) of the impact of their work. Nonetheless, the ample evidence documented in most countries means we can be reasonably sure that the MRMV strategy, i.e. to focus on capacity building and awareness raising related to education and health rights, has produced an influence *beyond* the youth included in the programme. In addition, the consistent reporting of changes that relate to gender relations implies that longer-term improvements might be most tangible in this area.

Finally, it is important to underline that some improvements, in particular those at broader societal level, might be the result of efforts of a broad range of actors, including those not involved in MRMV.

Below, and within the framework outlined above, we present the changes to which MRMV might have contributed at the level of parents and families of the youth involved in the programme, at the level of their schools and communities, and at national and regional level. A final sub-chapter will deal with the contribution of the programme to the MDGs related to education and health.

### 6.1 Improvements at the level of parents and families

The nature of the (contribution to) improvements at the level of parents and families is largely conditioned by the prevailing local norms and traditions: what is considered a major achievement in one country might already have become part of prevailing norms elsewhere. For instance, a key improvement in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, the openness – at parental and family level – towards mixed youth meetings, might not be a major issue elsewhere. Nevertheless, there is a high level of similarity among the improvements described in the documents and those mentioned during field visits.

The major improvements at this level can be summarised as follows, and it should be noted that many of these constitute a contribution to the MDGs (see 6.4 below):

- Parents (in TA, NI, VI, AF among others) have become more open to sending their children, in particular girls, to school and (e.g. in VI) to creating conditions (diminished workload) that enable girls to study.
- In many families, SRHR issues are dealt with more openly and consciously, and measures are undertaken to avoid early or forced marriages, gender-based violence and violence against children, and HIV infections (e.g. in VI, MA, NE and NE).
- In various countries (e.g. MA, NI, GE, PA), it has been reported that efforts to build the capacity of youth have produced broader effects in terms of youth's character development, leading to improved communication and relations with their parents; this process was often triggered by the fact that parents themselves showed much interest in SRHR issues, as they had not received adequate information on SRHR.

- Many programmes also mentioned increased self-confidence at the level of parents, enabling them to get involved in school activities and to deal with authorities to protect the interests of their children (e.g. VI, NE).

**Box 9: Programme influence on parents in Afghanistan**

Parents said that they learned many things as a result of MRMV. These included: women’s, children’s and youth rights, eliminating violence against women, access to basic health and education services, and the importance of involving youth in socio-cultural development and raising their voice to ask for their rights. Parents also explained that the programme offered them a good learning experience in realising the responsibilities and opportunities for youth in society. Parents now believe that youth groups are working well and are doing a good job in improving health and education conditions at family and community levels.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, the limited involvement of parents in some programme countries and, hence, the corresponding limited levels of improvements, constitute one of the major weaknesses of the programme in some countries; it should be underlined that focusing simultaneously on highly different target groups such as teachers, youth and their parents, is a major challenge.

**6.2 Improvements at the level of schools and communities**

Not all programme countries targeted schools, but those that did (e.g. VI, MA, TA, NE) in many cases produced improvements that are claimed to go beyond the initially targeted outcomes. Work around SRHR issues often contributed to better communication and understanding among students, teachers and school directors. In some cases it led to schools more explicitly addressing the specific needs of girls (e.g. by providing separate toilets in TA) and, more generally, to creating a more conducive atmosphere for girls to study and take up leadership roles. Many schools also show a higher level of awareness and determination to prevent and react against gender-based violence (within and beyond school) and early marriages.

**Box 10: Adoption of an e-learning platform in a school in Segou (Mali)**

“Our school was approached by WALE (partner NGO) to participate in the programme, and we agreed. Five teachers volunteered to be trained in the use of the e-learning platform. After their training, they informed and trained their colleagues during two days, and continue to do so each year for new incoming teachers.

“Some teachers are reluctant to be included in the programme because of their religious conviction. We did not oblige them to follow the training, though we tried to convince them. Slowly, we see an evolution in their mind-sets. The use of the platform has produced some spin-offs, such as a conference on sexual harassment in schools, and sketches on SRHR that are part of our ‘cultural’ days.”

*From an interview with three teachers*

Improvements at community level have been of a varied nature. The following examples deserve to be mentioned:

- Probably the most fundamental change, reported in various countries, is that youth are now considered as important change agents in their own right and are able to pursue change via their own organisations. Youth are also considered to be able to play an active role in the decision-making process at the local level. Community leadership of all kinds (traditional, religious, formal) recognises the capacities of youth and the unique contribution they can provide to local development. Youth leaders are often called on to solve problems in local

communities. In some countries with strong traditions (e.g. PA, AF), girls are now being accepted as leaders.

- Local authorities and existing institutions (e.g. the Women’s Unions in VI) show an increased concern for children’s rights and are actively involved in ensuring the quality of education and preventing child marriages; it is, however, very difficult to estimate the breadth and depth of these types of changed practices.

### 6.3 Improvements at the national and regional level

Improvements at higher levels are often similar to those at the level of communities, in the sense that government authorities and other players at national level increasingly recognise the role of youth as change agents and actors to be involved in decision-making processes. As such, examples have been provided of youth leaders and their organisations having played a role in the formulation of national strategies and policies that relate to youth needs and interests. However, as is the case with most lobbying and advocacy efforts, it is difficult to clearly ‘isolate’ the distinctive role and effect of the efforts of youth supported by MRMV. Furthermore, country programmes mostly have not succeeded in pursuing a lobbying and advocacy strategy *on a continued basis*, and have not always been able to liaise strategically in a continuous way with key actors. This is understandable, as policy changes often require long-term efforts before they materialise.

Other, country-specific improvements that deserve to be mentioned include:

- The replication of the MRMV model by the Department of Education and Training in Vietnam.
- The win-win partnership with the media (VI, MA, PA) that increasingly brought to the fore issues related to youth, in particular their SRHR, and hence had an impact on how these issues are dealt with by society at large.

#### **Box 11: How a leading journalist perceives MRMV in Mali**

“MRMV has been successful in reaching out to the media. When important activities are organised, they always invite us, also when activities take place in rural areas. However, we need more training to fully understand the issues advocated before we actually disseminate information. This has not happened so far. But the programme helps us by providing good quality information for our articles. In the longer term, we hope however to become a stakeholder instead of simply being called upon when they need us.

In my view, MRMV and partner organisations have been successful in fighting against the mental inertia that characterises some of our youth. The youth clubs stand for an alternative that seems to attract some of the youth and increases their awareness on issues such as early marriage and gender-based violence.”

- In Pakistan, important policy changes have been initiated, such as the inclusion of life skills (including SRHR-related skills) education in the national youth policy, and the establishment of a national youth fund.
- In Nepal, there has been improved political representation of women: 1,600 women from Community Discussion Classes have been elected to key positions in local decision-making bodies.

## 6.4 The contributions of MRMV to the MDGs on education and health

The overall programme proposal contains several explicit references to the MDGs and states that the achievement of the MDGs implies inclusive and active participation of, in particular, women, children and youth, as these are the most marginalised and vulnerable people within societies. The proposal for the year-4 extension, both at the global and country-specific level, maintained the basic rights-based thrust of the programme while focusing in a more explicit way on the rights of girls and women (groups that receive particular attention in some MDGs). By concentrating on youth rather than on children, the programme<sup>36</sup> did not deal with some of the groups explicitly targeted by some of the MDGs, such as younger children.

More specifically, the MRMV programme proposal submitted to Sida includes objectives that are directly connected to some MDGs, such as policy changes towards quality education, support to young people to acquire knowledge and skills to manage their SRHR, and the development of a social environment favouring the access of girls to (continued) education. However, the rights-based approach of MRMV meant that the programme was geared to develop voice and claim children's and youth's rights to (quality) health and education, but not to directly pursue the achievement of the MDGs as such,<sup>37</sup> which is rather considered a *consequence* of the approach followed. In other words, the MRMV programme framework very much stresses the rights-based approach and defines objectives and outcomes accordingly, but does not include explicitly the envisaged effects of that approach (effects that might coincide with MDGs), which are rather seen as a longer-term impact of the programme.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, MDG objectives were not included systematically in the eight country programme components, nor have they been a direct source of inspiration and motivation for programme implementation teams, partners and the youth themselves.

The programme has developed along its own dynamics (with notable differences between the countries), whereby the approach has very much focused on health and education *rights*. In some countries however, the initial focus on rights has, in practice, expanded to addressing *specific* needs (in particular in the areas of SRH and girls' empowerment), which actually cover part of the MDGs or are clearly contributing to these MDGs (such as those relating to education for girls and maternal health).

When considering the overall programme framework<sup>39</sup> from an MDG perspective, it can be concluded that:

- MRMV has contributed to MDG 2 (*achieve universal primary education*) by:
  - Ensuring that parents (in TA, NI, VI, AF among others) have become more open to sending their children, in particular girls, to school and (e.g. in VI) to create conditions (diminished workload) that enable girls to study.
  - Contributing to better quality primary education and (in VI) ensuring the replication of the MRMV model by the Department of Education and Training.
  - Contributing to increased access of girls to education by promoting gender equality and women's (and girls') empowerment (also see below).
  
- MRMV's contribution to MDG 3 (*promote gender equality and empower women*) has consisted of:

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<sup>36</sup> With the exception of its Vietnam component during part of its implementation.

<sup>37</sup> For example, none of the indicators defined at MRMV outcome level is similar to the MDG targets that more explicitly express the achievements aimed at, for instance, achieving universal primary education, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education, and ensuring universal access to reproductive health.

<sup>38</sup> In addition, and as will be discussed later, the programme has not systematically monitored its effects related to the MDGs.

<sup>39</sup> See Annex 1.

- Consistently reaching out to girls and young female adults, who constituted roughly half of the youth reached by the programme and have been involved on an equal basis in strategic activities such as capacity and leadership building; as a result, in some countries with strong traditions (e.g. PA, AF), girls are increasingly being accepted as leaders.
- Ensuring that in many families SRHR issues are dealt with more openly and consciously, and measures are undertaken to avoid early or forced marriages, gender-based violence and violence against children, and HIV infections (e.g. in VI, MA, NE and NE).
- More in general, the strong focus of the programme on promoting gender equality and women's (and girls') empowerment *as a cross-cutting strategy*, must have produced empowerment effects (which are, however, difficult to estimate).

**Box 12: Gender discrimination at home and changes induced by the programme (Vietnam)**

“There is a family with four daughters but the father does not like girls. He always blames his wife because she could not give birth to any boys. Once, when I visited their family I saw the wife was crying. I asked: “Why are you crying? What’s happened?” She said: “I just want to die. My husband always blames me because we do not have any boys.” After that, the school organised a training course on child rights with the participation of children, teachers and parents. Her husband was invited to the course. I don’t know what he learnt from it, but after the course he seemed to be a changed person. He cares for his wife and daughters, and the family is happy now.”

*Student from Phan Chu Trinh Secondary School, Vietnam*

- MRMV has also contributed to MDG 5 (*improve maternal health*) in various ways:
  - The strong focus in many country programmes on SRHR, with adolescent girls and young women being the main beneficiaries, has constituted an important factor in increasing knowledge and self-confidence among adolescent girls and young women (and has probably led to key behavioural changes related to sexual behaviour).
  - Important policy changes have been initiated, such as the inclusion of life skills education in the national youth policy and the establishment of a national youth fund (PA), and the inclusion of an e-learning platform on SRHR in the education curriculum in Mali.
  - The win-win partnerships with the media (VI, MA, PA) have increasingly brought issues related to youth, in particular to their SRHR, to the fore, and have therefore positively affected how these issues are dealt with by society at large.
  - More broadly, in various countries (e.g. MA, NI, GE, PA), efforts to build the capacity of youth have produced broader effects on their character development and have led to improved communication and relations with their parents; this process was often triggered by the fact that parents themselves often showed a keen interest in reliable information on SRHR issues.
- Finally, MRMV also made a contribution to MDG 6 (*combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases*), via the same strategies and approaches dealing with SRHR which ensured its contribution to MDG 5.

## 7. QUALITY OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

*In this chapter, we start with a global assessment of programme efficiency before addressing a few selected issues, such as the quality of involvement of youth in communication initiatives, the (potential) added value of MRMV being a multi-country programme, and the effects of the Mid-term Review (MTR) and Strategic Gender Review (SGR). The last sub-chapter deals briefly with the Research and Innovation Fund.*

### 7.1 Overall efficiency of programme approach and implementation

Overall, the programme set-up was complex: the MRMV programme was run by three Oxfam affiliates during a period in which the Oxfam family had initiated its internal process towards an Oxfam ‘single management structure’; the programme had activities in eight countries spread over three continents, managed by a Global Coordination Team (GCT) whose members were based in different locations. At country level, several institutional models were developed in response to local circumstances, but country-level MRMV staff were accountable to a local line manager and not to the GCT. In addition, other programmes working with youth had adopted different approaches, while Oxfam had decided to pull out from the health and education sectors.

While to a major extent unavoidable, such high levels of complexity obviously challenged programme efficiency. Although these challenges were managed reasonably effectively, there have been – inevitably – several other factors that have negatively impacted on overall programme efficiency. These include the large geographical and cultural distances between the programme countries (making the desired exchange and learning processes difficult and expensive), and the programme’s complex communication patterns (Steering Committee – GCT – Oxfam country offices – partner organisations – youth groups – individual beneficiaries – care-takers – duty-bearers). This is despite the fact that a major part of MRMV’s activities were implemented in fragile states, where short communication lines, decision-making procedures and simple organisational set-ups often play a major role in efficiency and success.<sup>40</sup>

The MRMV Learning and Innovation Fund was an innovative tool which aimed to generate interesting new approaches and knowledge, and was considered as a means to finance research, to capture key learning, to pilot new approaches, methodologies and technologies, and/or to develop new components for the programme. The fund supported four projects of which, according to an internal evaluation, three can be considered as truly innovative, as they were intended for and made by youth.

#### 7.1.1 MRMV governance structure and process

##### Steering Committee

Overall, the programme has been managed by a *Steering Committee* (SC) that had clear terms of reference defining its mandate as ‘to oversee the overall direction and strategy of the project, and to ensure that its implementation remains on course’. The initial SC was composed of six members

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<sup>40</sup> A thematic evaluation on conflict transformation conducted on the initiative of Partos, the umbrella organisation of the Dutch co-financing agencies (title: Conflict transformation, a science *and* an art) recommended (among others) that ... *adequate, but in essence light frameworks, tools and procedures are designed and applied that give the minimum structure and guidance to the ‘artistic’ efforts needed.* It was found that in fragile state contexts, one should give room to ‘the artist’ (i.e. room for creative solution-seeking), i.e. not everything can be arranged by the ‘classic’ way of working.

belonging to Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib. The *Programme Coordinator* (PC) was tasked with reporting to the SC and providing it with strategic information requiring a steer. The PC also played a role in preparing and organising the SC meetings, including the selection of topics for decision making. SC meetings were planned to take place on a quarterly basis, with SC members expected to allocate 1.5 days a month on average to contribute to the steering of the programme.

As MRMV was a new, challenging and exciting programme, the SC made an enthusiastic start, with members contributing consistently to strategic thinking, and encouraged to do so by a capable programme manager. However, the complex programme set-up (see above) meant that the SC, more than it had intended, had to deal mostly with operational issues. This was to some extent unavoidable (due to it being a new initiative, pioneering role, etc.), but the committee's role was also made more challenging by difficult interpersonal relations and turnover in SC membership. Some of the SC work was delegated to thematic working groups to allow more in-depth work.

Looking back at the role and impact of the SC, it certainly provided important inputs and steering, but could only partially fulfil the initial (but maybe over-ambitious) expectations of strategic steering and achieving broad programme results (as mentioned in outcome 4 of the programme, for instance). A major reason for this finding is that the MRMV programme cycle largely coincided with an important institutional change process within the Oxfam family. This generated a lot of tensions and a lack of administrative clarity, with unclear leadership at times, which unavoidably cast a shadow on MRMV. Harmonising different financial and reporting systems and programme strategies proved to be a massive burden, in particular in the early years of programme implementation. MRMV programme management discussed these issues with senior management, but without tangible effects.

### **Global Coordination Team**

The GCT's effectiveness gained much from the fact that its first coordinator had also played a key role in programme formulation and in the selection of the eight country proposals that were eventually included in MRMV, whereby autonomy and space were provided to the countries as long as they respected a few key parameters including the focus on youth, education and health as areas of intervention, and the adoption of a rights-based approach.

As the GCT had much operational freedom (because of little initial interest by senior management in youth programmes), it could opt for a rather open, innovative and exploring approach, to steer and give freedom at the same time, which eventually led to buy-in from country programme teams. This process was shaped and supported by monthly calls and discussions, by various country visits, and by annual exchange and learning events in which delegations from all countries participated. These learning events were considered as key moments in programme development, as they brought in new and challenging ideas (e.g. by bringing in other actors dealing with youth, such as ActionAid). While the eventual effects of these annual meetings cannot be precisely determined, they may have played an important role in, for instance, giving substance to the 'programme by youth' concept and to shaping advocacy campaigns and strategies, or in adopting interesting approaches from one another (e.g. mutual learning between Mali and Niger, and Pakistan and Nepal via the MTR). The programme also benefited from the high level of continuity of its key staff, also at country level, which in itself is a good indication of the quality and attractiveness of the programme.

The key role of the GCT coordinator implied that her departure, after roughly three years of programme implementation, inevitably brought some discontinuity in programme management, at least in terms of the management style and approach. The void (initially) and change (later) in the GCT key position at a crucial moment in the programme implementation cycle (roughly one year before programme closure) also meant that some key issues were taken up too late, such as the design of exit strategies, and that key processes (follow up of MTR and SGR) were delayed. Furthermore, the implementation of the MEL function remained substandard for most of the implementation period (see below). On a more general level, the fact that GCT members were based in different locations was a challenge throughout the

implementation process. Finally, the inclusion of two countries in which French is the official language obviously complicated matters; as key programme documents and key communications were not translated into French, involvement of these two countries was inevitably limited.

### 7.1.2 Analysis of a few selected issues related to programme efficiency

Within the overall picture described above, there are a few issues that need to be explored in more detail:

- The development of partnerships with local organisations, NGOs in particular, has been beneficial in most cases and has positively impacted on efficiency, especially where partnerships with strong and professional organisations could be forged (PA, MA, AF, NI to some extent). However, the flip side of this strategy was that in some cases cooperation with some partners had to be stopped, either because partners left the programme (PA), underperformed (AF, NE) or were dissolved by government (NI). In addition, the interplay between the Oxfam country office and some (key) partners has been not always optimal (VI, NI, AF), for various reasons that were not always linked to MRMV.<sup>41</sup>
- Related to the previous point, in most countries the programme has succeeded in mobilising youth and tapping their energy and enthusiasm for the benefit of the programme. The ambition to develop a programme *by* youth (rather than just *for* youth) has been successful to an important extent, in particular towards the end of the programme. The mobilisation of contributions of other actors (be it the youth, schools, partners or authorities) is to be welcomed, not only from a pure efficiency point of view, but also as a means to create and consolidate ownership and lay the foundations for benefit sustainability. On the other hand (see also chapter 4 above), it is possible that the focus on a youth-driven programme may have limited the involvement of marginalised youth, with some having to abandon or reduce their participation.
- The contribution of the GCT with regard to MEL has been weak, in particular because of the underperforming MEL function during the first three years of programme implementation. Throughout the programme implementation period, various efforts were undertaken to lay down the basis of a well-developed M&E system, but to no coherent effect. A key constraint was the lack of good baselines (at country level) developed on the basis of a global programme framework. Particular efforts in this regard (elaboration of country-specific TOCs, baseline surveys – even after more than one year of implementation, logical framework reviews) either did not materialise or did not lead to changes; and some of the results achieved, even those with good intrinsic quality, failed to become part of the M&E framework and practice of the actors concerned. The quarterly reports drafted along a pre-determined format constituted the main component of content-related M&E but were restricted mainly to providing interesting records of the activities undertaken and (in the best cases) the outputs achieved. From mid-2015, i.e. towards the end of the programme, the MEL function was addressed more consistently, among other reasons, to prepare for the end-of-programme evaluation and reporting. It was further decided – rightly in our view – only to introduce marginal changes to prevailing monitoring and reporting practices.
- The lack of incentives to monitor and report on results, combined with the lack of a good programme results-based framework, meant that in some countries the focus of programme partners and Oxfam offices became overly operational without much concern about the eventual effects of the efforts undertaken. As such, country programmes were allowed to

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<sup>41</sup> Many MRMV partners have a long history of cooperation with Oxfam, which obviously creates opportunities but also challenges.

continue along the same lines for the entire programme period without the right strategic questions being formulated, a process that remained unchecked because of the limited impact of the programme Mid-term Review and Strategic Gender Review (see also chapter 7.4 below). As mentioned at the start of chapter 5, in particular the overlap among outcomes created some confusion in a few cases and, consequently, rather erroneous monitoring and reporting.

- In many countries (e.g. NI, MA, AF) administrative and financial constraints (linked, among others to Oxfam's financial and reporting requirements and procedural framework, that are considered overly complicated and without added value<sup>42</sup>) have seriously hampered programme implementation and often required precious time from senior programme staff that could/should have been spent on programme content issues. It goes without saying that such a complex administrative set-up can become particularly problematic in the context of an inherently complex programme such as MRMV.
- On the same theme, it has been noted that the extension of the programme (by one year in addition to the initial three-year programme period) was administratively heavy, in particular at country level. Several observations can be made in this regard: first, in retrospect, the short initial programme period (three years) can be questioned in view of the high level of ambition and complexity of the programme and the change process envisaged. Second, the cost-effectiveness of an extension of one year (and one year *only*) is inevitably under pressure; third, the decision, in some countries, to modify the country results framework (e.g. NI, NE, VI) or intervention approach (e.g. PA) casts doubts on the feasibility of achieving sustainable benefits upon the closure of the programme.
- In *Pakistan*, there were long delays in setting up the edutainment campaign; this experienced a clash between a development and commercial approach as the service provider had difficulty grasping the development focus of his client. In addition, a serious backlash was experienced when conservative elements started a coordinated campaign against the programme. As a result, the programme was halted for about six months and much energy had to be spent in the design and implementation of mitigation strategies.
- Unlike in many other programmes, many country-level programmes decided not to use financial incentives to encourage the involvement of youth, journalists, teachers and partners, which points to the efficiency of the MRMV programme.
- Many implementing organisations faced challenges in applying the programme approach of 'doing with/by youth' and often struggled to abandon their traditional approaches, in particular in the early implementation stages. For instance, in some countries (NI, PA), youth involvement did not go so far as to ensure consistent involvement of youth in design and planning, at least not until the last stage of the programme.
- One external issue also needs also to be mentioned: MRMV has experienced the drawbacks and challenges of working in fragile states. A few of the setbacks encountered include the forced retreat from a programme region for security reasons (MA) and the forced or voluntary pulling-out of some partner organisations because of government intervention (NI), as well as security considerations and/or the fact that the programme was dealing with sensitive issues (NI, PA, AF). These events illustrate to some extent the price an organisation has to pay when it has the ambition to promote socio-cultural change via a rights-based approach in fragile states and/or in socio-culturally difficult environments. On the other hand, it could be questioned whether the

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<sup>42</sup> The fact that the programme was implemented by two Oxfam affiliates, each taking the lead in some countries, further complicated matters, as for the Oxfam Novib-led countries two financial teams were involved (first Oxfam Novib then Oxfam GB).

risks were sufficiently taken into account in the preparation process; it might very well be true that the risks were considered 'acceptable' for each country considered in isolation, whereas the picture for the programme as a whole might have looked different.

## 7.2 Quality of involvement of youth in project monitoring and evaluation, and in communication initiatives

*The quality of involvement of a programme actor, in this case youth, is difficult to assess adequately on the basis of documents. Even during fieldwork, 'participation' and 'involvement', which are popular terms in development circles, are also notions that are understood and put into practice in highly different ways. What some will consider (or feel) to be genuine participation, others might view as manipulation or tokenism – and for many actors, it has proven a major challenge to genuinely provide space to youth to do their own thing. Moreover, interaction between children/youth and adults entails particular challenges that relate to their different roles and positions at family and community level (and in projects where actors might compete for limited funds), but also faces challenges relating to differences in perceptions, needs and even interests. In such a context, assessing the quality of participation and involvement inevitably becomes a delicate matter, in particular when such assessment has to be made from a distance.*

Different forms of participation<sup>43</sup> of children and youth seem to have (co-)existed within the same country programmes. In addition, many country programmes have undertaken attempts to set up and develop so-called Youth Advisory Boards (YABs). The picture, however, differs from one country to another, whereby various factors seem to have determined the level of youth and child participation and its development over the programme implementation period.

At one end of the spectrum are countries such as Mali and Pakistan, where there already existed a tradition of youth organisation and involvement, illustrated for example by the existence (prior to MRMV) of youth organisations and networks, and of a clearly identifiable leadership among the youth. In these two countries, representatives of these organisations were involved from the design phase of the programme onwards, and have been consulted and closely involved on a continual basis during programme implementation. *In Mali*, programme partners also played a facilitating role in the set-up of a youth organisation that is entirely autonomous and presently participates in all key decision-making processes related to the programme. This development does not, however, exclude situations where local partner NGOs have struggled to create frameworks and spaces to optimise youth participation and involvement; some NGOs continued to resort to rather traditional approaches whereby they remain in control of decision-making processes. *In Pakistan*, youth were not actively involved in programme design and planning, but did play a role in operational planning and review processes via the youth structures set up (youth councils and district youth councils). In this country, youth audits were conducted to measure programme progress. Youth also played an active role in campaigns related to child marriage, HIV and child abuse.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find countries where active youth citizenship was virtually non-existent prior to the programme (e.g. AF, NI, GE, NE, TA, VT). In these countries, at least in the initial stages, youth were understandably not considered as equal partners, and all key decisions were taken at the level of the programme implementation structures. However, there are clear signs that the pattern of youth involvement has changed over time, at least partially, and that modes of improved involvement of youth were gradually developed. Such evolutions understandably have gone hand-in-hand with the creation and strengthening of youth groups and organisations. As such, in these countries active

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<sup>43</sup> Quality (depth) of participation and involvement is assessed in various ways. A useful tool in this regard is Hart's 'Young People's Participation Ladder', which distinguishes eight levels of participation ranging from 'Manipulation' [of young people] to 'Young people and adults share decision making'.

involvement of youth has become more important; youth representatives have, for instance, been closely associated with M&E activities (e.g. in AF, GE, NE) and even trained in these areas. There are also many examples of an increased role for youth in the design processes of new activities and of shared responsibilities in implementation. In some cases (e.g. GE), youth could take the lead in the implementation of a specific project (e.g. a project on SRHR in GE, financed via the MRMV innovation fund; increased involvement of youth in radio programmes in NI, where the partner NGO retired from the activity to enable youth to take the lead). As such, many examples of ‘shared decision making’ (the highest rung on Hart’s ‘participation ladder’) can be found in the programme.

It has to be mentioned that attempts to set up YABs were not always successful. Externally initiated set-ups of forums or organisations (by the programme or other actors) are actually always delicate affairs. As such, it is not a surprise that some such structures collapsed or suffered from internal tensions (NI).

Finally, *Vietnam* is a particular case, as the programme here focused mainly on children. Programme staff worked hard to clearly inform children and parents, involve parents in decision making, and to develop approaches to optimise child participation, so that in year 4 children and youth led and organised some activities.

While progress in terms of youth involvement can be seen everywhere, there have been few indications of a *structured and continuous* reflection about how to optimise youth involvement and to fully realise the ambition to develop a programme *by* youth. As such, and notwithstanding progress in this regard, in some countries opportunities were missed to gradually shift to approaches that make better use of existing potential for youth participation. That said, the issue of ‘optimal’ youth involvement might be more complex than is often perceived, as there are (or should be) intrinsic limitations to (voluntary) involvement of youth in programme activities, which ideally should be part of the dialogue and negotiation process between youth and actors who want to support them. In addition, the funding of youth activities remains a delicate issue (who makes decisions regarding use of budgets, balance between voluntary work and external support, etc.).

### **7.3 Added value of countries being part of a multi-country programme**

MRMV was explicitly conceived as a multi-country programme and equipped with a coordinating structure, the global coordination team (GCT), which had a mandate that clearly reached beyond routine programme administrative and financial management. As such, the programme has been part of Oxfam’s global work on youth, one of Oxfam’s major areas of intervention. Overall, it has been found that all country-level programmes were well aware of being part of a global programme. The programme engaged in many efforts to create a programme identity, including through substantial communication efforts (e.g. a regular blog, development of case studies, etc.). This provided the programme with a specific brand, which was strengthened via the organisation of an annual international exchange and learning event and other attempts to promote mutual exchange and learning, such as the participation (as peer evaluators) of Oxfam MRMV staff in the MTR field visits to other countries, which they unanimously considered an excellent learning opportunity.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly these efforts added to the creation of a global identity, but awareness of this was more or less limited to those participating in global events; it did not really permeate the awareness of programme staff and other actors, and had limited influence on implementation at country level. Very clearly, country programmes had their own dynamics which were predominantly led by local circumstances, although obviously this does not preclude the integration of learning from other countries.

All countries have been positive about these opportunities for learning and exchange (see also 7.1.1 above, in particular the discussion on the role of the GCT). The exchanges dealt with relevant topics and

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<sup>44</sup> The MTR will be discussed further in this report; see chapter 7.4.1 below.

provided opportunities to share and learn from each other's experiences. Participants also mentioned that these events expanded their outlooks and increased their self-confidence and pride. In most cases, upon their return participants shared their experiences with their peers and, in some cases, with other actors. Nevertheless, apart from a few exceptions (see below), the longer-term effects of these exchange events seem to be limited. It appears that in most cases the learning cycle was not fully concluded, in that 'learning' did not actually result in changed *practices*, not even at the individual level let alone at organisational (in this case programme) level. A well-structured approach did not exist to systematically identify and conceptualise individual learning, to analyse its applicability and need for contextualisation at organisational level, and to consequently translate it into new or enriched organisational approaches and activities. Such a structured learning approach would have helped to overcome the significant intrinsic programme constraints to creating added value (such as the very different socio-cultural environments, the heterogeneity in terms of strategic choices and approaches to promoting youth rights, and language barriers).

Careful analysis seems further to suggest that actual learning was achieved to a greater extent in clearly delineated settings (such as the cross-participation in the MTR process or specific exchange visits, such as that between Pakistan and Afghanistan) where there were opportunities to observe, share experiences and learn from the field realities. The most convincing cases of learning leading to actual change (in VI, PA) are related to participation in the MTR.<sup>45</sup>

From the perspective of country-level actors,<sup>46</sup> it could be questioned to what extent it is desirable and feasible to actively promote beyond-country-level learning within a programme such as MRMV. For sure, there are chances to do so, and maybe interesting opportunities have been missed. For example, other programmes have gained good experiences through internet learning and exchange platforms that can be (but are not always) part of a broader set of measures to promote learning and exchange; however, in these successful cases, programme management seems to have been limited to facilitating communication and the creation of the platforms, and providing some support in structuring and guiding the exchange. Participation in these learning processes seems to have been limited to committed individuals.

It may be more adequate to search, at least in the first instance, for learning and exchange opportunities *within each country*, which some countries (VI and MA) have done with success. Only in cases such as Afghanistan, where local actors suffer from isolation and civil society is weak, a deliberate attempt to promote a 'break out' (i.e. a conscious effort to ensure that staff from Afghanistan has the opportunity to visit other countries) seems to be the most adequate approach.

#### **7.4 The influence of the recommendations of the Mid-term Review and Strategic Gender Review**

As the Mid-term Review (MTR) and the Strategic Gender Review (SGR) were designed and implemented in an entirely different way from one another, it is important to analyse their influence separately (see 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 below). In a third sub-chapter, we will present some overarching conclusions and reflections.

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<sup>45</sup> In the MTR report, p.7, the same idea was stated as follows: *What worked well was the way in which the reviewers learned from another country by immersing oneself in the country for a week. Understanding and experiencing the programme in another context enabled the team members to reflect, as if from the outside, on their own context.*

<sup>46</sup> The situation might be different from the point of view of Oxfam itself, as apparently MRMV has triggered much internal reflection and learning within the Oxfam family (see also chapter 5.4).

#### 7.4.1 The influence of the recommendations of the Mid-term Review

*The MTR was conducted in the last quarter of 2013 and had the following objectives: to assess the relevance of the MRMV global Theory of Change and progress towards the MRMV Global Programme Framework (and identify concrete recommendations as to where any mid-course corrections or improvements may be required at both global and country level; to measure progress in ‘meaningfully’<sup>47</sup> engaging children and youth across the programme; to support cross-programme learning and innovation; and to inform the conceptualisation and design of a second phase of the MRMV programme. In order to optimise learning opportunities, a guided peer review approach was opted for, whereby the external consultant was accompanied by MRMV project officers from other MRMV countries and a member of the GCT. Three countries were visited for the purpose of this review: Nepal, Tanzania and Niger. The choice of these countries was based on considerations including the thematic focus of the programme, the socio-cultural environment (conservative vs. less conservative), and the socio-political conditions (stable, post-conflict, in conflict).*

The GCT and SC have undertaken efforts to unpack the results of the MTR and integrate them in country-level reflections in view of the planning for year 4 of the programme. As such, the evaluation team has found indications of MTR results being included in planning and strategies for year 4 of the programme, but little to no evidence of its influence on further programme implementation, although there is strong evidence of *individuals* having learned a lot via the peer evaluation approach.<sup>48</sup> References to the MTR are rare in the quarterly reports, and local stakeholders interviewed during field visits could hardly relate anything about the findings of the MTR. This finding is rather surprising, as mid-term reviews usually have an operational focus with an explicit aim to provide information about programme progress and undertake remedial action where necessary.<sup>49</sup>

There are probably various explanations for the apparently limited influence of the MTR. First of these is the rather eclectic nature of the MTR report provided. For sure it contains some interesting and challenging insights, but it lacks operational focus and clear answers to the TOR key evaluation questions, which in our view were the right questions to be addressed and should have been considered as the key outputs of a mid-term reflection and assessment process. The MTR only very partially addressed these key questions, did not formulate recommendations, and hence provided little substance to build upon further. The report does not address key issues of the TOR and fails to include the richness of the peer review approach and much of the advice brought in by peer evaluators. As such (and with the exception of individual learning effects via the peer review approach, which are not documented in the MTR report), programme actors were only provided with a document with interesting global reflections on the programme, but without clear recommendations for the future. As a consequence, and despite the organisation of webinars and other exchange and learning efforts that followed, the GCT and SC failed to translate some of the MTR’s key observations and reflections into *operational (country-specific)* recommendations that could have guided country actors in the next programme stage. As such, translation of the MTR findings into recommendations and subsequent actions was entirely left to the country programme teams. This might have constituted too big a demand, the more so because towards the end of the MTR period, the actors were preoccupied with securing programme funding for an additional programme period.

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<sup>47</sup> *Meaningfully* in this regard refers to the third and subsequent steps in Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation: *Consulted and Informed* (Hart, R: 1992).

<sup>48</sup> Note that none of the countries visited in this end-of-programme evaluation was included in the MTR. The choice to visit other countries (than those included in the MTR) was deliberate. On the other hand, representatives from all countries, with the exception of Afghanistan, had the opportunity to participate as peer reviewers.

<sup>49</sup> These aims have also been included in the TOR of this MTR.

#### 7.4.2 The influence of recommendations of the Strategic Gender Review

*'The purpose of the Strategic Gender Review (SGR) was to help the MRMV team assess where the programme is now, and propose recommendations to the MRMV Global Programme Coordination Team and Steering Committee for future work and the development of a second phase of the programme.'*<sup>50</sup> The review was initiated because the initial aim of consistently including gender in the MTR did not materialise, as the MTR team was weak on gender. The SGR consisted of two components: first, a process of engaging staff and youth representatives in individual and collective reflection and dialogue on the gendered dimension of the programme. The second component was the drafting of the review's findings, based on a review of MRMV and external documents, interviews (mainly via Skype) with 26 staff, a survey of 13 youth representatives and two Skype live chats with youth representatives.

*Even more important was the follow-up of the SGR, which consisted of: a programme webinar (in May 2014) to discuss the review results; special sessions during the 2014 and 2015 learning events to unpack some of the issues raised by the SGR; so-called 'gender justice calls' with (mainly) the MRMV programme coordinators in five countries (between July and September 2015); and another webinar in early September 2015 to discuss 'gender justice work in difficult socio-cultural and religious contexts', in which representatives from four countries (Afghanistan, Mali, Niger, Pakistan) participated.*

Besides the information gathered during the field visits, in particular the reports related to the SGR follow-up activities enabled a good understanding of the influence of the review at country level (much more so than the quarterly reports). Overall, the follow-up to the SGR varied a great deal between the countries. In countries with relatively strong steering mechanisms, such as Vietnam, or countries where the country gender advisor could be called in for the SGR follow-up (as in Niger), changes seem to have been more substantial than elsewhere. In Vietnam, a gender objective was added to the programme and well-selected initiatives were undertaken, such as efforts to promote the rewriting of school curricula to eliminate gender stereotypes. In Niger, gender was better mainstreamed in regular programme activities, with increased attention given to overcoming barriers for girls/young women to fully participate, and promotion of female leadership. In Pakistan, the drastic reorientation of the programme in year 4 benefited equally from the SGR inputs as it did from the expertise of the new programme partners.

In other countries (e.g. MA, NE, AF), little evidence has been found of the influence of the SGR. The Mali programme experienced difficulties in explicitly integrating gender justice in its action plan, as it depended much on the openness and dynamics at partner level. It was noted, however, that some partners had engaged in gender capacity-building and mainstreaming initiatives, but those were not connected with MRMV. In Nepal, some rather scattered activities were undertaken (training, planning of new activities with attention to gender, and including men in Community Discussion Classes).<sup>51</sup>

While the SGR seems to have produced positive effects in at least some countries, those should, in our view, not be overestimated. Without questioning their relevance, it is not possible to conclude otherwise than that the activities undertaken in these 'better' countries did not significantly address (or change) the key finding of the review: i.e. that youth and programme representatives do not really recognise or perceive gender dynamics and mechanisms of discrimination within their own groups and organisations; nor did these countries address the fact that gender is not well mainstreamed in the key programme objectives and/or via a specific gender objective.<sup>52</sup> There might be many reasons that explain this finding: first, changes in gender relations, dynamics and practices are clearly difficult to introduce and embed. Second, most of the changes proposed were 'heavy' in the sense that they inevitably had to include local partner organisations which did not necessarily share the same vision,

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<sup>50</sup> J. Enarsson, *Report of the Gender Strategic Review, My Rights My Voice*, February 2014, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that in the Nepal programme, gender was already relatively well integrated before the SGR.

<sup>52</sup> With the exception of Vietnam.

values and commitment (and hence, capacity) towards gender (e.g. in VI and MA), while in some countries capacities were limited also at the level of Oxfam staff. Finally, and rather on an operational level, the SGR follow-up trajectory was spread over quite a long period (also a consequence of the discontinuity in the GCT Programme Coordinator position, which was unfilled for a few months), which might have created some loss of momentum. Some key follow-up activities only took place in the last semester of the programme, i.e. when there was little time to bring change processes to a conclusion and there were many other preoccupations related to the closure of the programme.

### **7.4.3 A few final reflections related to the MTR and SGR**

Overall, the influence of both the MTR and SGR might be seen as rather limited, notwithstanding the fact that both initiatives were conceived, implemented and followed up in highly different ways. In addition to the specific explanations provided above, there are a few more general reflections we want to share to put our findings further into perspective.

First, the actual use of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations is a challenge the development world has long struggled with. There are no easy solutions to increasing the uptake and effective use of evaluation results, and the challenges are exacerbated in complex programmes such as MRMV where perspectives, needs and priorities with regard to evaluation might substantially differ between the global and the country level, and among key actors at country level. In such a situation, coming to a jointly agreed evaluation agenda and approach, and creating ownership is a highly challenging process. The MTR and SGR seem both to have been initiated at the global level, whereby global and strategic considerations figured among the main preoccupations. Needs at the local level may have been different, which might be illustrated by the fact that the strategic outcomes and recommendations of the SGR contrasted with the more down-to-earth follow-up measures taken at the local level as a consequence of the review.

Finally, and despite the evaluation efforts undertaken, MRMV in all its complexity has suffered from the lack of a clear MRMV evaluation plan in which the various aims of evaluation initiatives (accountability versus learning versus support of future policies/initiatives) are clearly outlined, then operationalised in a concrete portfolio of evaluation activities, and articulated with existing M&E practices and, possibly, with other Oxfam evaluation initiatives undertaken at the global or country level.<sup>53</sup> Such an evaluation plan should also include clear indications on the budget earmarked for evaluation, which is preferably substantial in complex innovative programmes such as MRMV, and at least more substantial than the budget that has actually been allocated to evaluation efforts.

## **7.5 The Learning and Innovation Fund<sup>54</sup>**

To stimulate learning and innovation, an MRMV Learning and Innovation Fund was established. The fund aimed to generate interesting new approaches and knowledge, and would be disbursed via two calls for proposals. As such, the fund was considered as a means to finance research, to capture key learning, to pilot new approaches, methodologies and technologies, and/or to develop new components for the programme.

The internal evaluation of the fund concluded that most activities and projects financed under the MRMV Innovation and Learning Fund did enhance learning and innovation. For three of the four

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<sup>53</sup> As such, what we have in mind here clearly goes beyond the section on programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting in the Sida proposal.

<sup>54</sup> The evaluation team has had little time to pay attention to this issue; in addition, as the Fund no longer exists, it was not easy to obtain evidence on its effects. As such, the findings presented here refer mainly to the internal review conducted in March 2014 by Nele Blommestein, MEL advisor of Oxfam Novib.

projects that were implemented in-country (in Nepal, Vietnam and Niger), the methods developed under the fund were truly innovative, as they were intended for and made by youth. In the case of Georgia, the fund was used to apply learning from other countries in an experimental way. However, the evaluation stated that field research is needed to draw explicit conclusions on the results of the projects implemented under the fund.

Furthermore, and very much in line with the findings of this evaluation, it was found that the *assessment and approval procedures* designed for the MRMV Learning and Innovation Fund both hampered and stimulated its purpose. For half of the projects, the approval period took longer than described in the procedure. On the other hand, applicants stated that they very much appreciated the content of the comments, and that it made their proposal stronger. The evaluation stated further that the *financial and administrative arrangements* of and between Oxfam Novib and Oxfam GB clearly hampered the purpose of the fund. The evaluation said that this could hardly have been avoided, as any multi-affiliate programme will be subject to these kinds of arrangements. The MRMV Fund projects had indeed to comply with the same financial reporting requirements and were functioning financially as 'regular' MRMV projects. This obviously caused a lot of work and implementation delays.

As a comment on this last paragraph, this evaluation cannot agree with the internal evaluation's consideration of the fund's heavy financial, administrative and reporting requirements as 'unavoidable'.<sup>55</sup> It is regrettable that the main thrust of the fund, promoting innovation, was not also applied to the fund's management requirements. By overburdening project initiators, the very aim of the Learning and Innovation Fund might well have been compromised.

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<sup>55</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that Oxfam's experience with multi-affiliate programmes was limited when MRMV started.

## 8. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRAMME BENEFITS

Sustainability is often understood and approached in various ways by development actors, including in evaluations. The definition in the DAC glossary<sup>56</sup> reads as follows: *The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed and the probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.* This definition will be used as our reference for this evaluation.

Important elements of this definition include: (1) sustainability relates to the continuation of *benefits*, not (necessarily) of activities and organisations; (2) sustainability does not exclude external assistance in the post-programme period, but such assistance should remain limited (... after *major* development assistance has been completed). As such, sustainability includes benefit continuation whereby the benefits should at least be maintained at the same level as that achieved by the end of the programme. It might however occur that benefits multiply in the post-programme period (e.g. a change in practices with regard to SRHR that spontaneously spread in society).

Finally, it should be remembered that assessing sustainability entails its own particular challenges, as in most cases (this evaluation included) it deals with formulating an assessment with regard to a *future* condition.

### 8.1 Level of inclusion of sustainability considerations in programme design

The 2011 proposal to Sida describes, in its summary, in one page how it wants to strategically address sustainability. It states that ensuring sustainability of changed policies and practices that meet the education and health needs of children is a central aspect of Oxfam's overall goal. To that effect, it wants to pursue specific strategies including building structures to sustain continued engagement by children and youth on their rights, a focus on practices and beliefs of duty-bearers so as to create a receptive environment for child and youth, and research and learning coming out of the programme so as to inform Oxfam thinking and work around children and youth.

At the more operational level, some key principles ensuring sustainability were put forward in the proposal, including: the choice to work primarily with existing partners, with whom Oxfam has solid programmatic linkages; ensuring ownership by key stakeholders of activities from a very early stage; preparing the ground for replication of successful processes and innovative models that show results; the development of a clear exit strategy with partners, that outlines roles and responsibilities leading up to the end date and beyond (including support for securing alternative funding if necessary). The country sections of the Sida proposal discuss in more detail the sustainability and exit strategies to be followed by each country.

Summarising, it can be concluded that sustainability considerations were well addressed in programme design, both at the global and country level. While it is understandable that the proposed strategies lacked specificity, a few strong key principles and strategic considerations were put forward that laid the foundations for developing a solid sustainability strategy. On the other hand, it can be regretted that a few specific sustainability challenges related to working with children and youth were *not* addressed (at least not in the programme proposal): the fact that children/youth do not remain young but eventually become adults and parents, which requires continued capacity building to maintain the momentum created and results achieved (in particular in terms of leadership); and, secondly, the fact that reliance

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<sup>56</sup> OECD DAC, Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management, 2010.  
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on the motivation, skills and voluntary commitment of young people is key to programme success and ownership, but at the same time should remain limited in scope in view of the many other challenges young people face.

## **8.2 Level of inclusion of sustainability considerations in programme implementation**

To begin with, it is important to underline that some elements that form an intrinsic part of all country programmes constitute vital prerequisites for benefit sustainability. These include: attention to capacity building of youth, youth organisations and partners; and the aim to ensure ownership at the level of beneficiaries (in particular, youth structures) via the 'programme by and with youth' approach. In addition, in all countries 'sustainability' has gained specific attention, including via the organisation of workshops to discuss sustainability, the formulation of so-called exit strategies, etc.

While specific actions to ensure sustainability were present everywhere, their relative importance and the quality of action to ensure benefit sustainability varied greatly among the countries. A common characteristic has been that sustainability was only systematically addressed towards the end of the implementation period, whereas to deal adequately with sustainability it should be built in from the very start of the programme.

Looking at the eight countries, at one end of the spectrum are countries with little or virtually no concern for sustainability (MA, NI); these countries pointed to sustainability as an issue to be addressed but failed to design and implement, in time, realistic measures to contribute to benefit sustainability. The six other countries dealt with sustainability in a more consistent way. However, a major drawback has been that the issue of sustainability was only dealt with towards the very end of the programme implementation period. As a result, exit strategies and plans in many instances could not be implemented, due to lack of time and an underestimation of the complexity of implementing the actions needed to sustain programme benefits, or because of other priorities, such as the demands of the financial and administrative closure of programme activities. In addition, the fact that a separate action plan had to be designed and implemented for a fourth year has to an important extent diverted attention and energy towards implementation, in particular in those countries where programme content and approach were different compared to the previous years.

To conclude, sustainability considerations were included too late in programme implementation. Something has been done, undeniably, and key stakeholders have become acquainted with the idea that programme support would eventually come to an end and other strategies had to be developed. In addition, some key characteristics of the programme approach could lead to sustainable results despite the lack of specific sustainability measures.

## **8.3 Effectiveness of sustainability measures and likelihood of benefit sustainability**

First, it is important to underline that not all results achieved by the programme need specific measures to ensure their sustainability. As such, the evaluation considers that in particular the changes in behaviour and attitude of youth, duty-bearers and care-takers, and the acceptance, at the level of duty-bearers and care-takers, of the specific concerns and needs of youth, might eventually be embedded in larger sections of society. At a wider level, these change processes initiated via consistent efforts of the programme (e.g. in AF, PA, GE, TA) can benefit from broader social developments taking place in most of the countries concerned. The interplay of conscious programme efforts and broader social processes

mean that the envisaged changes are ‘naturally’ accepted and socially and institutionally legitimised by political and religious authorities.

Furthermore, it has been difficult to assess the actual effectiveness of the sustainability measures undertaken. Without any doubt, these measures produced some immediate effects, such as the awareness and motivation to take responsibility for specific actions, the ambition to formalise youth organisations (e.g. in Pakistan) and the efforts to look for alternative funding. However in most countries, the effects of the specific measures undertaken might prove insufficient to ensure benefit sustainability; the scope of these measures has generally been too narrow and, above all, the period of their implementation too short as they were only set up shortly before programme closure.

In addition, the evaluation considers that overall, the programme has not fully recognised that the specificity of the programme (in terms of addressing youth and enabling them to steer the programme) necessitates specific requirements and strategies towards sustainability. This relates, among other things, to the high level of rotation among youth leadership and the specific needs of youth organisations in terms of funding. Unlike regular NGOs, these organisations do not have easy access to national and international donors and, hence, continue to depend on other actors to ensure continuity.

**Box 13: Youth organisation in Pakistan thinking about their future after MRMV**

“We are not worried about the project closure; we continue our activities on our own. Our collective skills, energies and cohesion are our assets to sustain as a district youth council.”

*District youth council member, Jamshoro, Sindh*

The sustainability strategy that seems have worked best has consisted of handing over – whether in a conscious (VI, AF) or more implicit (MA) way – programme components to government agencies, other donors or programme partners. In these cases, there is evidence that benefit sustainability of part of the programme achievements is guaranteed. However, in countries where such a strategy could not or not fully materialise (e.g. GE, TA, PA), doubts exist about benefit sustainability, despite the often strong commitments of local youth organisations (e.g. in PA). In addition, while such strategies might be successful in some countries, they never include all programme achievements. This is particularly the case for innovative actions, on-going lobbying and advocacy efforts, and attempts to scale-up particularly interesting approaches, and – maybe most importantly – programme-level learning and exchange mechanisms. As such, there is a substantial danger that part of the social capital built up by the programme will eventually vanish. This applies also to second-tier organisations with a democratically elected leadership (in the form of district youth clubs) that have evolved and have the ambition to continue activities after programme closure. These structures are clearly owned and steered by the youth, but need further strategic support to become sustainable.

## 9. OVERARCHING CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the main conclusions of our analysis, while the second part focuses on a few major lessons learned.

### 9.1 Main conclusions

#### *Relevance*

The MRMV programme was well prepared with explicit measures to include key stakeholders in the process. As such, it is no surprise that the MRMV aims, and its choice of education and health as areas of intervention, design and approach, were largely adequate in view of the specific needs of young people and communities. Important elements in this regard include the principle that youth prefer to engage via their own forums and organisations. Some critical remarks with regard to the programme approach include the lack of a specific focus on and consideration for (the constraints of) *marginalised* youth; the lack of operationalisation of gender considerations (that were well analysed during preparation) in the programme approach; and the limited attention, at least in the early stages, to inclusion of duty-bearers and care-takers in the programme strategy and approach.

#### *Effectiveness*

In most countries, the programme had to invest in substantial initial efforts to overcome barriers in order to work directly with youth and achieve their effective participation, in particular that of girls. As such, the recognition of youth (boys and girls) as actors in their own right, with specific rights, needs, aspirations but also capabilities, is considered the first important achievement of the programme.

Most country programmes have clearly been successful in developing, at the level of youth, knowledge, awareness and capacity to articulate needs and aspirations along with the principles of a rights-based approach. In most cases however, they have also invested in obtaining *actual changes (in terms of changed behaviour and practices)* at the level of children, youth and their allies, in particular in the area of sexual and reproductive rights. In this regard, the emergence and consolidation of strong leadership (including boys and girls) and youth organisations have been considerable achievements, and often came as a surprise to other stakeholders. An important remark in this regard is that effectively including allies (in particular, parents) has been a challenge, and in some countries has even largely been ignored.

Achievements in terms of improved collective (organisational) skills and resources have been varied, which can to a significant extent be attributed to substantial differences among the countries *prior to the programme*. As such, in some countries the role of the programme has mainly been to create adequate frameworks and spaces for youth to undertake action, whereas in other countries, programme implementing partners (Oxfam itself and programme NGOs) have played a substantial role in encouraging youth programme ownership and setting up autonomous youth organisations.

The programme has succeeded in gaining the interest of government authorities (at the national and local level), informal leaders, journalists, religious scholars, and parliamentarians in specific programme issues, and getting them ready to engage in dialogue and exchange and, in quite a number of cases, to openly endorse the advocacy and policy agenda of the youth. This has in some cases led to specific actions by duty-bearers to improve access to and quality of health and/or education services for boys and girls, young women and men. Overall, the effectiveness of these efforts were constrained by various factors, including severe resource limitations at the level of the authorities concerned and the relatively short duration of lobbying and advocacy efforts that, to be truly successful, might require continued efforts and engagement for a period longer than the programme duration.

The fourth programme objective – related to Oxfam’s strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and its global campaigning force to facilitate youth claiming and accessing better health and education – has remained largely unaddressed in an explicit way in day-to-day implementation of the programme; capacities to work on youth agency have, however, been strengthened considerably via work on the other objectives. However, the second component of this objective in particular might have been overly ambitious for an innovative programme, not least given that programme implementation coincided with the Oxfam’s internal reorganisation towards a single management structure. Most importantly though, the fact that country programmes were focused on in-country dynamics perhaps meant it was not realistic to try to find common issues for joint campaigning in the North and the South and within the eight programme countries.

### **Contributions to longer-term impacts**

While programme monitoring has been largely confined to the activity and output levels, there exists ample evidence that the MRMV strategy to focus on capacity building and awareness raising related to education and health rights has produced an influence *beyond* the youth included in the programme. Most country programmes record important changes in the views and attitude of parents, who, for instance, have become supportive and open to discussing SRHR issues with their children, and have allowed their daughters to participate in youth-led activities and liaised with authorities to protect the rights of their children.

At the level of communities, probably the most fundamental change, reported in various countries, is that youth are now considered as important change agents in their own right, able to play an active role in the decision-making process at the local level and ‘allowed’ to pursue change via their own organisations. Improvements at higher levels often are similar to those at the level of communities, in the sense that government authorities and other players at national level increasingly recognise the role of youth as change agents and actors to be involved in national decision-making processes. As such, youth leaders and their organisations have played a role in the formulation of strategies and policies that relate to youth needs and interests. Nevertheless, country programmes mostly have not succeeded in pursuing a lobbying and advocacy strategy on a *continued basis* and have not always been able to liaise strategically with key actors.

Linking the programme with the MDGs was an explicit aim during programme formulation. However, contributing to the achievement of the MDGs has not been a direct source of inspiration and motivation for programme implementation teams, partners and the youth themselves. In all countries, the programme has developed along its own dynamics, whereby a rights-based approach was the common denominator without there being a clear link, in the minds of the people involved, with the MDGs. However, it has been found that MRMV has made a direct contribution to several MDGs, related to access to education (MDG 2), gender equality and empowerment of girls and women (MDG 3), maternal health (MDG 5) and the fight against HIV/AIDs (MDG 6).

### **Overall efficiency of programme implementation**

Programme efficiency should be assessed against the background of the highly complex programme set-up: the – innovative – MRMV programme has been run by two Oxfam entities during a period in which the Oxfam family initiated its internal process towards a single management structure. The programme had activities in eight (culturally and economically rather diverse) countries spread over three continents; it was managed by a Global Coordination Team whose members were based in different locations, while at country level several institutional models and strategies were developed to respond to local circumstances. While to a major extent unavoidable, such high levels of complexity obviously challenged the efficiency of programme implementation.

The programme was equipped with a governance structure (Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, programme coordination) that can be considered as adequate in view of its innovative character. Members of these structures were also motivated and eager to provide the necessary support and

steer. However, the complex programme set-up meant that the Steering Committee (SC) had to deal with highly operational issues, much more than it had intended. This was to some extent unavoidable (new initiative, pioneering role, challenges related to Oxfam's internal reorganisation processes, etc.), but other factors such as turnover in SC membership added to the challenges. As such, the SC could not truly fulfil its initial (but maybe over-ambitious) expectations of providing strategic steering and guidance.

The programme coordination's effectiveness gained much from the fact that the Programme Coordinator had played a key role in the programme formulation and in the selection of the eight country proposals that were eventually included in MRMV. In addition, programme management was successful in the early stages in streamlining views and perceptions of the programme and getting these internalised at the level of country implementation teams. As such, MRMV can be considered a 'real' programme, despite its context-bound specific characteristics in each country. However, the MEL programme function has been inadequately addressed throughout programme implementation, so that weak monitoring – in particular, limited attention to outcome and impact – constitutes one of the major weaknesses of the programme. Indeed, the lack of incentives to monitor and report on *results*, combined with the lack of a good programme results-based framework, has been a major factor in some countries becoming overly operational without much concern about the eventual effects of the efforts undertaken.

Finally, discontinuities in the Programme Coordinator position (which remained unfilled for a few months) also led to a delay in starting the key processes related to ensuring benefit sustainability. This discontinuity also coincided with the extension of the programme by one year, which was administratively heavy and required much time and energy that should have been devoted to other activities.

The establishment of good cooperation structures and mechanisms with (often well-established) partner organisations has constituted a programme strength. Often cooperation with local organisations has existed for quite a long time, but only on a programme-by-programme basis. As such, these partnerships seem not to have become part of a longer-term strategy aimed at forging broad-based civil society coalitions.

### **Quality of involvement of youth**

All country programmes have undertaken attempts to ensure the involvement of children and youth, and for all of them active involvement of children and youth has been an important consideration in itself. Even so, different forms of participation of children and youth seem to have co-existed within the same country programmes. Various factors seem to have determined the quality of youth and children's participation and its development over the programme implementation period. In countries where youth organisations existed before the programme start, representatives of these organisations were involved from the design phase and consequently were continually consulted and engaged throughout programme implementation. However, also in these same countries, there have been instances where local partner NGOs have struggled to create frameworks and spaces to optimise youth participation and involvement, and have often continued to resort to rather traditional approaches whereby they remained in control of decision-making processes.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find countries where active youth citizenship was virtually non-existent prior to the programme. In these countries, at least in the initial stages of the programme, youth understandably could not be considered as equal partners. However, there are clear signs that the pattern of youth involvement has changed over time, at least partially, and that modes of improved involvement of youth were gradually developed, evolutions that have gone hand-in-hand with the creation and strengthening of youth groups and organisations.

To conclude, while progress in terms of youth involvement has been seen everywhere – often surprising local actors about the youth’s mobilisation and implementation capacities – there have been few indications of a *structured and continuous* reflection about how to optimise youth involvement and to fully realise the ambition to develop a programme *by* youth. As such, in some countries opportunities have been missed to more quickly shift to approaches that make better use of the existing potential of youth participation.

#### **Added value of MRMV being a multi-country programme**

MRMV was explicitly conceived as a multi-country programme and equipped with a coordinating structure, the Global Coordination Team (GCT), which had a mandate that clearly reached beyond routine programme administrative and financial management. As such, the programme has been part of Oxfam’s global work on youth, one of Oxfam’s major areas of intervention. Overall, it has been found that all country-level programmes were well aware of being part of a global programme, but that this did not really permeate the consciousness of programme staff and other actors, despite the programme’s initiative to organise an annual international exchange and learning event, and other attempts to promote mutual exchange and learning. While participants evaluated these annual events in a positive way, the longer-term effects of the events seem to be limited. It appears that in most cases the learning cycle has not been fully concluded, in that ‘learning’ did not actually result in *changed behaviour and practices* at the individual level let alone at organisational level. Thus a well-structured approach to systematically identify and conceptualise individual learning, to analyse its applicability and need for contextualisation at organisational level, and to consequently translate it into new or enriched organisational approaches and activities, did not materialise.

#### **Influence of the recommendations of the Mid-term Review and the Strategic Gender Review**

Little evidence has been found of influence of the Mid-term Review (MTR) on MRMV in further programme implementation, although there are strong indications of *individuals* having learned a lot via the MTR peer evaluation approach. A key explanation for this is that the MTR report failed to address key issues of the TOR, and failed to include the richness of the peer review approach and much of the advice brought in by peer evaluators. Furthermore, opportunities were missed to translate some of the MTR’s key observations and reflections into *operational* recommendations. Lastly, the follow-up of the MTR coincided with the end of the first three-year programme period, and as such was compromised by the uncertainty surrounding the extension of the programme.

The Strategic Gender Review (SGR) was followed up by various activities, and as such seems to have produced some influence, in particular in countries with strong steering mechanisms or where the country gender advisor could be called in for the SGR follow-up. While the SGR seems to have produced positive changes in at least some countries, these should not be overestimated. Indeed, the activities undertaken in the ‘better’ countries as a consequence of the SGR barely addressed the key findings of the review, namely that youth and programme representatives do not really recognise or perceive gender dynamics and mechanisms of discrimination within their own groups and organisations, and that gender is not well mainstreamed in the key programme objectives and/or via a specific gender objective. It should be acknowledged that the SGR came too late in programme implementation to allow for such fundamental changes.

#### **Sustainability**

Sustainability considerations were well addressed in programme design, both at the global and country levels. A few strong key principles and strategic considerations were put forward that laid the foundations for developing a solid sustainability strategy, such as promoting ownership by youth and the comprehensive attention to capacity building. On the other hand, specific sustainability challenges related to working with children and youth were *not* addressed, such as the fact that children/youth do not remain young but eventually become adults and parents; and secondly, the fact that reliance on the motivation, skills and voluntary commitment of young people is key to programme success and

ownership, but at the same time is limited in scope in view of the many other challenges young people face.

While sustainability considerations were present in the design phase, their relative importance and the quality of action to ensure benefit sustainability differed much among the countries during implementation. Overall, sustainability was not systematically built in as a continuous point of attention. Hence it was addressed as a key issue only late in programme implementation, via the organisation of workshops, the development of exit strategies, etc. In most cases however, these exit strategies and plans could not (or could not entirely) be implemented, due to lack of time and an underestimation of the complexity of implementing actions needed to sustain programme benefits, or because of other priorities, such as the demanding financial and administrative closure of programme activities.

The deficiencies related to sustaining programme benefits should, however, be put into perspective. Indeed, it is important to underline that not all results achieved by the programme required specific measures to ensure their sustainability. In particular, the changes in behaviour and attitudes of youth, duty-bearers and care-takers, and the acceptance, at the level of duty-bearers and care-takers, of the specific concerns and needs of youth, might eventually become embedded in wider society without much additional attention, simply as a result of favourable contextual evolutions. In other words: important programme achievements might prove to be sustainable.

On the other hand, other results do require accompanying measures (e.g. via exit strategies) to become sustainable. In most countries, the measures undertaken might prove insufficient to ensure benefit sustainability. The scope of these measures has generally been too narrow and, above all, their implementation period too short; in addition, in some cases the specificity of dealing with youth has not been incorporated in the sustainability strategies. The handing over of aspects of the programme to local institutions (government bodies, NGO partners) could prove to be an effective way of ensuring sustainability, provided that these organisations will safeguard the programme's unique philosophy and approach. However, while such strategies might be successful, the packages handed over to other institutions do not include all successful aspects of the programme such as innovative actions, ongoing lobbying and advocacy efforts, attempts to scale-up particularly interesting approaches, and – maybe most importantly – programme-level learning and exchange mechanisms.

## 9.2 A few important lessons learned

### **Multi-country programmes: conceptually interesting but inevitably facing huge implementation challenges**

MRMV was conceived and managed as a multi-country programme with the full support of Sida, which even insisted on adding a few countries. The specific ambitions of this multi-country approach were defined in a concise way in the overall proposal. Some of the elements the proposal mentioned – such as the programme's governance and management structure and the importance of cross-programme learning and innovation – point to Oxfam's ambition to create effects that go beyond those achieved at the level of the individual countries.

Oxfam's performance in dealing with the challenges of MRMV as a multi-country programme has been mixed. On the one hand, Oxfam has consciously allowed the eight countries to set their own priorities, taking into account local constraints and opportunities. By doing so, Oxfam showed the necessary sensitivity to local specificity but also succeeded in ensuring that the programme didn't become too disparate, notwithstanding the highly different socio-cultural contexts. It has done so by being firm on a few key issues: the adoption of a rights-based approach, the focus on activities implemented by youth and on creating spaces for youth to give form to the programme. As such, Oxfam succeeded in creating a programme identity, which has further been enhanced via continuous efforts by the programme

coordination staff to get the key principles operationalised using sound and culturally appropriate approaches and strategies. In our view, the importance of these – virtually undocumented – efforts cannot be underestimated, and have been key to MRMV remaining a programme in the full sense of the word.

On the other hand, the experience of MRMV has shown that aims and ambitions with regard to multi-country programmes should remain realistic, particularly when the countries involved have enormously varied social, cultural and institutional characteristics. Indeed, it has become obvious that programme dynamics and developments were largely led by internal (i.e. in-country) factors, despite initiatives at the programme level (e.g. annual learning and exchange events). This is understandable, as in particular local actors want – at least in the first instance – to deal with *local* issues and problems.<sup>57</sup> As such, in-country programmes give priority to in-country dynamics, networking and learning, as there is actually a huge (and often untapped) potential for in-country learning from the programme for other actors and vice versa. Further, as experiences elsewhere have shown, a broader outlook and scope only emerge when local and national developments and dynamics have gained in strength and maturity.

The above does not necessarily imply that exchange and learning between countries is impossible or should not have its place in multi-country programmes. However, apart from efficiency considerations, one should remain realistic in what such learning and exchange can (and cannot) achieve. If international exchange events are meant to contribute to broader learning, they should rely on substantial in-country achievements and become part of an exhaustive learning cycle that starts well before such events take place and continues after the event, via consistent efforts to translate learning into individual and organisational change. While cross-country learning has undoubtedly taken place through the many efforts undertaken, much of it has been limited to the individual level and not embedded in organisations.

### **Specific characteristics of youth programmes imply specific measures for optimal performance**

MRMV has clearly stated its ambition to be (or become) a programme run by and with youth. While this is a relevant ambition that takes into account important lessons learned through working with youth, the programme has only to some extent been able to translate this overall principle into adequate strategies and approaches. The following are a few key findings in this regard:

- Both Oxfam and its NGO partners have struggled to apply in practice the key principle of a programme run by or with youth. In some instances, NGO partners actually only paid lip service to this principle, without being able (or ready) to put the programme in the hands of youth. In other instances, such partners needed some time (and push) and a clear change path to gradually shift their attitude in the desired direction. Evidently, local circumstances did not always enable the immediate application of this principle, but in such cases clear change paths towards increased involvement of youth and their organisations seem to have been absent.
- The programme has failed to develop a strategy and good practices to deal with the inevitable rotation in youth participation and leadership, caused by the simple fact that youth eventually become older and enter a new phase of life with other challenges and requirements. A good strategy in this regard would not only have ensured adequate renewal of youth leadership but would also have built on the experience and expertise of the earlier youth participants and leaders.
- The promotion, set-up and strengthening of youth organisations has been a major objective of the programme and in an important number of cases led to the set-up of youth organisations or advisory boards. However, as sustainability was addressed late in the programme cycle, little has

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<sup>57</sup> This does not exclude the fact that experiences from elsewhere can help in making progress locally.

been done in terms of working out specific approaches to support these youth organisations in the post-programme period. The stronger youth organisations might have been able to attract external (donor) funding, but many others might not have been able to do so, simply because they have not been able to gain sufficient experience or to develop the necessary networks.

- Related to the previous point, it seems that for young people, involvement in the programme and in youth organisations is both rewarding *and* demanding. Such involvement provides a valuable life experience, but at the same time requires commitment (of time but also other resources) that need to be combined with young people's many other obligations. As such, it is quite possible that socio-economically marginalised youth were not, or were only very partially, able to participate in the programme, in particular when a rights-based approach was strictly adhered to.

### A 'narrow' rights-based approach can easily become counterproductive in youth programmes

MRMV has adopted a rights-based approach (RBA). This choice might have been made for ideological reasons but certainly also because the key characteristics of a RBA are very much compatible with the key principles of MRMV. The key characteristics of the RBA in the context of MRMV<sup>58</sup> seem to have been defined in the early stages, but the results of this reflection were never followed up, so that the potential value of the RBA – but also its potential drawbacks – were never adequately addressed. The evaluation has learned that the value of a RBA, *at least when applied in a narrow way* (see below), is questionable, and that various country programmes have understood this and have expanded the approach accordingly.

To begin with, there is no doubt that a RBA has its merits by stating that people, in this case youth, are entitled to (in the MRMV case) health and education services, and that development programmes should avoid taking over the role of government institutions in this regard. On the other hand, limiting programme action to voicing and claiming means little when it does not lead to a transformation of power relations; simply engaging with duty-bearers (as happened in many instances) does not imply altered power relations. In addition, the recognition and general acceptance that youth have rights to particular services does not automatically lead to the fulfilment of these rights and the improvement of conditions for youth. In particular, in the case of fragile or failed states, it is well known that government institutions lack the capacity and/or resources to ensure delivery of these services. In such conditions, targeting government agencies only makes sense when the latter are also supported or enabled to provide the requested services (which happened in a few countries, including Vietnam).

The evaluation has come across situations where the RBA was part of a broader approach, and situations where a narrow approach was adhered to for too long. In various country programmes, programme priorities have – implicitly or explicitly – moved beyond a narrow RBA to address problems experienced by youth. In such cases, sometimes youth (organisations) went their own way, sometimes they partnered with programme NGOs, and sometimes they cooperated also with duty-bearers to search for solutions. In line with the programme philosophy and dynamics, reconsidering (or even renegotiating) roles and responsibilities that were in line with the local context and priorities seems to be the preferred option; not surprisingly, this kind of achievement is valued most by youth and other actors.

In other cases, a narrower RBA was taken, in particular in the early programme stages. From a rather strategic but also pragmatic point of view, putting the focus too much on the RBA (and on the corresponding responsibilities and obligations of the state) also risks not tapping into the potential of youth and other actors (communities, care-takers and even duty-bearers) to work out and implement

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<sup>58</sup> This finding actually applies to a RBA in general: many consider 'rights-based approach' to be a vague term that does not represent a clear set of ideas.

alternatives, which in turn means their capacities and expertise are not strengthened. Considering the huge creativity, potential and preference for self-organisation, emphasising the obligations for service delivery to the state via a narrow RBA bears a huge risk of eventually disempowering youth and their allies.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are mostly of a strategic nature as they relate to the overall characteristics of the programme; in addition, many recommendations are related to each other, which implies that their implementation will create notable synergies. Considering their strategic nature, most recommendations are addressed to Oxfam and, indirectly, to the donor agencies. Many of the recommendations are also relevant to partners, e.g. those involved in the continuation of MRMV activities or similar programmes.

### 1. Opt for an 'expanded' rights-based approach (Ox, CO & Pa)<sup>59</sup>

It is important to continue adopting a rights-based approach (RBA) in youth programmes, but such an approach should be well adapted to local circumstances and to the needs and aspirations of youth, and should not be restricted to 'voicing and claim-making' towards government and other duty-bearers. In particular in fragile and poor countries, the assumption that a RBA will lead to improved service delivery is often improbable, at least in the short term. It is therefore recommended that a RBA is part of a broader active citizen approach, and as such is complemented with initiatives whereby the energy, motivation and skills of youth and their allies are utilised to develop alternatives that should not replace state obligations (in terms of service delivery, ...), but rather complement and trigger these. These efforts should obviously also become part of the programme results framework and, hence, should be operationalised. When successful, such initiatives will not only contribute to solving serious problems youth are facing, but will also constitute excellent ways for youth to further develop their capacities and will contribute to their empowerment and political influence.

### 2. Strive for clarity about the position of marginalised youth in the programme (Ox, CO & Pa)

MRMV, it is stated, wanted to focus on *marginalised* youth. While there are indications that this succeeded in a number of cases, there is (indirect but consistent) evidence that in many cases the programme reached predominantly middle-class youth, for a number of reasons. The evaluation considers that working with relatively better-off youth is a positive approach, as this cohort might have the greatest potential as agents of change, in particular in socio-culturally sensitive areas such as SRHR and gender. Better-off youth also seem best-placed to devise approaches to liaise with marginalised youth in the later stages of the programme. Working with better-off youth should, therefore, be part of a longer-term strategy, which eventually should enable the programme to reach out to marginalised youth. As such, it will be key to the programme to monitor who (in socio-economic terms) is actually involved in the programme. In addition (and thereby referring to recommendation 1), the implementation of a 'narrow' rights-based approach is probably not compatible with the ambition to focus on (the needs of) marginalised youth.

### 3. Redesign the approach to mainstream gender in the programme (Ox, CO & Pa)

Despite the fact that there exist, within the Oxfam family, many examples of successful mainstreaming of gender in programmes, mainstreaming gender in youth programmes faces particular challenges in addition to the more generic constraints. Adequate gender mainstreaming should start with efforts to make it completely clear that the aim of gender mainstreaming is (to contribute to) gender equality. The inclusion of gender equality as a specific programme objective is therefore strongly recommended. This should be accompanied by specific outputs and activities, the implementation of which can be closely monitored, thereby making the achievement of this gender objective a realistic aim (see also recommendation 8). Activities and outputs might vary from

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<sup>59</sup> At the end of each recommendation, it will be indicated to whom the recommendation is (primarily) addressed: the donor agencies (Donor), Oxfam (Ox), Oxfam country offices and partners (CO & Pa).

country to country, but should include measures at both the institutional (partners, Oxfam country offices) and programme level. In this way, the key finding of the Strategic Gender Review should be taken into account, namely that youth (and their organisations) tend to see gender inequality as a 'typical' problem of adults, and to ignore the way in which gender inequalities are also embedded in their own behaviour. In addition, it is recommended that gender-based violence (GBV) be addressed consistently, including GBV by peers, which is often ignored or underestimated, particularly in the context of schools and universities.

**4. Reframe capacity building of youth organisations as part of a broader development agenda (Ox, CO & Pa)**

Capacity building of youth and youth organisations should remain a key strategy of future youth programmes, but should be designed to contribute to aims *beyond* those of the programme itself. These efforts should make full use of the power of youth as change agents, and hence support youth to take up roles and initiatives for a broader development agenda. Youth organisations can in this way become part of wider (macro) networks and forums in which youth, regular CSOs and INGOS join forces to lobby for and advocate macro policy changes.

**5. Operationalise strategies and approaches towards genuine 'implementation by youth' (Ox, CO & Pa)**

The evaluation has provided much evidence of NGO partners (and also Oxfam country offices) 'struggling' with the implementation in the programme of the principle to entrust youth organisations and/or with defining and implementing a change pathway towards that aim. Guaranteeing adequate and genuine participation of youth and youth groups can indeed be challenging, as it should be based on an adequate assessment of youth's capacities, but also on a clear choice for youth empowerment by NGO partners and Oxfam offices. In particular, service-oriented NGO partners might struggle with the implementation of such a strategy or even consider it as going against their interests. Existing dilemmas in this regard should be made explicit from the very start of the programme, whereby the legitimate interests of NGO partners should be acknowledged and become part of strategies that allow win-win solutions. Such strategies should include *conscious* approaches with clear steps towards higher levels of participation of youth organisations.

**6. Continue with the development of multi-country programmes but be realistic about what they can achieve (Ox, CO & Pa)**

When designing multi-country programmes, it is important to delineate which added value is aspired to, and later to question whether such added value has been achieved (not only at the individual level but above all on a broader level). Key to successful multi-country programmes is the quality and success of individual country programmes that should serve as a basis for broader exchange, learning and (maybe) regional impact. Before engaging in cross-country learning and exchange, country programmes should first invest in in-country learning with youth, their NGO partners and other actors. The evaluation further recommends that multi-country programmes include countries with similar socio-cultural characteristics (including a common programme language), as this will offer opportunities for broader, more cost-effective cross-country learning and exchange.

**7. Optimise the effects of capacity building and exchange by adopting a more structured and comprehensive approach to learning (Ox, CO & Pa)**

The evaluation found that many learning efforts were either poorly designed or were implemented without being part of a broader strategy and approach. Learning (in a broad sense) should be based on a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions that actual learning entails and eventually produces (changes in practice or behaviour), what conditions need to be fulfilled to ensure optimal learning, and how organisational learning should be achieved. Some conceptual support (e.g. an explicit use of Kolb's learning cycle) should support these efforts.

**8. Invest in the design and development of the programme’s monitoring and evaluation (Ox, CO & Pa)**

For various reasons, monitoring and evaluation have been rather weak in the programme, whereas an innovative programme such as MRMV should, more than regular programmes, have invested in the development of well-performing M&E systems and practices, starting with the development of good baselines (in which youth actors can actually play an important role). The development of strong M&E should be a key consideration of any similar future programme, whereby: (1) monitoring is to be conceived as a task and responsibility at the level of *all actors* (including youth), thereby becoming part of the comprehensive learning approach referred to in the previous recommendation; (2) monitoring should not be limited to the activity and output level, but should also include outcomes and the follow-up of risks; (3) a clear evaluation (programme-level) action plan should be designed and implemented, whereby evaluation complements monitoring efforts, and serves different evaluation needs (learning, accountability) and interests at different levels (country, global).

**9. Simplify financial and administrative procedures (Ox)**

The early years of programme implementation were characterised by substantial difficulties in harmonising the financial and administrative procedures. While this was to a significant extent the consequence of programme complexity (several Oxfams taking up a role in the same programme at a time when they each still had their own procedures), the programme continued to struggle with excessive financial and administrative requirements. Programme implementers faced overkill in terms of rules, regulations and policies which may have been linked to contractual obligations, but in many instances created confusion and inefficiency. This seriously hampered programme implementation by taking precious time from senior programme staff that could/should have been devoted to programme content issues. Oxfam should therefore undertake conscious efforts to scale down the scope and complexity of its procedures and policies, and have more faith in the capacities of its staff and partners to sort out operational problems. Proliferation of rules and policies is not a sign of professionalism, but rather the opposite.

**10. Need for a longer programme duration (Donor, Ox, CO & Pa)**

Similar future programmes should avoid implementation periods of less than five years, as the type of changes aspired to require substantial time to materialise and ensure benefit sustainability, in particular when the programme includes (as was the case for MRMV) fragile countries and/or those figuring among the least developed countries.

**11. Considerer the modalities of using the e-learning platform on a broader scale (Ox, CO & Pa)**

The experiences of Mali (and other countries, not in the context of MRMV) with an e-learning platform related to SRHR are so convincing that the use of the platform in other countries is to be seriously considered and promoted, obviously after adapting the platform to the local socio-cultural context. MRMV’s experience with the adaptation of the platform in Mali and the efforts to introduce it into the national curriculum, but also to promote it outside the context of schools, should thereby be taken into account.

## ANNEXES

### 1. Terms of reference

Terms of reference for the final evaluation of 'My Rights My Voice'	
Programme/project title /affiliate identification code	My Rights, My Voice
Geographical coverage:	Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania, Vietnam, Global layer
Programme/project lifespan	15 December 2011 - 31 December 2015
Programme/project budget	USD 11,368,677 (year 1 to year 3) + 2,882,910 (year 4 extension)
Evaluation budget	\$49,848.80 (maximum excluding 20% VAT)
Evaluation commissioning manager	Global Programme Coordinator
Evaluation manager	Global MEL Advisor

#### 1. Introduction

These are the Terms of Reference for the final evaluation of My Rights My Voice programme implemented by Oxfam Great Britain and Oxfam Novib. My Rights My Voice is a four year programme ending in December 2015. It is principally funded by the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida) to the total amount of \$14,251,587.

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. Oxfam recognizes the universality and indivisibility of human rights and this forms the most basic framework for its work. It believes that all people are rights-holders and that human rights apply to all people equally; and that all duty-bearers, especially states, have an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil these human rights. Oxfam has adopted five overarching aims to express these rights in practical terms through its work. These rights are to: a sustainable livelihood; basic social services; to be safe from harm; to be heard; and to be treated as equal. Oxfam sees people as principal actors in achieving their rights, not as passive recipients of services, aid, or decisions. It is vital that women and men, girls and boys are empowered to ensure that the rights of the poorest people and the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society are recognised and that their voices are heard, especially in decisions affecting their lives. These groups often include children and youth who, despite making up a large proportion of the populations in many of the countries where Oxfam works, are often voiceless and powerless.

One of Oxfam's key, and unique, strengths is its ability to drive change from the local, to the national, to the global level, galvanising resources across the world to deliver change through a mix of research and policy development, lobbying, media work, and public campaigning. Using the information and experience gained through local programme knowledge and direct contact with the poorest communities, Oxfam is able to work with and support national, regional, and global alliances, strategies, and policies that truly reflect the needs and perspectives of the most marginalised people.

#### 2. Background

My Rights, My Voice is an innovative multi-country programme engaging marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. The programme is working through partner organisations and

directly with marginalised children and youth (in all their diversity), their allies and with duty bearers. The programme delivers a holistic and contextualised vision of children's and youth's rights to health, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and education in eight countries: Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania and Vietnam. The work in Georgia and Tanzania ended in 2014, as foreseen in the initial programme cycle. After an extension for the fourth year, MRMV continues its work with partners in six countries: Afghanistan, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan and Vietnam.

Whilst the thematic focus and activities differ from country-to-country - some work on health, others on education, some on SRH, a few on more than one of these issues - all of these country-level projects aim to place marginalised children and youth, especially girls and young women, as 'active citizens' at the centre of their thinking, approaches and activities.

Together with our partners, we believe that the greatest and most lasting impacts on the lives of children and youth will be achieved if they themselves are supported to become active citizens. This translates as young people – and their allies – being equipped with awareness and knowledge about their rights, having improved confidence and skills to speak up and out, and by creating and opening up spaces for them to come together, mobilise and influence decision makers. As active citizens, young people have the potential to become dynamic forces for transformational change in their lives, their families, their communities and ultimately their countries. Furthermore, by supporting the development and growth of youth groups, organisations, and networks, and strengthening their participation in decision-making processes, the interests and voices of children and youth will be heard long into the future. Targeting young people should thus be seen as both a means to an end (in this case to improve access and quality of basic services) and a goal in itself.

The *overall goal* of MRMV is to achieve sustainable changes in policies, practices, and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women, to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Central to this overall goal are *four key outcomes* that are dependent upon one another and that all MRMV projects are working towards (see our Programme Framework in Annex).

1. To increase young people's awareness of and strengthen their voice in relation to their health and education rights, needs and aspirations.
2. To strengthen young people's and their allies' individual and collective skills, knowledge, confidence and resources to both organise and claim their rights in decision-making spaces.
3. To ensure that duty-bearers and those with influence engage directly with marginalised young people to deliver better access and quality health and education.
4. Oxfam, partners and others have strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and Oxfam's global campaigning force facilitates youth claiming and accessing better health and education.

When speaking about children, youth and young people, we acknowledge the heterogeneity and diversity within these groups and the different realities that exist. While each country project is founded on its own assumptions, the ones below are common to all:

- If young people, specifically girls and young women, are empowered and have space to interact with duty bearers, they will claim their health and education rights.
- Young people and their allies can formulate a common agenda and activities for the realisation of their rights to quality health and/or education services.
- Mobilising young people and creating spaces for them to interact with duty bearers will be received positively and will have positive impacts on policies, practices and beliefs.
- Beliefs blocking the health and education rights of youth, especially girls, are often based on lack of information, knowledge and awareness. Provision of information to, knowledge building and raising awareness of young people, their allies and duty bearers will help remove these blockages.

- Through lobbying and campaigning of Oxfam and partners, a sufficient critical mass of duty-bearers will engage with young people, listen to them and take their needs and aspirations into account when implementing and/or formulating policies.
- Agreements/decisions made by duty-bearers will lead to positive actions and commitment of resources to enhance quality and accessibility of health (incl. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights) and/or education services for young people, especially girls and young women.
- Some demonstrable changes in policies, practices and/or beliefs will be seen within the lifetime of this project, supporting children and youth (especially girls and young women) to organise themselves and engage with duty bearers, and leading to improved quality of and access to health and/or education services.

At global level, the Global Coordination team connects and reinforces each country project with the aim of driving and supporting programme learning and innovation, influencing and partnering with global peers and stakeholders, and ensuring effective programme management and accountability, to ultimately deliver better outcomes and have the greatest impact on the lives of children and youth.

### 3. Rationale and purpose of the evaluation

The MRMV programme is expected to end on 31 December 2015. At the time of this final evaluation, the current six My Rights, My Voice countries will be wrapping up the implementation of activities for the fourth year. **The main aim of the evaluation will be to systematically analyse the actual outcomes of the programme and its underlying working mechanisms against the proposed outcomes and Theory of Change.**

Sustainable changes in policies, practices and beliefs will often need longer to translate into measurable effects on the overall health and/or education situation of children and youth in project areas, and even more so at national level. Therefore, the main focus is on the outcome and processes rather than the impact level. Where available, impact level data from existing sources (incl. baseline studies) should inform the evaluation, but it is not expected that additional data are collected at this level.

The purpose of this final evaluation is twofold:

- **Building institutional knowledge:** The evaluation will inform the development of current and future youth (and other multi-country) programmes and projects. To maximize learning for all those involved, the methodology for the final evaluation will ensure the active involvement from Oxfam staff, partners and youth.
- **Accountability:** The evaluation will allow us to be fully accountable to our different stakeholders. It will also indicate to what extent Oxfam has been able to change its ways of working in response to the recommendations of the Mid-Term Peer Review and Gender Review organised at the end of 2013.

Primary users of the evaluation results are the following:

- *Oxfam staff (global + in-country) and partners involved in this programme:* The evaluation process and its results will allow them to gain a good understanding of the current achievements as well as areas for improvement, which will in turn inform the design and implementation of future projects and programmes under their responsibility.
- *Youth groups* established under the programme. Youth-led groups in the different countries will use the results to strengthen their organisations and to mobilize alternative funding sources.
- *Oxfam Youth and Active Citizens Working Groups:* A multi-affiliate learning community within Oxfam has taken on the task of consolidating Oxfam's existing experience and track record of working with youth. The results will be used by its different Working Groups to inform and influence the broader organisation.
- *SIDA.* SIDA may use the results as input for the final evaluation of the SIDA youth fund and for accountability towards the Swedish public.

Secondary users of the evaluation results will be the following:

- *Oxfam and affiliates* will use the results to further inform and build their work around youth and active citizenship. The evaluation will also contribute to building Oxfam's reputation as an effective, innovative and transparent learning organization, thereby improving our credibility with participants, stakeholders and within the development sector.
- *Oxfam OSP evaluation team*: A number of questions in the evaluation will directly feed into the evaluation of the Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019.

#### 4. Specific object and objectives of the evaluation

The object of the evaluation is the My Rights, My Voice programme as described in the approved My Rights, My Voice programme document and any changes to the programme in the course of its implementation (Year 4 proposal for extension, work plans 2015, strategies, adjusted Theory of Change etc.).

The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- Stimulate reflection and learning among country offices, partners and youth groups, including learning from failures and challenges.
- Review and validate the achievements reached under each outcome as presented in the MRMV annual reports (and underlying documents like quarterly monitoring reports), Midterm Peer Review and Strategic Gender Review.
- Validation of the Theory of Change of this project and its underlying assumptions. This means describing the process of how the changes in policies, practices and beliefs have been achieved, and analysing this against the Theory of Change of the project, including the underlying assumptions.
- Developing concrete recommendations for future programme and project development on youth and for multi-country programmes in general.

#### 5. Key questions of the evaluation

The below evaluation questions are in line with the reporting requirements of SIDA (account and analysis of outcomes, analysis of factors that affected implementation and sustainability<sup>60</sup>).

##### Main questions at programme level:

- What are the *principal outcomes/contributions* of the MRMV programme as a whole? To what extent do these reflect the four global outcomes as described in the overarching Theory of Change?
- Based on the available evidence, did the achieved outcomes lead to long-term improvements in the general environment for youth and children (*impact*)?
- How relevant was this programme given its original aim of contributing to the Millennium Development Goals on education and health?
- Did the changes follow the logic underlying our global Theory of Change? Were there unexpected positive or negative results?
- Which *internal and external factors* have influenced the overall achievements of the programme (positive or negative)?
- Was there an advantage of conceiving this intervention as a global/multi-country programme? How did the global layer and the Learning & Innovation Fund contribute to its success?
- Were recommendations of the Mid-Term and Gender Reviews sufficiently taken into account?

##### Additional questions for in-country visits:

- What outcomes were achieved at country level? To what extent did these achievements correspond to the outcomes outlined in the national Theories of Change?
- What can we say about the process and steps taken to achieve these national outcomes?

<sup>60</sup> Sida's instruction to international non-governmental organizations, for grants from the appropriation item support via Swedish civil society organizations, for the implementation of the Swedish Government specific child- and youth initiative. 30 May 2011).

- a) Did the approach suit the priorities and needs of the diverse groups of young people and their communities? Was it inclusive enough for harder-to-reach youth?
  - b) Was the chosen approach and its practical implementation carried out in an economical and efficient way?
  - c) What was the involvement of youth in planning, monitoring and evaluation and communication initiatives?
  - d) What is the perceived added value of countries being part of a multi-country programme?
- Are the exit and hand-over strategies adequate? What is the likelihood that the benefits of the programme are sustained upon its completion?

Note that evaluation questions will be further fine-tuned throughout the process to ensure they respond to the specific information needs of our key stakeholders.

Issues of gender equality should be taken into account when answering the evaluation questions. Particular consideration should be given to the different ways in which young women and men have been involved in and responded to the programme.

In answering the above questions, the evaluators will also consider whether and how the use of new technologies (online platforms, radio, TV, mobile, social media) contributed to the outreach and mobilisation of youth.

## 6. Scope of the evaluation and approach, establishing the basic methodological requirements

### *Scope*

The evaluation will encompass the **whole MRMV programme from 15 December 2011 up to the moment of the country visits**. The evaluation will include a validation of the results of the programme as presented in the annual reports of 2012, 2013 and 2014. The evaluation will also address the implementation of follow-up actions after the Midterm Review and the Strategic gender Review.

The results of the internal review of the MRMV Learning & Innovation Fund and the final evaluations of the Georgia MRMV project and the Tanzania project should also be taken into consideration in the conclusions and recommendations. As the MRMV Learning & Innovation Fund and the Georgia and Tanzania country projects did not continue after 15 December 2014, their review and final evaluations preceded the final programme evaluation.

### *Document Review*

The **key documents for this evaluation process** include:

- The approved My Rights, My Voice Programme proposal, including the eight country project proposals and the overall project proposal making it a programme.
- My Rights, My Voice Theory of Change and pathway of change
- My Rights, My Voice MEL plans
- National baseline studies
- Quarterly monitoring reports
- Annual reports (2012, 2013, 2014)
- Midterm Peer review report
- Strategic Gender Review
- Management response (MTR and Gender Review combined)
- Overview MRMV Learning and Innovation fund
- Final Evaluations for Georgia & Tanzania
- Meeting minutes, selected communication materials and videos, ...

### *Country visits*

Additional primary data will be collected through **in-country visits** to a selected number of countries, partners and/or projects. **The proposed countries include Mali, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Vietnam<sup>61</sup> as these were not visited during the Mid-Term Review.** The number of workshops and stakeholders to be consulted in each country as well as the geographical focus of the evaluation (selection of provinces) will be agreed upon after submission of the detailed methodology.

	Georgia	Tanzania	Afghanistan	Mali	Nepal	Niger	Pakistan	Vietnam
<b>Thematic focus</b>	Health	Education	Education & Health	Education & SRH	Health	Education & SRH	SRH	Education
<b>No extension, completed in year 3</b>	X	X						
<b>Focus of global Mid-Term Review</b>		X			X	X		
<b>Final Evaluation</b>								
• Review of key documents	X*	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X
• In-country visits			X	X			X	X

\* For the completed projects in Georgia and Tanzania, the review will be limited to the initial country proposals and earlier in-country evaluations.

For the in-country visits, **outcome harvesting or similar participatory methods** are to be used. The following basic principles are expected to guide the further development of the methodology:

- **Participation:** Allow for the meaningful participation of Oxfam staff, partners and youth in the evaluation process.
- **Gender equality:** The proposed approach should sufficiently consider the different ways in which young women and men have been involved in and responded to the programme.
- **Data triangulation:** The evaluators will gather information through different complimentary sources (outcome harvesting, but also direct observations of MRMV activities, key informant interviews, small survey data collected with help from youth, ...).

The detailed methodology proposed by the consultants should at least contain the following components:

- 1. Train participants (youth, partners, staff, ...) in function of what is needed to actively take part in the evaluation**
- 2. Fine-tuning of evaluation questions to the national context, together with participants<sup>62</sup>.**
- 3. Identification and documentation of the achieved outcomes by participants**
  - The methodology should include verification mechanisms to increase reliability of the documented outcomes (peer checks, solicitation of additional information from key sources, ...)
- 4. Summary and interpretation of achieved outcomes with participants**
- 5. Presentation and discussion of preliminary findings**
  - At the end of the in-country visit, the consultant will present the preliminary findings from the document review, participatory workshops and any other data collection methods to the Oxfam country staff, selected partners and youth.

**7. Evaluation team:** qualifications and skills needed, plan for organizing the evaluation team

<sup>61</sup> This selection is subject to a careful prior assessment of the security situation and may be subject to change.

<sup>62</sup> It is up to the evaluators to ensure that these specific and contextualized questions provide enough information to adequately answer the evaluation questions defined in these Terms of Reference.

We are looking for a team of two experienced evaluators who are able to work in parallel during the in-country visits. One principal consultant will take the overall lead and responsibility.

The team should be gender-balanced and should possess the following qualifications:

- Demonstrated experience in conducting multi-country evaluations
- Experience with facilitating participatory processes related to Monitoring & Evaluation, especially Theory of Change and Outcome mapping/harvesting or similar
- Experience with programmes in least one, and preferably several of the following domains: Education, Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Youth.
- Excellent communication, writing and presentation skills in both English and French
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to child safeguarding and gender equality, specifically with regards to women's rights (Desirable)
- Knowledge of the work of Oxfam or other international NGO's (Desirable)

## 8. Schedule, budget, logistics and deliverables.

### Proposed timing

Activity	Responsible	Deadline for completion	SEP '15	OCT '15	NOV '15	DEC '15	JAN '16	FEB '16
Submission of proposals	Consultants	22/9						
Evaluation of proposals	Reference Group	25/9						
Approval of selected proposal and team	Steering Committee	30/9						
<b>Inception meeting + Signing of contract</b>	Reference Group	<b>Before 10/10</b>						
Literature Review and preparation of field visits	Consultants	22/10						
Field research in selected countries	Consultants	25/10 to 7/12						
<b>Submission of draft report</b>	Consultants	<b>By 11/1</b>						
First round of comments	Reference Group + Country Leads + Programme & Comms Advisor	19/1						
Reworking of draft report	Consultants	28/1						
Final comments	Reference Group	3/2						
Webinar to share findings with YAC group	Reference Group + Consultants	12/2						
<b>Submission of final evaluation report</b>	Consultants	<b>By 23/2</b>						
Approval of final evaluation report	Steering Committee	29/2						

### Budget

The maximum budget for this evaluation is \$49,848.80 excluding 20% VAT. Accommodation, flights and other forms of transport are not included in this budget and will be reimbursed separately in accordance with Oxfam GB's expense policy (summary attached). Where needed, translators will be contracted by country offices. All other costs should be included in the quoted price of the contractor.

### Logistics

Oxfam Country Leads will assign a responsible to arrange accommodation, transport and translation services. They will receive support from the Evaluation Manager and Reference Group. The country offices will also assist with the practical organisation of workshops, scheduling of interviews etc. Please note that the evaluators must adhere to Oxfam security guidelines during in-country visits.

### Key deliverables

Deliverable	Deadline	Payment
<b>Short inception report</b> with a summary of the final methodology and detailed work plan as agreed during the inception meeting (to be signed	3 days after meeting	/

off by Reference Group)		
A <b>clear and concise draft evaluation report</b> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive summary that can be used as stand-alone document</li> <li>- Explanation and justification of used methodologies, including the perceived limitations</li> <li>- Findings from the document review</li> <li>- Documentation of findings from in-country visits (without identification of specific individuals)</li> <li>- General conclusions, including a clear and well-reasoned answer to the evaluation questions and recommendations: What should we do differently in the future?</li> <li>- Appendices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Signed ToR and inception report with final work plan</li> <li>o List of participants, interviewees and locations visited</li> <li>o Outcomes per country identified during workshops</li> <li>o Raw datasets (interview notes, data worksheets, ...)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	11/01/2016	40%
Presentation of findings to YAC Working Group (online <i>webinar</i> )	12/02/2016	/
Final evaluation report (in line with the above requirements)	23/02/2016	60%

## 9. Evaluation responsibilities and management arrangements

The Global MEL Advisor, Lien Van Mellaert, will be the **Evaluation Manager**. She will be the first point of contact for the evaluation team and ensure the team has access to documents, people and other information needed to answer the evaluation questions.

The evaluation manager will be part of a broader **Reference Group** ensuring the quality of the evaluation and adherence to Oxfam's and back donor's procedures and requirements. This Reference Group will include the **Global Programme Coordinator**, one other Steering Committee member and an Oxfam colleague external to MRMV (but with expertise in evaluation and youth programming). The Reference Group will select the team of consultants, give input to the methodology during the inception meeting and approve later changes to evaluation work plans and budget. They will also give regular input and comments on draft documents and ensure that the full Steering Committee is regularly informed about the status of the evaluation. For important decisions, the Reference Group may also opt to consult **Sida** as the principal funder of this project.

The **MRMV Steering Committee** will come in at key milestones during the process, mainly: 1) Approval of the selected team of consultants and their proposal, and 2) Approval of the final evaluation report and its corresponding management response.

The MRMV **Global Programme and Communications Officer** will also be involved in reviewing the draft evaluation report. The MRMV **Finance Manager** will assist with the development and management of the MTR budget.

The **Oxfam Country Leads** will provide support during country visits, including for the logistical aspect. They can introduce the evaluators to partners, youth and other relevant stakeholders.

## 10. Dissemination strategy, plan and responsibilities for sharing and using the findings.

Before the end of the country visits, the evaluators will share and discuss the preliminary evaluation results and initial recommendations with national staff, youth groups and partners.

In close collaboration with the Global Programme and Communications Officer, a specific action plan will be developed to ensure the dissemination of the evaluation results to youth (for example through Youth

Advisory Board representatives), the Active Citizenship Working Group and other colleagues. The plan will also indicate how the findings will inform the development of new youth and other programmes, organisational learning and advocacy.

The final evaluation report will be in English according to a mutually agreed outline (see standard example in Annex). The Executive Summary will also be made available in French. A copy of the final evaluation report will be published on Oxfam's website and will be made available to programme stakeholders, including, but not limited to, SIDA. This is consistent with Oxfam's commitment to transparency and accountability.

#### **11. Process of the selection of the evaluator or evaluation team and expectations for evaluation proposal**

The evaluation proposal will set out and describe how the consultants will operationalise and carry out the evaluation, bringing refinements, specificity and elaboration to the ToR. The evaluation of the offers will focus on the value for money criterion, with **particular attention for the technical quality of the proposal and the experience of the proposed team (CV's)**. Please note that **the total amount of working days should fall within the budget range specified in this ToR**.

The selection of the consultants will be done by the evaluation Reference group and the final decision will be approved by the MRMV Steering Committee. Oxfam withholds the right to conduct interviews with one or more potential suppliers to seek further clarification on the submitted quotations, proposal and previous experiences of the potential evaluators.

The **technical part of the proposal** should minimally contain the following topics:

- The evaluator's understanding and interpretation of the ToR, including evaluation questions
- Detailed description of approach, methodology, tools and analysis, with a clear explanation of strategies to ensure the participation of Oxfam staff, partners and youth
- Overview of perceived risks and mitigation strategies
- Work plan detailing the timing and division of tasks between consultants and their availability
- Proposed reporting format and outline

In addition, the following information should be included:

- **Total budget** with a cost break down in days or hours spend and the related fee for the tasks carried out by each consultant.
- **CVs of the proposed consultants**, including previous experience with similar assignments

The selected consultants are expected to be available to start immediately after their selection.

*NB: Once the selection process is finalized, and before proceeding to sign the contract with the evaluation team, the ToR will be updated to include the methodology proposed by the team selected to carry out the evaluation.*

**Quotations should be submitted by e-mail to [Lien.Van.Mellaert@oxfamnovib.nl](mailto:Lien.Van.Mellaert@oxfamnovib.nl)**

The deadline for submission is **22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2015 at midnight UK time**.

Any questions, remarks or requests for clarification can be sent to the above e-mail address.

## **Standard recommended outline of an evaluation report**

### **1. cover page clearly identifying the report as an evaluation and stating:**

- evaluation title
- Programme/project title /affiliate identification code
- Geographical coverage: global;region; country(ies)
- date that the evaluation report was finalised
- evaluator(s) name(s) and logo (if available)
- Oxfam logo (unless not appropriate)
- Appropriate recognition of institutional donor support (without logo)
- Clear statement in case this report can NOT be used externally

### **2. Table of contents**

### **3. Glossary**

### **4. List of abbreviations.**

### **5. Executive summary that can be used as a stand-alone document**

### **6. Introduction, stating objectives of the evaluation and evaluation questions**

### **7. The intervention and context**

### **8. Methodology, including an indication of any perceived limitations of the evaluation**

### **9. Presentation of the findings and their analysis**

### **10. Conclusions**

### **11. Learning and Recommendations**

### **12. Appendices:**

- Terms of reference
- Evaluation programme (main features of data and activities carried out).
- A list of interviewees (name, function and working environment) and places visited.
- List of documents and bibliography used.
- Details on composition of evaluation team (names, nationality, expertise, working environment).
- **Link** to Methodological appendices:
  - ✓ The evaluation proposal
  - ✓ Evaluation instruments such as questionnaires and interview guides
  - ✓ Data collected

## My Rights, My Voice Global Programme Framework

**OVERALL GOAL:** Sustainable changes in policies, practices, and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of marginalised children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women, to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

**Impact indicators:** By December 2015, in project areas % increase<sup>i</sup> in the number of youth and children accessing quality healthcare and/or education. By December 2015, in project areas % increase of girls and young women accessing free quality healthcare and/or education. By December 2015, % increase in the number of informed children and youth able to make decisions on their sexual and reproductive health, disaggregated by gender.

Objectives	OBJECTIVE 1: Children, youth and allies <sup>ii</sup> are more aware of the specific health and education rights of children and youth and with confidence voice these rights, needs and aspirations in a manner that strengthens equality.	OBJECTIVE 2: Children, youth and allies successfully apply improved individual and collective skills, confidence, resources and organisational skills to claim their rights to health and/or education in decision-making spaces.	OBJECTIVE 3: Duty-bearers and influencers <sup>iv</sup> engage directly with marginalised children and youth and as a result take specific actions to deliver better access to and quality of health and education.	OBJECTIVE 4: Oxfam, partners and others have strengthened capacity to work on youth agency in country programmes, and Oxfam's global campaigning force has facilitated youth claiming and accessing better health and education.
Outcomes	<b>1.1: Boys and girls, young women and men, and their allies are more aware and knowledgeable of their rights to health and/or education</b>	<b>2.1: Through programmes executed by local partner organisations, boys and girls, young women and men, and their allies are organising themselves more effectively to claim their rights to health and/or education</b>	<b>3.1: Duty-bearers and influencers recognise boys and girls, young women and men as a valid constituent with specific health and/or education needs and aspirations and consult with them on issues of health and/or education policy and services.</b>	<b>4.1: Young women and men have gained experience in relating to each other and in connecting to campaigners at global level who support their ability to claim their rights to health and education, thanks to the intervention of Oxfam and partners.</b>
Indicators	<p>A. By December 2015, % increase<sup>v</sup> in boys and girls, young women and men that can verbalise examples of country specific laws, policies and or services on health and/or education (age specific) as provided by the government (disaggregated by gender).</p> <p>B. By December 2015, % increase in allies that can verbalise examples of country specific laws, policies and or services on health and/or education as provided by the government.</p> <p>C. By December 2015, % increase in allies that can verbalise examples of specific rights, services and/or issues of girls and young women on health and/or education.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, % increase in organised groups (youth clubs, CSOs, parent associations, health committees, etc) actively pursuing youth and child rights to health and/or education.</p> <p>B. By December 2015, % increase in the number of girls and young women participating in these groups and taking up leadership roles.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, local and national policy makers in target countries create, recognize, and/or formalise spaces for young people's voices (e.g. youth parliaments, child caucuses and youth fora).</p> <p>B. Numbers of cases that bring evidence that duty bearers include young people and/or children as a panel in their fact-finding and M&amp;E systems relating to health and/or education policy and services in the project area.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, number of youth and advocates supported by Oxfam and partners to engage in policy processes at national, regional and/or international levels. (Target: M/F 40/60).</p> <p>B. By December 2015, evidence demonstrates that international/global advocacy by Oxfam and its partners has significantly contributed to national level policy changes in favour of children and youth rights to health and/or education in at least 2 MRMV countries.</p>
Outcomes	<b>1.2: Boys and girls, young women and men girls articulate their needs and aspirations on health and/or education amongst their peers, allies and other actors.</b>	<b>2.2: Boys and girls, young women and men, and their allies, are capable of agreeing and voicing a shared agenda in open and closed decision making spaces to claim their rights to health and education.</b>	<b>3.2: Duty-bearers and influencers take specific actions to improve access and quality of health and/or education services for boys and girls, young women and men.</b>	<b>4.2: Oxfam and partners have the knowledge and tools to better engage youth and children in programmes, campaigning and decision-making spaces.</b>
Indicators	<p>A. By December 2015, % increase in the number peers, allies and other actors that indicate that they have discussed education and health rights, needs and aspirations with girls, boys and young women and men. Disaggregated by gender.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, % of above groups with documented shared agendas (policy recommendations, agreed activities and purpose, etc).</p> <p>B. By December 2015, % of above groups with documented shared agendas (as above) where the specific rights and issues of girls and young women are mentioned.</p> <p>C. By December 2015, % increase (compared to project year 1) in the number of key formal/public decision making events/processes (as defined relevant in each country) with children and young people raising their voice to claim their rights to health and/or education, disaggregated by gender.</p> <p>D. By December 2015, % increase (compared to project year 1) in the number of key formal/public decision making events/processes (as defined relevant in each country) with people other than youth (i.e. allies of children and youth) raising their voice to claim the rights of boys and girls, young women and men to health and/or education.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, number of documented country actions by duty bearers on health and/or education in favour of youth and child rights enacted and/or implemented as a result of the MRMV's advocacy and campaigning actions.</p> <p>B. By December 2015, number of policy recommendations made by children and youth within the context of the MRMV projects that are taken into account and implemented by duty-bearers.</p>	<p>A. By December 2015, MRMV country teams and partners improve performance on annual youth audit.</p> <p>B. Number of local and international partners working on child and youth rights to health and/or education has the resources and capacity to document their experiences and to publicise them beyond the national level.</p> <p>C. Number of young women and men involved in decision making structure of MRMV and ES campaign.</p>

<sup>i</sup> Obviously there are many factors contributing to realising the overall goal of the MRMV programme. It is, therefore, difficult to attribute positive changes in the impact indicators to the result of the programme. Oxfam proposes to use other innovative instruments that allow us to make a judgement on the programme's contribution to the overall goal at the end of the programme period.

<sup>ii</sup> The '% increase' in these indicators are against year 1 project results and/or baseline data where available.

<sup>iii</sup> Allies constitutes parents, educators, health staff, etc.

<sup>iv</sup> These include individuals and groups/bodies such as government ministries, politicians, donors, international institutions, parents, teachers, religious leaders, NGOs, etc.

<sup>v</sup> The '% increase' in these indicators are against year 1 project results and/or baseline data where available.

## 2. List of persons interviewed<sup>63</sup>

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location of the interview</b>
Lien Van Mellaert, member GCT MRMV	The Netherlands, Mali
Sitan Cissé, programme director MRMV	The Netherlands, Mali
Imogen Davies, member GCT MRMV	The Netherlands
Carron Basu Ray, former programme director MRMV	The Netherlands, Belgium (skype interview)
Stéphanie de Chassy, member SC MRMV	Belgium (skype interview)
Olloriak Sawade, programme lead YAC, ON	Belgium (skype interview)
<b>Field mission in Vietnam</b>	
Representatives of Bac Ai and Thuan district dept. of Education and Training (DOET)	Ninh Thuan province
Representatives of Women's Union and Youth Union in Ninh Thuan	Ninh Thuan province
Representatives of Ninh Thuan DOET	Ninh Thuan province
Ninh Thuan TV staff	Ninh Thuan province
Parents in Binh Nghia Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Binh Nghia Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Binh Nghia Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Ha Huy Tap secondary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Ha Huy Tap secondary school	Ninh Thuan province
Culture ambassador club in Ha Huy Tap SS	Ninh Thuan province
School head of Ha Huy Tap Secondary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Phuoc Binh A Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Phuoc Binh A Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Phuoc Binh B Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Parents in Nguyen Van Linh secondary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Phuoc Tan A primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Nguyen Van Linh Secondary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Phuoc Tan A Primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Nguyen Van Linh	Ninh Thuan province
Parents in Phuoc Tan B primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Green Ambassador club of Phuoc Tan B P School	Ninh Thuan province
Students in Phuoc Tan B primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Teachers in Phuoc Tan B primary school	Ninh Thuan province
Parents in Le Van Tam Primary school and Nam Nung secondary school	Dak Nong province
Game show by students of Nam Nung P School	Dak Nong province
Students in Le Van Tam primary school	Dak Nong province
Students in Nam Nung secondary school	Dak Nong province
Teachers in Le Van Tam primary school and Nam Nung secondary school	Dak Nong province
Parents and commune authorities in Le Loi primary school	Dak Nong province

<sup>63</sup> In accordance with the Oxfam policy, the list below does not contain the names of children and youth that have been interviewed.

Participatory School Planning Activity of Le Loi P School	Dak Nong province
Students in Le Loi primary school	Dak Nong province
Teachers in Le Loi primary school	Dak Nong province
Head of Krong No District DOET	Dak Nong province
Parents in Nguyen Van Troi primary school and Phan Chu Trinh Secondary school	Dak Nong province
Students in Nguyen Van Troi primary school	Dak Nong province
Student Club Activity of Ngyyen Van Troi P S	Dak Nong province
Girls in Phan Chu Trinh secondary school	Dak Nong province
Boys in Phan Chu Trinh Secondary school	Dak Nong province
Teachers in Phan Chu Trinh Primary school	Dak Nong province
Secretary of PMB in DaKNong province (DOET)	Dak Nong province
Head of Primary Education Department in DakNong DOET	Dak Nong province
Representative of Women Union in DakNong province	Dak Nong province
Representatives of People's Council in DakNong province	Dak Nong province
Satff of L& L (local NGO partner)	Hanoi
Staff of iSEE (a NGO partner)	Hanoi
Oxfam staff	Hanoi
<b>Field mission in Pakistan</b>	
18 members of the district youth council	Peshawar
Mr. Rahmanullah, journalist	Peshawar
Mr. Waqas Ahmad, CDA coordinator	Peshawar
Mr. Saqib Nawaz, journalist	Peshawar
Mr. Attaullah Khan, journalist	Peshawar
Mr. Nawab Sher, journalist	Peshawar
Mr. Danish Baber, journalist	Peshawar
Mr. Hidayat Khan, Deputy Director, Population Welfare Department, GoKP	Peshawar
Mr. Jaleel Asad, ally	Peshawar
Mr. Mudassir Shah, ally	Peshawar
1 YAB member	Peshawar
13 students	Peshawar
Ms. Aneela, teacher	Peshawar
Mr. Staram Sansi, journalist	Hyderabad
Mr. Israr Tunio, regional manager IRM (ally)	Jamshoro
Mr. Waheed Zaman, youth coordinator	Jamshoro
3 youth club members	Jamshoro
12 members of the district youth council	Jamshoro
Mr. Muntas Joyo, teacher	Jamshoro
Mr. Hammad Siddiqi, provincial coordinator Sindh, CDA	Karachi
1 YAB member	Karachi
Ms. Mitha Raam, CDA coordinator Jamshoro	Karachi
Ms. Lubna Khalid, editor Daiy News	Karachi
Ms. Syeda Tehseen, FM radio head of news	Karachi
Mr. Kamran Chouhan, journalist	Karachi

Mr. Mohammad Stahzad, Executive Director CDA	Lahore
Mr. Qasim mumtaz, Meal Program Manager	Lahore
1 member of youth led organisation	Lahore
Mr. Moqbool Hussain, field coordinator CDA	Lodhran
Mr.Naeem Bhatti, district officer, dept. of Social Welfare	Lodhran
Mr. Allah Ditta Anjum , Journalist	Lodhran
39 members of the district youth council or youth councils	Lodhran
Mr. Saiful Iqbal Shakir, teacher	Lodhran
Mr. Khalid Mir, CDA field coordinator, Quetta	Skype interview
Mr. Salid Haider, journalist	Skype interview
8 members of the district youth council of quetta	Skype interview
<b>Field mission in Afghanistan</b>	
Wahidullah Shinwari, project coordinator (Oxfam)	Kabul
Parnian Sherzai, project officer (Oxfam)	Kabul
Mohammad Ayoub Shaharyear, project coordinator ACSFo	Kabul
Rafiullah Khafalwan, field coordinator ACSFo	Kabul
Eng. Reza Arman, program manger (OHW)	Kabul
Marsia, member of health department	Phone interview
12 youth group representatives	Individual phone interviews
Fawzia, parent	Phone interview
Ustad Esa, teacher	Phone interview
Shukrudin Khan, stakeholder (education)	Phone interview
Wakil Talaash, malik	Phone interview
Zarifa, parent	Phone interview
Amanulla, malik	Phone interview
Dr. Hashim Hakim, stakeholder (health)	Phone interview
Abdul Jameel , stakeholder (education)	Phone interview
Qudsia, teacher	Phone interview
Hajji Dawood, parent	Phone interview
Zahir Shaheen, teacher	Phone interview
Roqiah Hosainy, teacher	Phone interview
Abdul Maroof Nadiri, teacher	Phone interview
Abdul Rashid Marafat, stakeholder (education)	Phone interview
Dr. Amrullah, parent	Phone interview
Sayed Shafiqullah, stakeholder (education)	Phone interview
Mohammadullah, parent	Phone interview
<b>Field mission in Mali</b>	
Abou Coulibaly, staff Oxfam	Bamako
Elie Coulbaliy, staff Oxfam, partially in charge of MRMV	Bamako
Rose Dolo, staff Oxfam, partially in charge of MRMV	Bamako
Samuel Gao, staff Oxfam, partially in charge of MRMV	Bamako
Maïa Portine, former programme coordinator MRMV Mali	Skype interview
Dianta Mariam Diané, AMPPF (NGO partner)	Bamako

Alassane Sidi Maïga, AMPPF (NGO partner)	Bamako
Naparé Magniné Diarra, FAWE (NGO partner)	Bamako
Oumar Sougané, FAWE (NGO partner)	Bamako
2 peer educatorq supported by FAWE	Bamako
Thirop Aminata, FAWE (NGO partner)	Bamako
Aissa Touré, AWUL (NGO partner)	Bamako
Mahamadou Ongoïba, COSC-EPT (NGO partner)	Bamako
Salia Coulibaly, COSC-EPT (NGO partner)	Bamako
Traore Fatumata Touré, ASDAP (NGO partner)	Bamako
Fatalmoudou touré Simbara, ASDAP (NGO partner)	Bamako
Youssef Coulibali, ASDAP (NGO partner)	Bamako
11 peer educators supported by ASDAP	Bamako
Sow Sanata Pléa, Projet Jeunes (NGO partner)	Bamako
Adama Tamboura, Projet Jeunes (NGO partner)	Bamako
Birama togola, Projet Jeunes	Bamako
XX, Journalist radio Voix des Jeunes	Bamako
4 peer educators supported by Projet Jeunes	Bamako
Ousmane Maiga, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Adam Dicko, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Sokona Tounkara, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Fousseyni Diop, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Sissoko Ibrahim, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Mohamed Traoré, AJCAD (youth organisation and partner)	Bamako
Yacouba Konaté, WALE (NGO partner)	Segou
Vincent Konaté, WALE (NGO partner)	Segou
Oumar Tangara, WALE (NGO partner)	Segou
Assetou Diawara, WALE (NGO partner)	Segou
Brehima Dembélé, WALE (NGO partner)	Segou
Bakary Niaré, school director	Segou
Assanatour Doumbia, teacher	Segou
Chiaka Togola, teacher	Segou
Sirantou Diakité, teacher	Segou
Aliou Moussa, teacher	Segou
Mamadou Cissé, teacher	Segou
8 students of Audrin Oswal school	Segou
Mamadou Sagara, director IFP (secondary school)	Segou
Alphonse Kelu, staff IFP	Segou
Mahmmed Bathily, staff IFP	Segou
Ousmane Gindo, staff IFP	Segou
XX, teacher IFP	Segou
Boukari Konaté, staff ministry of Education	Bamako
Bai Coulibaly, journalist	Bamako
Salimata Traore, consultant SRHR	Bamako

### 3. List of most important documents consulted

#### Global documentation related to the programme

- My Rights, My Voice: Engaging marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services, proposal to Sida, 2011
- My right, my voice, Mali project overview, 2013
- My Rights, My Voice: Engaging marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services, Programme Proposal for Extension (January – December 2014)
- My Rights My Voice, Year 4 proposal (January – December 2014), Pakistan
- Jenny Enarsson, Strategic Gender Review, My rights, My Voice, February 2014
- Midterm Review of the My Rights, My Voice programme, January 2014
- Annual progress reports (2012 till 2015)
- MRMV logic model

#### Country specific documentation

##### *All countries*

- Quarterly reports from quarter 2 2012 till quarter 4 2015 included

##### *Vietnam*

##### *Pakistan*

- Green Rose - Edutainment Project Proposal Pakistan
- MRMV Pakistan Proposal for Year 4
- Situation Analysis for Adolescents" and Youths" Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights - Education (SRHR – E) Project
- Learning Needs Assessment Report
- Drama Impact Evaluation – Kis Se Kahoon, July 2015
- MRMV End Line Evaluation Report, September 2015

##### *Afghanistan*

- Baseline Survey Report by HQCS (March 2013)
- Mid Term Review MRMV by SARC (2013-2014)
- Bi-ANNUAL REVIEW WORKSHOP REPORT MY RIGHT MY VOICE, 30<sup>th</sup> August-1<sup>st</sup> September, 2015

##### *Mali*

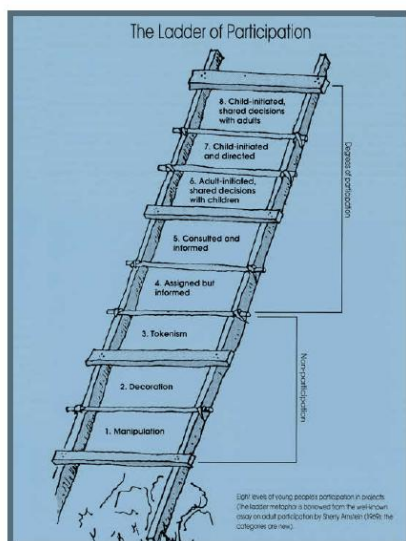
- Draft pour Sustainability plan
- Éléments du plan de pérennisation
- Etude de base complémentaire du programme My Rights, My Voice, rapport final, septembre 2013

## 4. Specific tools used by peer evaluators during field research

The peer evaluators used the following tools during their field research, in particular via sessions with their peers.

- **Participation Ladder - How do I participate ?**

This tool helps the participants to recognise and discuss the quality of their participation in various aspects of life. It encourages them to reflect on different levels of participation, on constraints that hamper participation and on ways to improve their participation. The participation ladder (see below) is often used to determine the level of participation.



- **Body map exercise**

This tool helps children (in particular) to explore existing attitudes and behaviour, and corresponding likes and dislikes of children by using body parts. For instance, the head can be used to discuss about the question: what knowledge do children have of child rights related to education? The ears can be used to explore the question: to which extent do parents listen to children?

- **'Spaceogram'**

In this exercise, the participating group is invited to express their view related to a particular statement. They can choose among 4 possible answers: fully agree – more or less agree – more or less disagree – fully disagree. These four answers are hung up in the four corners of the meeting room and form a kind of diagram created in space. The participants are then invited to move to one of these corners to express their point of view with regard to a particular statement (e.g. I can talk freely with my parents about issues related to sexual and reproductive rights). Once the participants have taken their position, a discussion can start on how the participants have distributed themselves, on why participants have taken a particular position, etc.

- **Life storytelling**

There exist several approaches to implement this exercise. In the MRMV evaluation, interviewees were invited to draw a lifeline and indicate on that line particular events that have influenced their life (in particular during their adolescence). These events were then used to engage in a discussion on how the interviewee dealt with the situation, which support he or she enjoyed etc. (from peers, via the program,

## 5. Graphical representation of MRMV's Theory of Change

