



Children collect water that has just been delivered by truck in Zaatari Refugee Camp, Jordan. Photo: Lucy Brinicombe/Oxfam

STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS IN JORDAN

The Jordan Local Economic Empowerment and Development Consortium (JOLEED)

Oxfam has been working in Jordan on strengthening civil society since the early 90s. In 2013, Oxfam also started providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan. In 2013, Oxfam and four other agencies came together to create an informal working group called Jordan Local Economic Empowerment and Development Consortium (JOLEED) with the aim of improving coordination and sharing good practices. This case study discusses the benefits and challenges of this consortium.

1 INTRODUCTION

In 2013, five agencies involved in unconditional cash transfer programmes – Oxfam, the Danish Refugee Council, ACTED (Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development), CARE International and Save the Children International formed a working group to improve coordination around cash programming, share experiences and provide regular input to the UN coordination system. As cash programming began to scale down and the challenges associated with sustainability became serious, the group evolved in response to the changing context towards more sustainable solutions.

In August 2014, Oxfam began a study of the markets in Jordan, with a view to developing livelihoods programming for Syrian refugees and crisis-affected Jordanians. Oxfam was requested by the working group to take a lead in bringing together the individual organizations into a working consortium to take joint action on livelihoods development and livelihoods planning in Jordan. Organizations were concerned that existing aid schemes were inadequate to support Syrian refugees, given the protracted nature of the crisis. They identified a strong need for new approaches and innovation, and felt that unless an independent lead was taken it was unlikely that the consortium would succeed in coming together.

Oxfam therefore adapted its own study in order to take the lead and to include an assessment of potential joint programming. It also held three progressive workshops over six months, during which working-group members could consider the findings of Oxfam's study to guide the co-production of joint programming. At the same time, the working group undertook a separate study of previous livelihoods programming in Jordan to consider impact and to learn from this. Oxfam and the working group members also shared the information gathered with donors who were considering their strategies for more sustainable programming in Jordan.

2 ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

This led to the creation of the Jordan Local Economic Empowerment and Development Consortium (JOLEED). JOLEED's goal was to identify potential joint actions to improve livelihoods for both Syrians and Jordanians using the local economic development approach. At the same time, JOLEED members worked together through the INGO coordination group to influence stronger consultation mechanisms between various stakeholders and INGOs.

A strategy outline was produced and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was drafted and signed by the five member agencies. At this stage, there were no financial commitments apart from an agreement to co-finance research. The situation changed when, many months later, donors started to invest funds towards livelihood programmes. The agencies involved, in line with the MoU, had the intention of working together on proposals as a coalition where desirable.

Moreover, joint meetings were held with major donors, and all the member organizations agreed to promote JOLEED during individual meetings with donors.

Consortium members discussed individual donor proposals and agreed on partnerships within the wider group. For instance, if a call for a proposal was not large enough for a 'whole consortium bid', partnerships between different members of the consortium were discussed and agreed. A few initial problems were experienced, such as the potential of an identified and core Oxfam project idea and partner apparently being adopted by another consortium member after information was shared. Another problem related to the diverse views of members on certain subjects and the strong will of certain members in this regard. In each case, issues were tackled sensitively through open dialogue and observing the rule to respect the views of others despite disagreement.

After the initial explorations, when the teams in Lebanon became involved it was found that there were once again divergent views which needed reconciliation. Finally, certain members experienced difficulties in convincing their global management to accept lower unit funding in return for the benefits of interdependent working. JOLEED proposed a programme with an overall objective to contribute to the economic self-reliance, resilience and social stability of displacement-affected populations (refugees and host communities) in Jordan and Lebanon.

Eventually it was successful in securing a grant under the EU *Madad*¹ funding mechanism – an EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis. The programme aims to reach 130,000 economically vulnerable individuals, with a focus on marginalized women and youth among both Syrian refugees and the host community. Oxfam will also carry out targeted media work at regional and international levels, and facilitate high-level roundtables to discuss policies limiting refugees' and poor communities' access to work opportunities, collective barriers to economic growth, national refugee frameworks and labour laws and practices.

3 WHAT HAS OXFAM LEARNED?

By first listening very carefully to each organization about what programming they wanted to do, and playing to the strengths they had to offer within the initial programme frame, potential members were valued strongly and able to add value to the design. Joint workshops to develop common framework for program development helped. Oxfam's share of funding was small but continued focusing on the development of the consortium helped.

The consortium faced challenges and struggled to stay cohesive when donors started to fund the projects, and was weakened by the pressure to compete for funds and market space. It was further undermined by changes in leadership at country level and pressure to fundraise.

Key lessons

- In the initial stages, it is crucial to do a lot of active listening to potential members and to ensure that the perspectives and wishes of individual organizations are respected within discussions, joint working and programming. It also made a difference to set ground rules on this from the outset.
- Effective leadership and an experienced mediatory role can enable change, and in this case led to a very strong consortium, which was recently recommended to the UNDP as best practice by the EU. It has been agreed with the UNDP that this collaboration will begin in Jordan through the planned national learning panel component of the embedded action research component covering JOLEED and Oxfam programming.
- Early collaboration on a research piece (committing funds to a joint initiative) helped to strengthen the consortium. The incentive to work as a consortium was not only based on creating a partnership that was attractive to donors; it also resulted from the context.
- The donors started to contribute financially only when the consortium was strong enough and able to add extra value. However, large consortiums often mean that significant funding is needed. Consortiums therefore need to be able to demonstrate the added value they can bring, as the costs involved when it comes to delivering are usually very high.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

JOLEED is still active, and hopefully offers opportunities to integrate humanitarian, development and policy work and offer opportunities for scaling up. A coalition such as JOLEED has a clear strategy and scale, and for this reason should attract a lot more financial investment and can support large numbers of poor and vulnerable people. Changes introduced to the legal framework following an agreement reached at the London Conference in February 2016 offered opportunities to remove some of the hurdles Syrians previously faced in accessing work permits. The recognition of Syrians' potential to contribute positively to the Jordanian economy is another welcome step on the way forward.

NOTES

¹ *Madad* is an Arabic word meaning 'helping together'.

© Oxfam International October 2016

This case study was written by Geoffrey Poynter. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Nedal Arabiat and Philippe Clerc in its production. It is part of a series of papers and reports written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. Email policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under
ISBN 978-0-85598-809-8 in October 2016.
Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 20 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. Please write to any of the agencies for further information, or visit www.oxfam.org.