Oxfam Management response to the review of *Accountability review in Tanzania: Fahamu, Ongea Sikilzwa / Informed, Speaking and Heard project (Effectiveness Review Series 2014/15)*

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Date:	*17 February 2016*	**Country/Region/Campaign:**	*Tanzania*

1. The context and background of the review

As part of Oxfam Great Britain's (OGB) Global Performance Framework (GPF), samples of projects a quarter to a half way through their lifetime are randomly selected each year in order to review the levels of accountability they are achieving. The accountability indicator that Oxfam has chosen to examine in its Accountability Reviews (ARs) is the degree to which its work meets its own standards for accountability. Oxfam is able to do this as it has clear standards that describe how a project/intervention/activity should be delivered by staff and partners and how it should be experienced by those for whom we are seeking change.

The Fahamu Ongea Silikizwa / Informed, Speaking, and Heard project was selected for this type of review.

Accountability is one of the 11 Programme Standards that Oxfam is expected to meet in its development work. It is the process through which an organization balances the needs of stakeholders in its decision making and activities, and delivers against this commitment. Accountability is based on four dimensions: transparency, participation, learning, and evaluation and feedback mechanisms that allow the organization to give account to, take account of, and be held to account by stakeholders. Oxfam's principle is**:** 'We hold ourselves primarily accountable to people living in poverty, but we take our accountability to all stakeholders seriously, and continuously strive to balance their different needs. Increased accountability will be achieved and demonstrated through respectful and responsible attitudes, appropriate systems and strong leadership.' This review assessed accountability in terms of transparency, feedback/listening and, participation – three key dimensions of Accountability for Oxfam. In addition it asked questions around partnership practices, staff attitudes, and satisfaction (how useful the project is to people and how wisely the money on this project has been spent) where appropriate.

The Fahamu Ongea Silikizwa / Informed, Speaking, and Heard project was developed to respond to community awareness needs and participation in Tanzania's constitution review processes. Tanzania has been in the process of developing a new constitution since 2013. Oxfam has been coordinating a consortium that has been working to encourage citizens to become informed, to speak up, and to be heard regarding issues around the constitution making process. The consortium consists of four partners: Oxfam, Voluntary Service Overseas, Restless Development and Legal and Human Rights Centre.

The **goal of this project** is to ensure that the issues being voiced by Tanzanians, especially marginalized groups, are incorporated into the constitutional review process and are ultimately reflected within the new Tanzanian Constitution.

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The project had two main objectives:

1. Marginalized women and youth in Tanzania are **informed** about the constitution and the review process, **speaking** about their opinions, and **heard** by the duty bearers in the constitution review process.

2. Following the constitution review process, referendum citizens are empowered to hold their leaders accountable and ensure that their rights are protected. However, the second objective could not be achieved as the constitution making process was terminated in October 2014. At the time of this review the new constitution was due to be made available in 2015, after a general election.

The review team used a participatory approach that involved a number of methods in collecting data in Morogoro, Kagera and Mbeya regions during the review. These included informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD), workshops, staff interviews and a review of existing project documentation.

2. **Summary main findings and recommendations**

Summary table: Oxfam's score for accountability to partners – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)

Acct Indicator	Transparency	Feedback	Participation
Review Team Score	2	2	3

Transparency: Detailed information about Oxfam and the project is mainly shared with partners during project inception and learning events. Information sharing during the implementation is positively affected by feedback mechanisms.

Feedback: Feedback mechanisms are in place such as a complaints policy; meetings and minutes are available.

Participation: Partners are highly involved in writing project proposals, developing budgets, and decision making during joint consortium meetings, which require the presence of all members.

Summary: Oxfam and partner accountability to communities – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)

Acct Indicator	Transparency	Feedback	Participation
Review Team Score	1	2	2

Transparency: Few members of the communities have access to project information and it has not been easy for communities to communicate with partners about the project and its activities.

Feedback: There were not many feedback mechanisms in place where it could be easy to determine whether communities' views have been taken into account. The scores were positively influenced by responses from those who participated in trainings directly provided by partners.

Participation: Communities have not had many opportunities to participate in making decisions.

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Recommendations:

- Utilise community structures for sharing project information for wider coverage and impact, especially on awareness raising interventions.
  Community members suggested gatherings such as Mbuyu 'baobab' meetings for the Maasai tribe as they are highly respected and participation is almost 100 percent.

- Involve implementing partners who are locally based as they interact on a very regular basis with community members.

- Consider how to incorporate a strong involvement of the local government.

- Consider how best to incorporate communities' decisions on their needs and approaches for project implementation to create a stronger sense of ownership among project participants.

- Improve joint monitoring by Oxfam and partners working in the communities.

- Improve cross learning among consortium members.

- Make sure that the available feedback mechanisms such as online networks are properly used.

- Ensure different documents are made available and are used by Oxfam staff.

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

The findings of the Accountability Review concur with the team in Tanzania's expectation of the project. It was expected that the project would score highly in participation because it was noted from the beginning of the project that there was great involvement of partners (in this case consortium members). An example of this is the frequent meetings held in response to feedback from DFID, where consortium members came together to provide more information and make joint decisions about the concept note and the proposal. I therefore agree with the findings for participation.

I agree with the scores under the transparency and feedback components of the review. Partners were not very open to beneficiaries, though Oxfam Coordination was transparent to Consortium members. Inception meeting and annual learning events were the main spaces for sharing of information and providing feedback. These meetings were attended by partners and beneficiaries. This is an irony as the project demanded this from local leaders. Effective communication between the partners and the community members was observed to be limited.

Consortium members introduced activities to project participants but the budget and full work-plan were not disclosed. There were very minimal feedback mechanisms especially from partners to beneficiaries. Reports are only submitted to Oxfam and are rarely shared with beneficiaries and local government authorities.

I appreciate the findings, they indicated the true picture of what was happening at the time on the ground. Most of the issues raised were dealt with under FOS II and Chukua Hatua 2 projects, which were implemented in 2015. For example, there were some improvements in transparency - sharing election information by uploading them onto the election website, and to Dropbox, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

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

The Accountability Review commended implementation of the project through the consortium in the following areas:

1. Working through a consortium improved participation and relationship.

2. Systems such as complaints procedures are in place, and feedback mechanism and a Google account is established.

3. Consortium working through locally based partners increased trust, while working with the community members created a sense of ownership and sustainability of the project.

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

The AR identified **transparency** on budgets to be a weak point at all levels; implementing partners were not ready to disclose the project budget because of several factors. These included raising expectations of the community while not considering administration costs, and partners' concerns to disclose budgets prior to having funds confirmed by the donor.

Additional weak areas were in monitoring of project activities, and their implementation by Oxfam at a project participant level. Project reports and proposals did not reach community members, and involvement of local government was found to be weak. Lastly, there were very few initiatives to ensure community participation during decision making, implementation, reporting – feedback systems were also not in place.

6. Summary of review quality assessment

The review process was strong generally, due to the fact that consultants were competent and people who listen; they managed to grasp information from wider groups including partners and community members, with different age, sex and geographical locations. The selection of target areas was done in collaboration with Oxfam. There was close communication with the Accountability Review Advisor in Oxford. Telecommunication facilitated understanding of the tools; technical support from Oxford was commendable. The Accountability Advisor was available to support the Oxfam Programme Manager who was managing the process and to support consultants in using the tools.

Participation with consortium members was commendable; the field work was made easy with support from partners who are based at local level. These partners supported the consultants to meet with local leaders and faith-based leaders. Every consortium member supported the AR process and owned the process.

Feedback meetings were successfully conducted with the participation of senior Oxfam staff including the Country Director and Social Justice Programme Coordinator. From the Consortium side, Senior Managers participated, also other Oxfam departments such as Gender Justice and Economic Justice participated actively.

The budget for the AR process was sufficient for beneficiaries to travel from upcountry to participate in feedback sessions. Therefore, the meeting was balanced and inclusive of Oxfam staff, Consortium members and their partners, and project participants from all target areas.

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

The agreed actions were implemented during the implementation of Fahamu, Ongea, Sikilizwa Election (FOS II) and Chukua Hatua 2 (another Tanzanian governance project):

- Community structures, especially local government authorities, were intensively involved in the implementation of the project. Faith leaders, ward executive officers and village chair persons were part of focus group discussions and were the recipients of election toolkits. A baseline survey report summary was produced and distributed to all districts where evaluators collected data. Civic and voters' education during the 2015 election was extended to local government leaders. Marginalized groups including women, youth and people with disabilities were also highly involved in the implementation stage.

- During the implementation of FOS II, informal structures were used in the provision of civic and voters education, and in conducting focus group discussions. For example, focus group discussions were held under big trees (baobabs), meetings were held in school compounds, informal discussions were conducted in water points and local kiosks. These methods were also used in implementation of Chukua Hatua activities, especially animators meetings and discussions.

- Election toolkits and publications were developed in both English and Kiswahili to cater for the needs of the wider population, for example: *Fahamu Taratibu Mbalimbali za Uchaguzi* (Understanding the Election process toolkits), *Taarifa ya Utafiti wa Ushiriki wa Wanawake katika Uchaguzi wa 2015, Tanzania* (Research report on Women Participation in the Election Process of 2015 in Tanzania) and *Kijana na Uchaguzi* (Youth and Election Toolkit). The Chukua Hatua newsletter, *Riwaya za Chukua Hatua,* was published in English and Kiswahili.

- The Fahamu, Ongea, Sikilizwa project was implemented by consortium members of national and international organizations. The Consortium worked with local government officials, faith leaders and the media to increase awareness of their responsibilities and act in enabling a free and fair election process. Each of these members further worked with local civil society organizations, community radios, journalists and media associations in target regions to ensure that they were playing an important role in preparing citizens and duty bearers for the election day event.

- Through the Chukua Hatua project, active citizens (animators) were identified from communities; there was close collaboration between animators and local leaders. At District levels there were contact people identified to be part of the project. These efforts were made to ensure the sustainability of the project.

- Joint monitoring has been one of the best practices during implementation of the FOS II election monitoring project. Monitoring tours were conducted with involvement of development partners (DfID and USAID). Three tours were conducted within the project timeframe. These monitoring tours facilitated learning among consortium members and learning in different project sites. Additionally, the Cross Programme Learning Tour (CPLT) was organized to allow the team to experience and learn from other programmes. The tour provided an opportunity to receive critical feedback on the Chukua Hatua theory of change and to provide feedback to other programmes.

- Throughout implementation of FOS II project and Chukua Hatua, short telephone messages and social media were used to get feedback on programmes. For example the following are the links where partners and community members were receiving information from Oxfam and partners, and the pages they used to provide feedback and exchange of information:

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www.uchaguzitz.co.tz
https://www.facebook.com/restlesstz
https://twitter.com/SautiyaVijana and the Twitter hash tag campaigns
#VijanaNaUchaguzi2015 and #KijanaJiandikishe
https://www.facebook.com/ChukuaHatua?fref=ts
https://twitter.com/ChukuaHatua and Google account. Tracking of views and viewers are
done by communication team. See example below.

- o There were 14,858 'likes' on the Facebook page, with an average of 123,000 reach per week, and 11,400 people engaging further by commenting and liking posts each week.
- o The Twitter accounts saw 321 tweets, 121 contributors, 85 re-tweets and 17600 followers.[1]
- o The Uchaguzi website had 32,865 viewers, with the most viewed page, '2015 Presidential Results', being viewed by 8,000 citizens.

Analysis of the above statistics by age, sex, geographical location is yet to be conducted. However Oxfam Tanzania has established a team of five people who will be guided by the Learning and Communications Officer for improving internal communication systems. In future Oxfam will be able to record, analyse and report communications within and outside Oxfam.

- Project documents including budget, work plan and reports are kept on a shared drive that is accessible to all staff. Citizens' stories about the election have been uploaded onto an election website (www.uchaguzitz.co.tz) where there are a total of 60 stories in English and Kiswahili. Hard copies of publications were printed and have been distributed to staff, partners and beneficiaries. A total of 69,730 election toolkits and 360 in Braille were printed and distributed to citizens in 20 regions where the election project was implemented. Additionally, the Chukua Hatua newsletter (Riwaya za Chukua Hatua) is distributed to participating communities in all programme areas (nine Districts). Two issues of Riwaya za Chukua Hatua were published (July–Sept and Oct–Dec issues). A total of 2,000 Kiswahili and 500 English copies of each issue were published and distributed.

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

We agree with the review findings; the low score on transparency and feedback was relevant to the programme context. Oxfam is not implementing directly, and programme implementation is done through partnership with local partners who still find it difficult to share budgets with participating communities before assurance of the funds. Disclosing the budget creates huge expectation to beneficiaries and sometimes causes misunderstanding within the respective communities. General practice is that, in meetings, it is Oxfam's role to disclose total costs of the project, so partners do not have to carry this burden.

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[1] See social media accounts: https://www.facebook.com/restlesstz, https://twitter.com/SautiyaVijana and the Twitter hash tag campaigns #VijanaNaUchaguzi2015 and #KijanaJiandikishe

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9. **What learning from the review will you apply to relevant or new projects in the future? How can the regional centre/Oxford support these plans?**

- Project final reports will be distributed to all partners. The report needs to be summarized and translated for sharing with communities. Support from the region is required in the production of a simple version that is user friendly and suitable for local communities, especially women and young people.

- All partners will be provided with electronic copies of the final evaluation and all documents related to the projects. Support from the Regional Centre / Oxford is required in developing simple versions for sharing widely.

- Join monitoring with consortium members was very useful in terms of getting comments from external people. Issues identified during monitoring visits were discussed in Project Steering Committee meetings (PSC) and Project Management Meetings (PMU). It was useful to have Regional Office representation during monitoring visits, though sometimes there is shortage of budget in order to facilitate this consistently. Provisioning budget for regional representation in monitoring visits needs to be considered during proposal development stages of future projects.

- Currently there are no governance projects in progress, as they ended in December 2015. Oxfam in Tanzania will ensure that partners / consortium members are highly involved in the preparation of proposals for future projects. The regional centre will be required to share information on available donors who are interested in funding governance projects, and thereafter, provide technical support and input to proposal development.

10. **Additional reflections**

N/A

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