



NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

Supporting networking and
coalition-building



OXFAM

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

1 Overview

Programme information

Name	IGUALES – Empowering Women in Honduras
Country	Honduras
Budget	€4.82m
Start Date	April 2016
End Date	March 2019
Donors	Projects Direct (Oxfam), Oxfam affiliates, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), Global Affaires Canada and other donors, Ford Foundation, Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID) and the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP).

Problem analysis

In Honduras, 74 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and 50 percent in extreme poverty.¹ Poverty rates are particularly alarming for women: 65 percent of the country's 2.2 million rural women live in poverty or extreme poverty.² The country is also ranked by the Global Climate Risk Index 2015 as the most vulnerable to climate risk,³ and changes in climate and extreme weather events further exacerbate women's vulnerability.

Though women make up over 50 percent of the total population⁴ and 36 percent of the formal labour force,⁵ their contributions to society are not recognized and they remain excluded from decision making processes at household, local and national levels. Women are also underrepresented in decision making and politics – only 25.78 percent of National Congress members are women.⁶ Violence against women and girls is at particularly alarming levels in Honduras, with the country having the highest femicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, a woman is murdered every 17 hours, and over 95 percent of cases never result in a conviction.⁷

Gender inequality in Honduras is underpinned by women's limited access to formal training and education, and the excessive workload they bear. They also face restricted access to, and control of, resources, land, water, credit and education. This inequality is reinforced by patriarchal social norms and values promoted by conservative churches and groups that confine women to their reproductive role, and limited and partial implementation of progressive legal frameworks and public policies supporting gender justice. This was further exacerbated after the 2009 coup d'état which caused a breakdown of institutional order and a severe loss of previously-achieved women's rights gains.

Brief programme description

IGUALES builds on Oxfam's work on women's rights in Honduras since 2008. It adopts a holistic approach to gender justice and women's rights and integrates women's economic empowerment, prevention of violence against women and women's active citizenship. The programme aims to strengthen women's agency and transformational leadership – primarily in rural areas, although there is also a pilot in urban areas – to improve their access to, and control over, productive assets, income and their own time, and to reduce the violence perpetrated against them and the levels of impunity in these cases.

IGUALES' approach links individual and systemic, formal and informal changes, while addressing social and political norms and practices as well as public policy design and implementation. The programme's theory of change considers change in power relations and gender inequality to be at the heart of the change process, and addresses change at individual, social and systemic levels. The programme's overarching objective is to help women and young people living in poverty and exclusion to exercise their leadership in ways that transform power relations, at local and national levels. In doing so it will enable women, young people and their organizations to promote positive changes in beliefs, attitudes, public policies and practices to safeguard their rights to live free of violence, to sustainable livelihoods and to be heard.

IGUALES has four interrelated high-level outcomes:

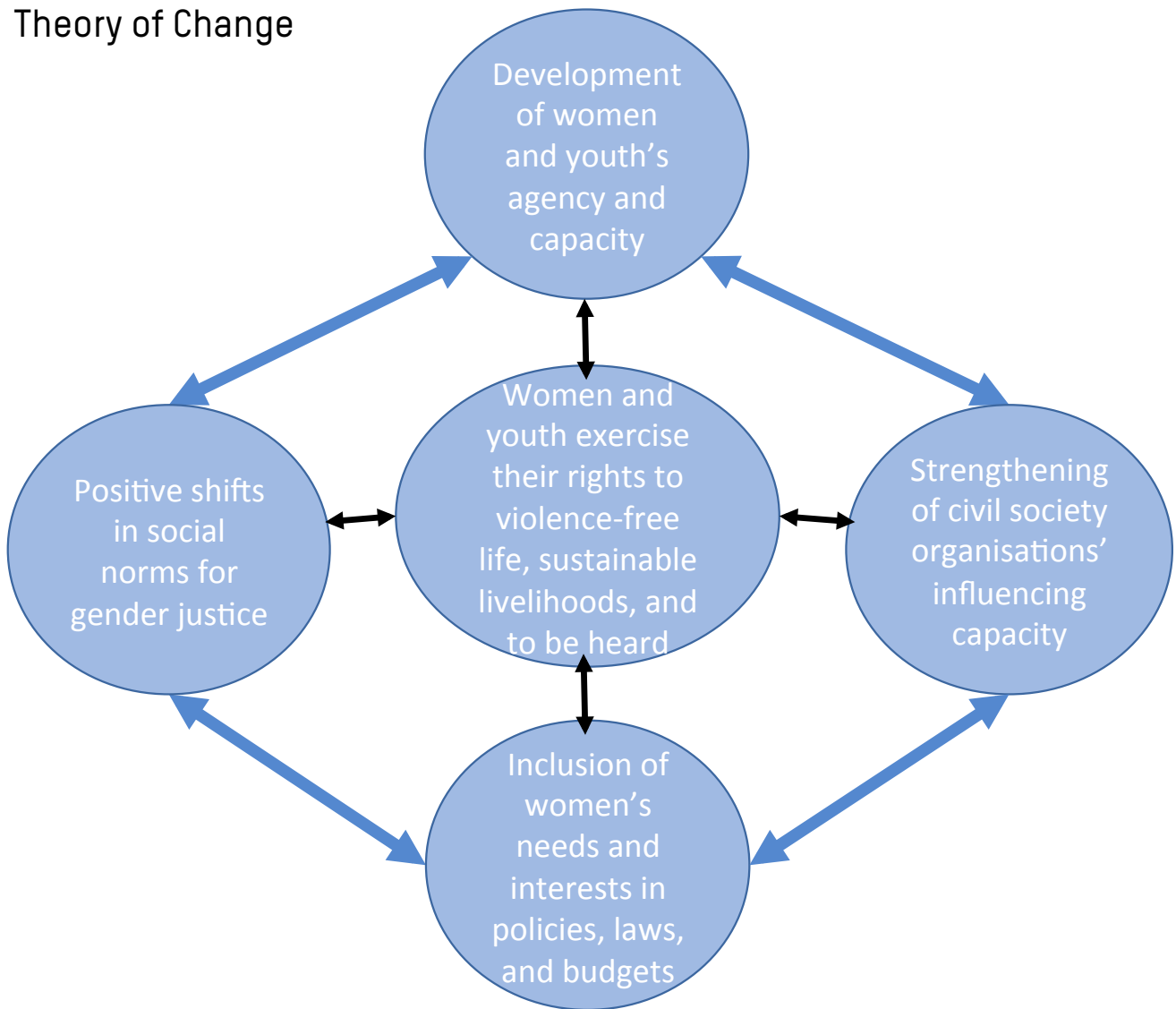
1. Ensuring women have greater and more effective influence with duty-bearers at local, national and global levels.
2. Changing the social norms related to gender, including those that perpetuate violence against women.
3. Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to influence duty-bearers (government and private sector) at local, national and international levels around women's rights.
4. Influencing duty-bearers to change their policies, prioritization and investment to better reflect the interests and demands of women at national and local levels.

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

In order to achieve these changes, the programme adopts the following strategies: generating evidence to influence decision makers; facilitating collaboration and coordination among actors, agendas and processes for change at local, national and international levels; strengthening women's leadership and participation capacities through technical capacity building, skills development and practical support;

promoting shifts in social norms by working with men and boys to redefine masculinity, with leaders and public influencers to increase social support for change, and with women's rights organizations; strengthening the influencing capacity of civil society organizations; and implementing international advocacy to achieve national change.

Theory of Change



NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

2 Achievements and challenges

Achievements to date

Considerable achievements for women's rights in Honduras have been made through the programme. As a result of work in rural communities and marginal urban areas on women's transformative leadership, Oxfam partners report improvements in women's self-esteem and communication skills as well as changes in their roles within households and development of their skills for engagement in public policy.

The programme has supported women to take part in local government structures and play an active role in securing resources for women's priorities (such as building schools and improving health centres) and auditing the use of these funds. In cooperation with local NGOs and municipal and judiciary duty-bearers, women have also been increasingly involved in strengthening local anti-domestic violence mechanisms and ensuring due process is followed in cases of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and femicide.

In terms of addressing social norms, partners working on the anti-femicide campaign in La Paz, Esperanza and Western Provinces reported changes in people's behaviour, such as increased mobilization of both women and men during the 16 Days of Activism and other symbolic dates, as well as their willingness to report femicides. These changes were attributed to a three-pronged strategy:

1. Engaging with gatekeepers: business organizations were approached through their executive boards, universities and schools through deans and headmasters/headmistresses, and churches through pastors and priests.
2. Media engagement: working with journalists to improve their reporting of femicide and VAW, including organizing a national prize for journalists covering such cases.
3. Through the organization of forums, discussion groups and debates.

The programme has also had considerable success in influencing policies, and will be building on these to ensure the effective implementation of new laws and commitments. These include: the establishment of a special unit in the Attorney General's office for investigation of violent crimes against women; ensuring gender-specific provisions in the national budget are used as intended to benefit women; and most recently, passing the law on credit for rural women by the National Congress (Credimujer), creating an opportunity for rural women to access solidarity loans. Resources needed to implement Credimujer are, however, still lacking, and Oxfam and partners will continue to advocate for adequate resourcing.

Specific challenges

The programme faces external and internal challenges. Honduras is witnessing a weakening of the rule of law, with systemic corruption and impunity and polarization of political forces. Civil society space is shrinking and there are few spaces for engaging with the government, and the influence of the church has led to setbacks in the gains won by the women's rights movement. At the same time, there is a great deal of distrust towards the government's Human Rights Defenders protection mechanism, necessitating careful planning for strengthening protection mechanisms and a constant review of risks for Oxfam's partners.

Capturing changes in attitudes and behaviours has also been challenging, particularly as some partners' monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems remain focused on activities and outputs. The programme is investing in its MEL system, including MEL for influencing and, with support from regional and global teams, will be designing tools and systems to be implemented as well as supporting partners in developing their MEL capacities.

IGUALES has also noted that women's and feminist organizations are going through a period of financial crisis limiting their capacity and their role; therefore, in alignment with Oxfam's Gender Justice strategies, the programme has increased its support for these organizations. The programme is also developing a fundraising plan for its own campaign on VAW (Enough is enough) as it has not yet secured the necessary resources.

Finally, despite young people being identified as a priority target for the programme, no specific and tailored strategies have been developed for their involvement, limiting their engagement. Oxfam and partners are considering interventions for youth leadership development and training, and use of social media for youth mobilization.

Lessons learned

Engaging with gatekeepers and the media contributes to increasing community mobilization.

International influencing can be used to support national-level advocacy demands.

There is a need to invest in MEL as capturing changes in attitudes and behaviours can be challenging.

Linking feminist and rural women's organizations has contributed to unifying the women's rights movement.

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

3 Partnerships and links with other programmes

Partnerships

The programme partners with women's and feminist organizations, each bringing its own thematic and geographic expertise, as well as with a few mixed organizations whose institutional priorities include women's rights. In alignment with Oxfam's partnership policy, these relationships are built on shared values, strategic alignment and added value. Programme and influencing priorities and strategies are jointly developed and reviewed, ensuring ownership and buy-in.

'When trying to build these alliances, entering those spaces with humility has proved to be critical. You have to admit you don't know it all – we need help from outside as it is the perspectives that are not your own that help you see your blind spots.'

Gladys Lanza, Movimiento Visitación Padilla.

Through its investment in partnerships and networking, the programme has facilitated the creation of, and access to, spaces for dialogue and coordination among organizations working on women's rights in Honduras. Relationships established between partner organizations such as the Alliance 611, Women's Tribunal Against Femicide, and 25th of November Platform have allowed for greater synergies and integrated action.

The programme has also played a role in linking rural women's rights movements with national feminist organizations and

movements, supporting the former in gaining a feminist perspective and the latter in understanding the needs and interests of rural women and better integrating them in to national influencing work.

The programme also engages with influential national and international actors. In alignment with its power analysis and influencing strategy, it will further develop its strategic alliances with government institutions, academia, social movements and the media.

Links with other Oxfam programmes

The IGUALES programme is fully aligned with Oxfam's programme frameworks and strategies and draws on successes and learning from Oxfam's work in Honduras and the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region.

IGUALES also fits well with Oxfam's gender justice programmatic framework and its three priorities of women's participation and transformative leadership, violence against women and girls, and women's economic empowerment and its methodologies. With its integrated focus and significant investment in promoting knowledge and learning, the programme can also contribute to learning on various areas of work such as networking and alliance building for policy change for women's rights, advocacy in closing civil society space, and prevention of VAWG in urban settings.

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

4 In focus

Supporting networking and coalition building to achieve national policy change

IGUALES includes an important influencing component that builds on significant policy and campaigning successes from previous years. These include: the anti-femicide campaign which resulted in securing the approval of a reform to include femicide in the Penal Code in 2012; lobbying for rural women's access to an agricultural trust fund (known as FIRSA) in 2014; and the 2015 campaign for Credimujer, a legal framework for provision of solidarity loans to rural women. One of the key ingredients of this success is the networking and coalition-building approach adopted.

The programme sought to establish a clear link between work at local and national levels to ensure national campaigns were rooted in grassroots realities and voiced the concerns and demands of local and rural communities. Creating a space where established women's and feminist organizations interact, strategize and implement campaigns together has not only ensured influencing efforts are evidence-based and effective, but has also supported local and rural organizations in their institutional capacity development and in raising the voices and demands of rural women. Thanks to this work, the previously fragmented women's movement is now more unified and able to speak with one voice.

A successful element and important learning point is that working in coalition does not mean all parties agree on everything but rather that they are all combining forces to achieve a shared objective – compromise is key. Oxfam can play a role at this level in helping to build bridges and establish dialogue between different organizations. Coalitions established do not only include civil society actors; based on a power analysis, the media was also targeted for its role in keeping women's rights issues visible, driving social change and highlighting advocacy and policy demands. The programme also engages with political parties, elected representatives/MPs, National Congress committees, experts, INGOs (through the Asociación de Cooperación Internacional, which brings together 29 INGOs), UN agencies and donor

representatives. In the case of the Credimujer campaign, seeking contributions from credit experts and other organizations that provided technical and political support contributed to ensuring the relevance and feasibility of demands. Additionally, the strategic alliance formed with UN Women and the National Congress's Gender Committee proved to be a successful strategy, as it facilitated one-to-one lobbying with decision makers, including the Honduran president.

Oxfam in Honduras has, furthermore, built on its international network and has demonstrated success in leveraging international influence to drive national-level change. An emblematic example of this approach has been the campaign implemented following the murder, in March 2016, of indigenous rights activist Berta Cáceres. Oxfam reacted very quickly to the murder and joined a global campaign demanding justice for Berta and protection for her Mexican colleague who had also been injured in the attack. The campaign called for a halt to the hydroelectric project (Agua Zarca) that Berta and indigenous Lenca communities had been fighting, and the need to ensure that stakeholders from the private and public sectors took communities' concerns into account. Oxfam participated in a diverse global coalition and mobilized its own teams at national, regional and international levels to amplify demands and exert pressure on the Government of Honduras, investors and companies supporting the Agua Zarca project. This collective pressure helped to contribute to the release and safe return of Berta's colleague to Mexico, and to convince international investors in the Agua Zarca project to suspend their financing.

The programme aims to continue learning from this experience and achieve better articulation with regional and global processes to bring about national-level change. It will also be focusing on strengthening its MEL system to improve its capacity to monitor progress against expected objectives, including long-term aims.

For further information about this programme:
www.oxfam.org.uk/iguales

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN HONDURAS

Notes

¹ CEPALSTAT. *Honduras: National Socio-Demographic Profile*. Retrieved from http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/Perfil_Nacional_Social.html?pais=HND&idioma=english

² Suyapa Martínez and Ana María Ferrera. *Can Commitment to the 2030 Agenda restore human rights?* Social Watch. Retrieved from <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/17338>

³ S. Kreft, et al. (2015). *Global Climate Risk Index 2015*. Germanwatch. Retrieved from <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/10333.pdf>

⁴ World Bank. (2015a). *Population, female (% of total)*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=HN>

⁵ World Bank. (2015b). *Labor force, female (% of total labor force)*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=HN&view=chart>

⁶ Honduras Congreso Nacional (National Congress). http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2139_E.htm

⁷ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2015). *Violence, Inequality, and Impunity in Honduras*. Retrieved from <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/multimedia/2016/honduras/honduras-en.html>

© Oxfam International July 2017

This paper was written by Sarah Barakat. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Maritza Gallardo and Juan Carlos Arita in its production. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email hkuwabara@oxfam.org.uk

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 978-0-85598-987-3 in July 2017.

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

Cover photo: Eleanor Farmer/Oxfam

WE
WON'T
LIVE
WITH
POVERTY



OXFAM