



International Conference on Food Security and Nutrition hosted by Oxfam in Georgia in 2016. Photo: Nikoloz Urushadze/Oxfam in Georgia

# SOUTH CAUCASUS FOOD SECURITY LEARNING SUMMARY

How to support national influencing using a multi-stakeholder approach

**Oxfam South Caucasus Teams**

**Oxfam GB Economic Justice Team**

**Programme Learning Team**

# 1 PURPOSE

This paper synthesizes experience and learning from the European Commission-funded South Caucasus multi-country project *'Improving Regional Food Security in the South Caucasus through National Strategies and Smallholder Production'*. The aim is to support the design of future national policy influencing programmes.

The summary draws on learning generated during key reflection moments in the project's life cycle. The primary reference source is the independent Final Evaluation Report<sup>1</sup> (a summary of which is published alongside this paper) supplemented by documented learning events, in particular July 2017's evaluation validation workshop. More information about the project can be found on the [Food Security and Nutrition in the South Caucasus website](#), and also from the organizations [BRIDGE](#) and [OxYGen](#), as well as Oxfam's own [Policy & Practice](#).

The paper focuses on distilling the project experience in a way that may have value for other project and programme teams supporting national level influencing. Rather than the project's achievements, which are covered in the evaluation summary, the emphasis is on lessons learned about how to support national influencing.

# 2 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Background	Project history, objectives and key actors
Impact	Achievements Challenges
Lessons learned	How to support successful national level influencing Room for improvement
Conclusions	What to include and exclude in project design

# 3 BACKGROUND

In September 2013, Oxfam launched the four-year EC-funded project ***Improving Regional Food Security through National Strategies and Small Holder Production in the South Caucasus***. The aim was to influence national level policies around food security and nutrition, to better reflect the needs and interests of smallholder farmers in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>2</sup>

The project was in line with Oxfam's economic justice priorities in the region: to challenge inequalities and promote sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers.

The drivers of food insecurity – food security meaning more than agricultural production and food national self-sufficiency – are multiple, inter-connected and complex. Estimates suggest Azerbaijan imports more than a third of its cereals, Armenia more than half, and Georgia more than two-thirds.<sup>3</sup> Importing food is not by default bad, but increases vulnerability to price fluctuations and impacts on the people who rely on small scale agriculture for their income: 63 percent of all people living in poverty in Georgia in 2010 were self-employed in the agricultural sector, 1.3 percent of the state budget was allocated to agriculture development and agriculture accounted for nine percent of total GDP. This suggests a systematic neglect of the rural economy.<sup>4</sup>

Land reform is a major contributor to food (in)security. In Armenia, the pace of reform is slow, meaning that when farming is unprofitable farmers leave their lands idle and engage in seasonal migration.

The regional economy has been hit by dramatically reduced oil and gas prices, and geo-political proximity with Russia – sanctions against Russia led to a 140 percent decline in the value of the Azerbaijani manat, a 40 percent reduction in the value of the Georgian lari, and a 20 percent decline in the Armenian dram during the life time of the project. Currency devaluation massively reduced buying power, making food imports more expensive while making food exports more competitive.

Another driver of insecurity has been a downturn in remittances – Armenia ranks among the 15 largest remittances recipients in the world.<sup>5</sup> Remittances represent an important source of foreign exchange and an important part of the economy – around 30 percent of households receive remittances, which finance around 40 percent of all imports from Russia, account for an average of 16 percent of GDP, and represent roughly four times more than official government inflows to Armenia.<sup>6</sup>

ENPARD, the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development, is investing a total of €102m in Georgia (2013–2019) to support government institutions to reform the agricultural and rural economy, improve employment and living conditions of rural farmers and promote diversified social and economic opportunities (particularly for women and youth) in rural areas.<sup>7</sup>

The ups and downs of the Russian economy being beyond its sphere of influence, Georgia has instead turned its attention to forming more advantageous trading agreements with its European neighbours. In 2014, Georgia joined the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), giving Georgian agricultural producers access to the EU's market as a possible destination for exports. As part of this close engagement, the EU has allocated €102m to Georgia for 2013–2019 to help develop its agricultural sector.

In 2015 Armenia joined the Russian-backed Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) – precluding any future EU Association Agreement – securing continued market access for Armenian goods and migrants to Russia, and requiring an increase in Armenia’s external tariffs on goods made outside of the region. This had an inflationary effect on the price of many imports, including food.

The project was evaluated as per FAO’s four pillars for food security (see below). Projects often equate or narrow ‘food security’ to mean ‘food production’, but in the case of Georgia and Armenia the Action Plan based on the Food Security Concept for 2017–2020 approved on December 1, 2016 addresses all four pillars of food security.<sup>8</sup> That said, although this is shifting, local CSOs have historically often defined food security as the country’s ability to produce more agricultural products and reduce dependency on food imports.

As per FAO’s definition of **availability** of food, this is *not* an issue in the three countries, with the notable exception of the most economically and physically disadvantaged. The focus is more on quality of the diet (for example the reported increase in numbers of people with stunted growth).<sup>9</sup>

Per capita agricultural production in Georgia is less than half that of Armenia’s. Given the more plentiful rainfall in Georgia, this suggests low-level government prioritization of agricultural production in the last few years.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of **accessibility** (physical and economic) Oxfam-financed research on food security<sup>11</sup> in mountainous Georgia highlights the problem of poor seasonal access in the high mountainous regions, where during the winter months 200 villages are inaccessible. Food price levels are the major determinant of economic accessibility, with the study documenting the relatively high cost of food compared to other purchases. In Armenia, food is more than five times more expensive relative to income compared to developed countries. Oxfam/ACT corroborate this finding, showing that in Georgia around half of the average monthly income is spent on food.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of **utilization** (health of the food preparation environment) in general terms there is good access to improved water and sewer systems across the region, though there remain questions about the quality of the water supply.

In terms of **stability**, all three countries show more variability in food supply than developed countries, or the Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA) region, with Azerbaijan’s index more than double and Georgia’s more than five times greater than that of developed countries.<sup>13</sup> Instability in production can be influenced by a range of factors, including animal disease and climate.

The focus of the project was to increase food security in the South Caucasus, but food security anywhere is dependent on a global web of economic and political relationships sharing the confines of a single planet. Current estimates are that worldwide, 60 countries rank as ‘extreme’ or ‘high risk’ for food-related insecurity. Climate change and migration flows are also important. ‘*Business-as-usual within the agri-food sector is not an option if we are to support the Paris agreement, and indeed, food security itself.*’<sup>14</sup> The links between food insecurity and political instability, and potentially, conflict are also well documented.<sup>15</sup>

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF FOOD SECURITY .



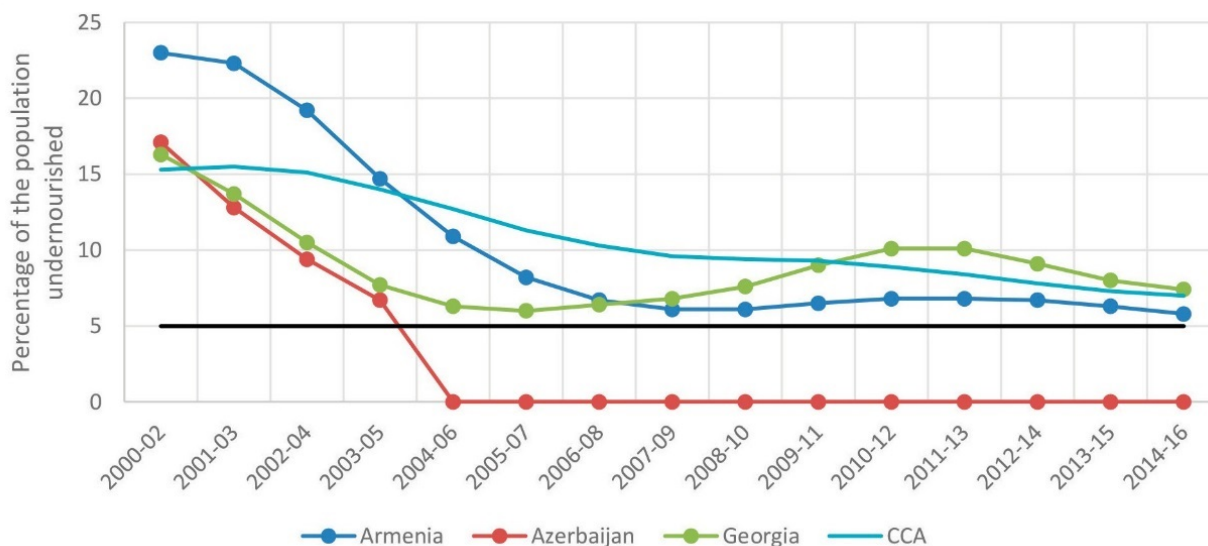
*"When all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".*

FAO-1996



In terms of project **strategy**, Oxfam’s support for a multi-stakeholder network (MSN) brought representatives of smallholder farmers’ associations and co-operatives together with government, think tanks, the private sector, civil society and the NGO sector. Acting to bridge the communication divide, the project helped to raise the voice and visibility of smallholders in policy and decision making circles at a national, European and international level and to raise the profile of food security in each of the countries.

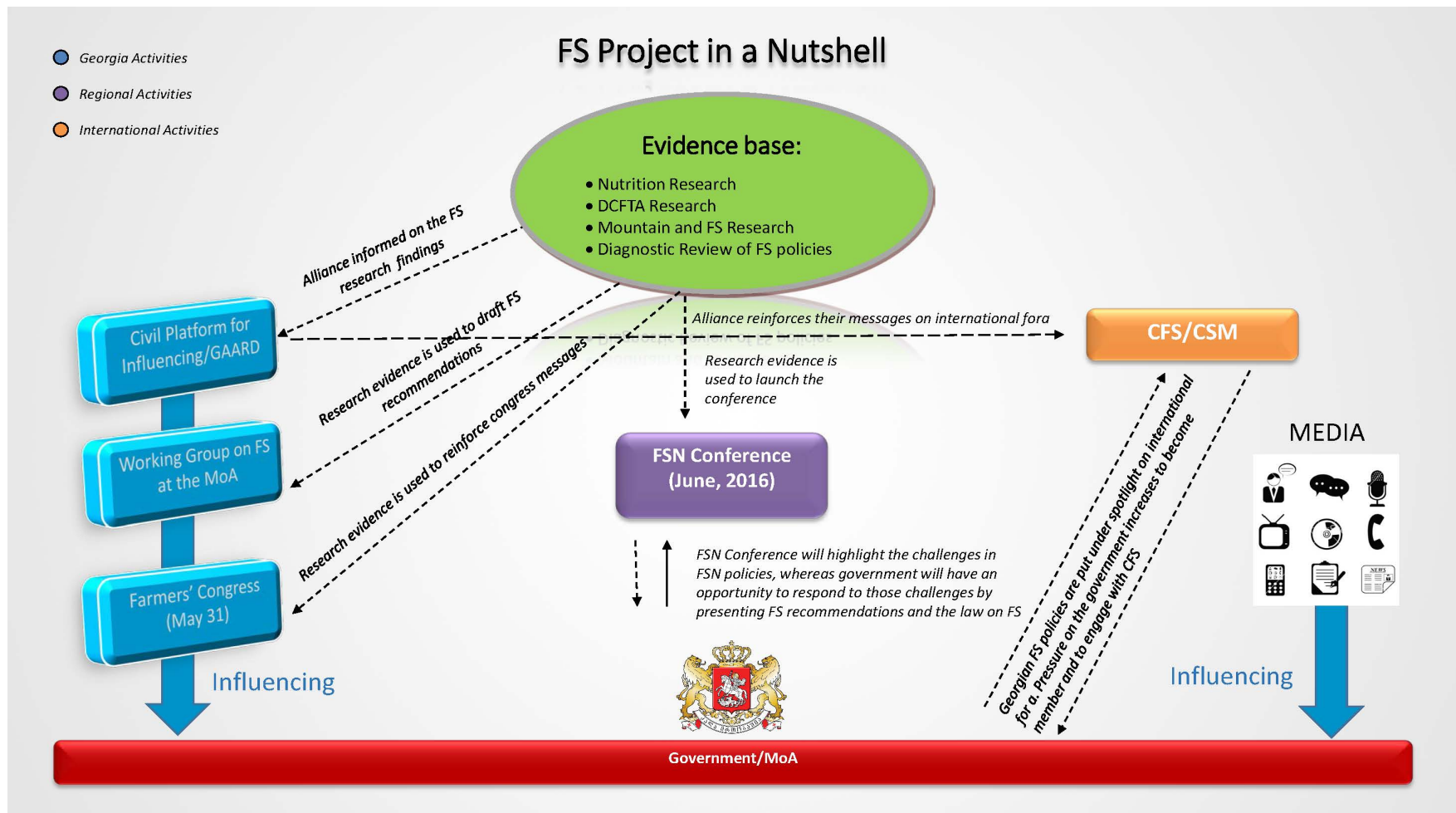
**Figure 1: Percentage of the population that is undernourished in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the CCA region as a whole**



Source: Oxfam (2017) Research on the Status of Food Security and Nutrition.  
<http://foodsecuritysc.com/publication/research-on-the-status-of-food-security-and-nutrition/>

Within the MSN, Oxfam invested in the capacity development (governance, technical, relational) of two national alliances: Agricultural Alliance of Armenia (AA) and the Georgian Alliance on Agriculture and Rural Development (GAARD).<sup>16</sup> They seek to represent the interests of the project’s priority group: smallholder farmers. The alliances have a broad membership base,<sup>17</sup> including some with direct links to co-operatives and farmers.

In a context not only of formal project closure but also Oxfam’s withdrawal from the region, the project has invested in two national spin-off organizations, OxYGen and BRIDGE, that will build on Oxfam’s 20-plus-year legacy of supporting grassroots development in the region.



Adapted from a presentation on the Georgia project.

# 4 IMPACT

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF NATIONAL INFLUENCING

- A consensus-based, well recognized and influential civil society mechanism for policy dialogue is in place.
- There is now a sound mechanism for reflecting the interests of target constituencies and for enhancing the level of participation and representation of disadvantaged groups, namely small holder farmers.
- There is a higher quality of engagement and greater representation of smallholder farmers' interests, made possible by investment in the MSN and the two national alliances.
- The influencing capacity of the two national alliances has been enhanced, meaning that new agricultural policy legislation is more responsive to smallholder farmers' needs.
- As political apprenticeship spaces, the alliances and the broader MSN are positioned to address the concerns of today and the future. This means they hold the potential to be sustainable, accountable and active members of civil society.
- There are new agricultural laws due to direct participation in national government working groups.
- There is greater voice and visibility of smallholder farmers for advocacy on cooperatives and food security policies.
- The terms of debate around food security have changed and it's a high priority on the political agenda of Armenia and Georgia.
- There is more media coverage and public interest in food security issues.
- The Ministries of Agriculture have officially recognized the role and value of the alliances and the MSN as key platforms to communicate and engage small holders. There is a new model for dialogue and debate between stakeholders.
- New thematic working groups have strengthened stakeholder collaboration and there is more strategic definition of entry points for national influencing.
- Civil society organizations are investing more in evidence-based research.
- There is more gender expertise within the alliances.
- There is gender scrutiny of draft agricultural strategies by alliance members.
- New, gender-sensitive resources developed to aid provincial planning have been adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture.

# IMPACT: PROJECT-SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

*'There is obvious positive change in political discourse favouring inclusive growth and pro-poor policies, strong networking, development of evidence-based policy recommendations, as well as formation of platforms for further elaboration of improvements in policies.'*

– Final Evaluation (2017)

<p><b>Agricultural Insurance</b> (Armenia): AA members introduced to range of insurance models in first meeting with agri-insurance actors. AA and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) share responsibility for monitoring pilot agricultural insurance scheme for smallholder farmers. AA member ICARE contributes to amendment of the <b>Law on Consumer Crediting</b>, helping to increase transparency on agricultural loans.</p>	<p>ICARE (AA) expertise in <b>agricultural cooperatives development</b> contributes to national Agricultural Strategy working group: over 100 of its suggestions included in the <b>Law on Agricultural Cooperatives</b>.</p> <p>Important support to smallholder farmers in terms of improving their <b>access to finance</b> including through engagement with financial service providers and state services such as the <b>Preferential Agro Credit Programme</b>.</p>	<p>The AA and MoA Memorandum of Understanding endorses AA's role as a convener of <b>dialogue</b> between the state and smallholder farmers.</p>
	<p>Thanks to Oxfam's long-term and intensive advocacy work and multi-stakeholder influencing, Armenia adopted the first law on Agriculture Cooperatives in December 2015. This law recognizes and protects the rights of cooperative farmer members, their unions and their legitimate interests. The government is also obliged to assist in the creation and development of cooperatives and to strengthen their economic viability. As a result, farmers are now more directly engaged in agriculture cooperatives.</p>	
<p>Photo: ArmenPress. 'AA and MoA begin discussions on partial subsidizing of credit interest rate programmes and agricultural insurance pilot for smallholders.'</p>	<p>Signing of MoU between MoA and AA. Photo: Oxfam in Armenia.</p> <p>In 2013 AA and MoA signed a Memorandum of Understanding setting the solid base and format for joint cooperation in the sector of Agricultural Development.</p> <p>AA influences contents of the draft 2015–2025 <b>Strategy for Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development</b>, the country's number one reference document for agricultural strategy.</p> <p><i>'The new strategy is aimed to create favourable conditions for agricultural producers, to help modernize this sector and raise the level of food security. The policy document pays a special attention to reducing the risks in this sector; introduce pathways to insurance and better lending terms. The strategy also rules out gender-based discrimination in agriculture'</i>.</p> <p>– former Minister of Agriculture for Armenia</p>	



GAARD (Georgia) member ELKANA's **research** on food security and nutrition helps to build **private sector** interest (food processors and distributors) in sourcing from small-scale farmers.



Food Security and Nutrition International Conference, organized by BRIDGE. Photo: BRIDGE.

In Georgia, GAARD and BRIDGE develop and revise a Memorandum of Understanding and Guiding Principles on **joint advocacy** roles.

Drawing on the campaigning experience of GAARD member Action Global the **campaign** combines national influencing and public campaigning to stimulate grassroots pressure for national policy change.

81 percent of GAARD's 41 **policy** suggestions are fully or partially addressed in the new **Agriculture Development Strategy 2015–2020**.



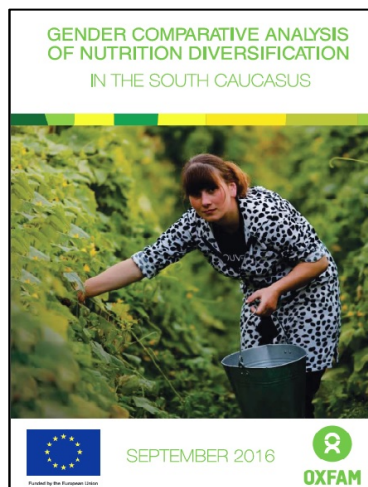
GAARD meeting. Photo: BRIDGE.

This followed GAARD member Elkana organizing a Farmers' Congress, which turned into live debates to agree on an **Appeal Text** to draw government's attention to issues with production, women's access to credit, agro-tourism and support for ecological local production and market development.

**Farmers' Congresses** and New Year Farmers' Food Fairs create opportunities for farmers to directly influence decision makers and stimulate collective organization for better bargaining power in the marketplace.

Seeking to improve the country's regulatory framework for smallholder farmers and to reduce national dependency on food imports, GAARD petitions the national parliament with a new **Food Security Bill**.

More gender-sensitive agriculture strategy in Georgia and Armenia as a result of AA and GAARD **gender** scrutiny. In Armenia, thanks to the AA, the Strategy for Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (SSARD) is the country's first gender mainstreamed strategic document. AA's gender mainstreaming manual is made mandatory for all provincial social economic development plans. The guideline, now mandatory for all 10 provinces, is the first gender-sensitive government document that ensures equal access to credit and wider agricultural and social services for women and men.




Oxfam research commissioned by the project looking at availability and access to food at the household level, 26% of all respondents stated that they did not have enough money to afford food all the time in the past 12 months. The findings showed differences between the 3 countries, but in all of them there was a significant difference between women's and men's dietary diversity.

'Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are growing economies, the economic growth should be inclusive, meaning an economic growth that promotes equitable access to food, assets and



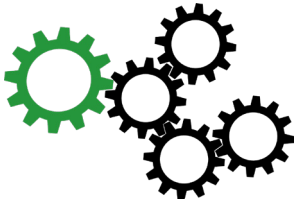


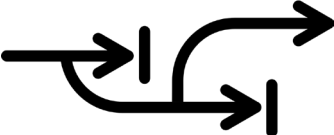
BRIDGE conference on gender and food security to popularize research and influence draft law on Food Security and Gender Sensitive Approaches to Nutrition. Photo: BRIDGE.

		resources, particularly for poor people and women'. <u>Gender comparative analysis of nutrition diversification in the South Caucasus</u>
<p>At the <b>international</b> level, Georgian smallholder farmers enjoy greater visibility participating at high-level food security meetings such as the CFS Forum in Rome, EaP CSF GNP meetings and other FAO, IFAD and WHO meetings.</p>	<p>Greater investment in regional level research and learning to advance the work of the alliances and to make them stronger, including research on the impact of trade and exploration of the use of Social Network Analysis.</p>  <p>Animation (in Georgian) made to communicate the research findings. Image: GAARD on YouTube.</p>	<p><i>'The time has come for rural women to have a say, too. The Oxfam programme not only changed my life, but also empowered me to bring change in my community'.</i></p> <p>– Nune Avagyan, leader of Gomk women's agri-co-operative in Vayots Dzor province and member of the Community Council, Armenia</p>
<p>The <b>Agricultural Alliance of Armenia (AA)</b> is a volunteer based, multi-stakeholder national platform of some 19 civil society organizations working towards joint advocacy for agricultural development.</p>   <p>Photo: OxYGen.</p> <p>'It is proved by experience that multi-stakeholder networks are more efficient while advocating and crafting policies. In that purpose, Oxfam initiated [the] Agricultural Alliance of Armenia, which is a multi-stakeholder network compounding 19 state, international and local organizations.</p> <p>On December 6, 2011 actors in agricultural development sector signed a Memorandum of Understanding while being committed in a long-term partnership and collaboration. The Alliance is a synergy of joint effort and enduring expertise aiming at bringing efficiency to existing problems and generating lasting change in the field.'</p> <p>Source: OxYGen website</p>		<p>Building on Oxfam's 20-year legacy in Armenia, <b>OxYGen</b> reflects its Oxfam roots and a commitment to youth and gender.</p>  <p>OxYGen's priorities going forward are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural education.</li> <li>• Agricultural loans.</li> <li>• Development of agricultural cooperatives.</li> <li>• Gender mainstreaming of agricultural policies.</li> <li>• Improvement of food security.</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation of policy development and implementation.</li> <li>• Agricultural insurance.</li> </ul>
<p>The <b>Georgian Alliance on Agriculture and Rural Development (GAARD)</b> was formally established in 2013 and currently has a membership of 22 civil society organizations.</p> <p>At the closure of the project in 2017, GAARD and Bridge signed an MoU pledging their commitment to continue working together to advocate for improved food security. Their priorities going forward include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of Law on Food Security.</li> <li>• Increasing the share of agricultural</li> </ul>	 <p>საქართველოს სოფლის მეურნეობისა და სოფლის განვითარების ალიანსი Georgian Alliance on Agriculture and Rural Development</p>	 <p><b>BRIDGE</b> – Innovation and Development is a fast-growing non-government organization operating in Georgia driven by its vision of Georgia free of poverty and suffering. Founded in 2015 as an Oxfam spin-off, it is an important</p>

<p>allocations in the state budget up to 10%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing annual allocations for financing capital investment grant schemes for SHFs and ag co-ops up to GEL 25m.</li> <li>Adopting a Land Code.</li> <li>Inclusion of SHFs and local SMEs in the state procurement schemes for food.</li> <li>Promoting gastronomic tourism.</li> </ul>		<p>legacy of 22 years in Georgia working to sustain and build grassroots connections and partnerships in service to rural development to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth.</p>
<p>Oxfam and the AA engage with the Tavush provincial government to develop a provincial Social Economic Development Plan, essentially the road map for sustainable agricultural and rural development. This inclusive policy making process facilitated by Oxfam and the AA was considered by the provincial municipality to be a new and <b>effective model of collaboration</b>, with potential for replication in other provinces of Armenia.</p>	<p>Joint advocacy and action to address <b>climate change</b> shocks in Armenia.</p>  <p><a href="https://youtu.be/hC56O1xr7p4">https://youtu.be/hC56O1xr7p4</a> <i>Food Security is At Risk Because of Climate Change</i></p>	<p>GAARD develops practical and accessible tools and training for the <b>co-operative movement</b>, strengthening their <b>organizational capacity</b> as a credible and significant actor in the agricultural economy. Such tools include the Organizational Development Cycle of Cooperative Organization Tool; the Guide on Cooperatives: fundamental principles of cooperative organization; benefits of the co-operative movement; legislative and regulatory environment, including laws and tax incentives.</p>

## CHALLENGES

### Common weaknesses

<p>Low level of understanding of the benefits of private sector engagement at programme design stage, including stakeholder and power analysis.</p> 	<p>Given the barriers for farmers to access credit and financial services, there is more work required on low levels of financial literacy; the absence of low-cost loans; the banks' commercial approach; absence of insurance for financial risks; and lack of knowledge about credit institutions.</p> 	<p>Even more to be done on gender mainstreaming in terms of the Alliances' ways of working, governance and the Alliances' choice of influencing priorities.</p> 
<p>Insufficient evidence of impact of policy influencing on the lives and livelihoods of smallholder farmers (too early at the project end stage<sup>1</sup>). Alliance members with direct links to smallholders to have been included in design of monitoring and evaluation plan and shared responsibility for tracking and collecting qualitative and quantitative impact at the target group level.</p>	<p>Political changes in the country context interrupted policy influencing. Country context was a crucial consideration in developing strategies. More is needed in terms of ways to review key changes in context regarding impact on the programme, in order to inform and adapt programme design.</p> 	<p>Although recognized by national governments, the networks formed by the project have operated as informal influencing bodies. The informality is not de facto a weakness in terms of their influencing capacity. In terms of sustainability, the focus is to sustain the benefits of increased agency to influence, rather than institutional sustainability per se. The continuation of activities identified and agreed by members in the Exit Plan depends on the mobilization of the members.</p>

# 5 LESSONS LEARNED

## ENABLING FACTORS FOR NATIONAL LEVEL INFLUENCING WORK

### Building successful multi-stakeholder networks was key to successful influencing.

 <p><b>Diversity</b> A diverse membership has been a great advantage for complex problem analysis, and provides a solid base for successful joint advocacy in the agriculture sector. Positively engaging with multiple stakeholders (civil society, international donors and decision makers and the private sector) promotes dialogue and influencing capacity.</p>	
<p><b>Be open and inclusive, fit for purpose</b> Regularly review alliance membership in line with vision and objectives to identify and invite new members to join to boost capacity and social capital (e.g. ProMedia; gender-focused NGOs; health and nutrition actors; Action Global for campaigning).</p> 	<p><b>Planning and acting together</b> Joint planning and delivery of MSN-level advocacy added value to influencing and advocacy capacity of alliances and their members.</p> 
<p><b>Make the most of experience and contacts</b> Formal and informal opportunities for exchange of experience (international exposure trips, study visits, workshops and cross-country exchanges) as well as pooling of contacts enhanced advocacy capacities.</p> 	<p><b>Proactive engagement at multiple levels</b> Deliberate inclusion of a mix of international and national stakeholders (strong links with FAO CFS Forum in Rome).</p> 



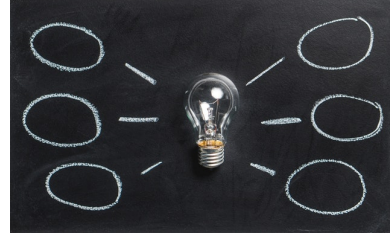
### Positive engagement with line ministries

Invest in building good working relationships with ministries (for this project, notably the Ministry of Agriculture). Where possible, guides and tools were developed together with the government agency and other partners, increasing the likelihood of their adoption and use.



### Support capacity development

Continuous support and coaching are needed throughout the project's lifecycle. Investment in capacity development – of alliances and MSN members – improves coordination and effectiveness ([read more on Policy & Practice](#)). Exit and transition strategies (closure of the Oxfam mission in Georgia and Armenia plus the formal closure of the project) were developed in a highly participatory and transparent manner to maximize ownership and promote sustainability of the effectiveness of the networks and MSNs. The creation of OXYGen and BRIDGE are facilitating the transition to national home-grown civil society actors and NGOs.



### Proactively engage with opinion shapers

Free 'publicity' and research dissemination through the media raised the profile of food security, increased the networks' popularity and their leverage on decision makers. Key statistics from project research were picked up and broadcast not only in social media networks, but also in the mainstream media. For example, statistics in the National Nutrition Study on how many households buy food were widely cited in news and analytical programs. Both Georgia and Armenia are advancing in implementing trade regulations, with the EU and the Customs Union respectively. This means that there is stronger demand to understand the implications in terms of gearing up for these changes at country level.



### Invest in communications

Effective broadcasting of the networks' aims, achievements and lessons learned paid dividends, increasing political will for policy aims. Learning was shared on the networks' websites and Oxfam's Policy & Practice. In Armenia and Georgia Oxfam hired Action Global Communications Company to develop an effective communications and advocacy campaign.





### Seize critical junctures

Oxfam identified at context analysis stage a moment of congruence between the political agendas of a number of key food security actors. Building on the foundations of the previous EC funded programme, and the opening up of space for civil society dialogue in the newly elected administration in Georgia, Oxfam spotted an opportunity to add value to the work of national networks through capacity development; facilitating national, regional and international connections; and supporting policy dialogue between smallholder farmers and national government, private sector and European policy makers.



### Regularly update power and gender analyses

Experience shows the importance of reappraisal to identify both opportunities and threats. The second change of political leadership in Georgia led to many of GAARD's policy gains being called into question.



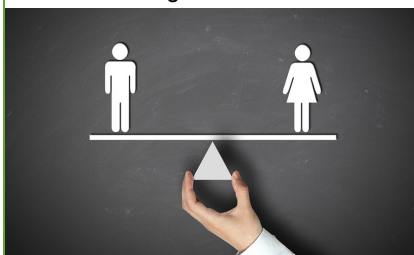
### Work on behaviours and attitudes

Oxfam played the role of ally and critical friend, inviting network members to reflect on how their behaviour impacted on advocacy effectiveness. This began a process of shifting attitudes around power and dialogue, improving the quality of negotiations and analysis. CSO *collaboration* replaced competition for donor funds leading to increased 'leverage' (Final Evaluation).



### Proactively enlist gender expertise

Bring on board the expertise and experience already in the civil society movement rather than ignoring or overshadowing it. The inclusion of Gender ProMedia



in Armenia and WIC, IDP Women Consent and TASO in Georgia

halfway through the project significantly decreased the gender deficit noted in the Midterm Review. This was reflected in more work on differences between men's and women's purchasing power; unequal access to assets in value chains; more on the unequal balance of paid and unpaid work within the household; unequal access to private and public decision making spaces; and unequal access to business opportunities and financial services.

### Money for gender mainstreaming



Gender mainstreaming will not happen by osmosis and requires investment: the hiring of gender expertise, for example, for soft lobbying; the new gender mainstreaming manual used by government and CSOs developing regional

socio-economic development programmes; training for rural women, heads of cooperatives and alliance members on topics such as local self-governance and government structures; organization of popular high profile media events such as the 'food female hero contest' and conferences on gender and food security.

### Context, context, context

'Food security' has different emphases in different contexts. At programme design stage the context analysis should inform the programme's change strategies, entry points and priorities. Following the Midterm Review, greater priority was given to 'utilization and stability' in the South Caucasus food



security context, over and above 'availability and access.'

# ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

## More on gender mainstreaming

Low capacity coupled with insufficient senior level support for gender mainstreaming meant that in spite of some policy level gains, the Alliances' ways of working and membership (participation, working groups, membership, decision making) did not reflect a high regard for gender justice.

Low levels of gender awareness impacted on the Alliances' influencing priorities and evidence gathering – for example more could have been done on collecting sex-disaggregated data, capturing the voice of women along the value chain and encouraging women's groups to lead food policy discussions.

Some project team members felt research into the link between gender-based violence and women's socio-economic empowerment would have helped to shape and propose policy reforms to advance women's economic empowerment and a more enabling environment for their participation in policy making.

Repeated attempts to address this gender deficit (multiple offers of advisory support in multiple forms) came to nought. Arguably this (once more) demonstrates the need for senior level accountability and leadership to put into practice the organizational commitment to promote gender justice in 'all that we do'.

## Better understanding of the impact on livelihoods of policy change

More could have been done to make the most of connections to grassroots members by alliance members (such as Elkana and the Georgian Farmers' Association) to gather quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of the work. All Alliance members could have been part of the MEAL design process. This is important for upward and downward accountability, and could galvanize internal and external support, increasing the network's visibility as catalysing and adding value to a dynamic change process. This mitigates the risk of networks being perceived as resource intensive self-serving institutions.

## More private sector engagement

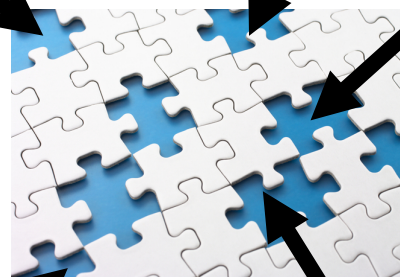
The hugely important role of oligarchs was insufficiently factored into the programme's power analysis. Oxfam staff from outside the region repeatedly failed to increase the programme's private sector engagement, blind to the political sensitivities. This massively impacted on the programme's influencing potential.

## More on land ownership

An Oxfam Georgia/Colombia exchange in 2015 alerted Georgian project staff to the risks of having no land registry system, with cases in Georgia of common land used for pasture by villagers being sold at auction to developers. For the national economy, these sales boost figures for national agricultural production, but the hidden cost is the impact on food security of vulnerable farmers.

## More on increasing access to financial services

Access to credit was identified as a serious barrier for smallholder farmers. Even more needs to be done to address low levels of financial literacy; the absence of low-cost loans; the mismatch between what is offered by banks and what is needed by smallholders; and inappropriate conditionalities, lack of insurance against financial risks and generally low levels of awareness about credit institutions and mechanisms.



# 7 CONCLUSIONS

1. Budget for post-project review/evaluation to assess the impact of policy change on smallholder farmers and include all stakeholders in design of MEAL<sup>18</sup> plans.
2. Make the most of multiple stakeholders (diversity) for power and gender analysis, as different perspectives are more likely to reveal invisible as well as visible power.
3. Regularly review context, stakeholder, power and gender analyses to identify critical junctures and to inform project adaptation.
4. Strategically grow the membership base with an eye to filling capacity gaps and making strategic connections to increase technical capacity and social capital.
5. Invest in private and financial sector engagement, including borrowing and saving, as well as co-operative rather than individual borrowing and agri-insurance.
6. Strengthen gender mainstreaming in advocacy for greater gender scrutiny of state and non-state projects and programmes.
7. Prioritize women's economic empowerment and support for youth in rural areas, identifying and addressing enablers and blockers, such as unpaid care, gender-based violence and unequal access to decision making spaces and entitlements such as education and health.
8. Bring opinion shapers (think tanks and the media) on side to increase political leverage and to develop a popular base of support among the wider public, and invest in communications to increase political will and legitimacy through enhanced accountability.
9. Invest in organizational development of the alliances (technical, governance and gender sensitive) to enable them to become role models for gender justice and inclusive ways of working – not only in terms of numbers of women participating in decision making spaces, and occupying leadership positions, but also as reflected in the quality of their engagement, the contribution they make and acknowledgement of their contribution.

# APPENDIX

Published on Policy and Practice:

Strengthening Armenia's Agricultural Sector Through Multi-Stakeholder Networking: A case study on the Agricultural Alliance, Uzunyan, Vadim Petrosyan, Alexey (October 2016)

Building Farmer Cooperatives in Georgia, Levan Dadiani (July 2015)

Improving Food Security in Georgia: Oxfam's Multi-stakeholder network approach, Jan Maes (October 2016)

Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Development: For Sustainable Alliances in the South Caucasus, Ian Goodrich and Benoit Trudel (July 2017)

Understanding Networks: The Application of Social Network Analysis methodology in the South Caucasus context, Ana Kvintradze (October 2016)

What makes networks tick? Learning from (a lot of) experience (Blog)

From coffee to conference (learning on building networks to influence change)  
Blog

Improving smallholder farming in Armenia (Blog)

Research on the Status of Food Security and Nutrition

# NOTES

- 1 Palonka, A. (2017). Final evaluation report. Oxfam, unpublished.
- 2 In Azerbaijan, the project was phased out after two years due to the closure of the Oxfam office on 11 September 2015. Funds were re-allocated in view of the needs and overall project objective. The Azerbaijan project team completed, monitored and reported on their work for the period.
- 3 Oxfam (2017) *Research on the Status of Food Security and Nutrition*.  
<http://foodsecuritysc.com/publication/research-on-the-status-of-food-security-and-nutrition/>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 IMF (2012). *Remittances in Armenia: Dynamic Patterns and Drivers*.  
<https://www.imf.org/external/country/arm/rr/2012/062012.pdf>
- 6 Caucasus Research Resource Centers, The Caucasus Barometer data,  
<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>
- 7 European Union for Georgia. <http://enpard.ge/en/what-is-enpard/>
- 8 Oxfam (2017) *Research on the Status of Food Security and Nutrition*.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Sian Williams, Global Food Security.
- 15 Food Security and its Implications for Political Stability: A Humanitarian Perspective, FAO forum Rome 2012.
- 16 **GAARD**: Oxfam, CARE, Elkana (represents the voices and interests of 2,320 farmers), Georgian Economists' Association, Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and the Georgian Farmers' Association (representing some 2,000 farmers).
- 17 **AA**: OxYgen, ICARE, Business Support Center, VISTAA Consultancy, Scientific Centre of Vegetable and Industrial Crops, Horizon Fund, SME Development National Center, Consumer Rights Protection, Strategic Development Agency, Armenia Young Women's Association, ProMedia Gender, Shen NGO, Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development, UMCOR Armenia. AA stakeholders work in all regions of Armenia, in more than 200 communities, reaching some 10,000 members.
- 18 MEAL-related learning and recommendations documented separately.





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