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# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN TUNISIA

Executive Summary: Impact evaluation of the project 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership' in Tunisia

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Effectiveness Review Series 2016/17

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Photo credit: Jennifer Ciochon/Oxfam

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam GB's Global Performance Framework is part of the organization's effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, as well as enhance learning across the organization. Under this Framework, a small number of completed or mature projects are selected at random each year for an evaluation of their impact, known as an Effectiveness Review. The project 'AMAL<sup>1</sup>: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in the Middle East'<sup>1</sup> (LEBA49) was one of those selected for an Effectiveness Review in the 2016/17 financial year. The project was selected under the global outcome indicator of Women's Empowerment, which is defined as change in empowerment of supported women – measured by a composite index assessing indicators of empowerment that are relevant to the socio-economic context of the project under analysis.

The project 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership' is a multi-country programme operating in Morocco, Tunisia, OPT and Yemen, with regional coordination from Lebanon. Given logistical and financial limitations, it was decided to focus the evaluation on the Tunisian component, as this was identified as having the greatest potential for future learning. Thus, the results from this Effectiveness Review are not meant to be indicative of the overall impact of AMAL, but more a focused assessment for the Tunisia component.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The AMAL project operating in Tunisia started in 2012, following the revolution of 2011, with the objective to increase women's awareness of their political and socio-economic rights, and support women to play a more active role in the political and socio-economic life of their community and country. Three partner organizations implemented the project: the League of Tunisian Women Voters (LET), the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) and the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development (AFTURD) in collaboration with Oxfam in Tunisia. The three partner organizations engaged with a variety of different women, employing a range of activities to reach this goal. Project undertakings included extended training, mentoring, group engagement and activities in a variety of thematic areas. The project directly supported 410 women, and it is estimated to have indirectly supported more than 5,000 women.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

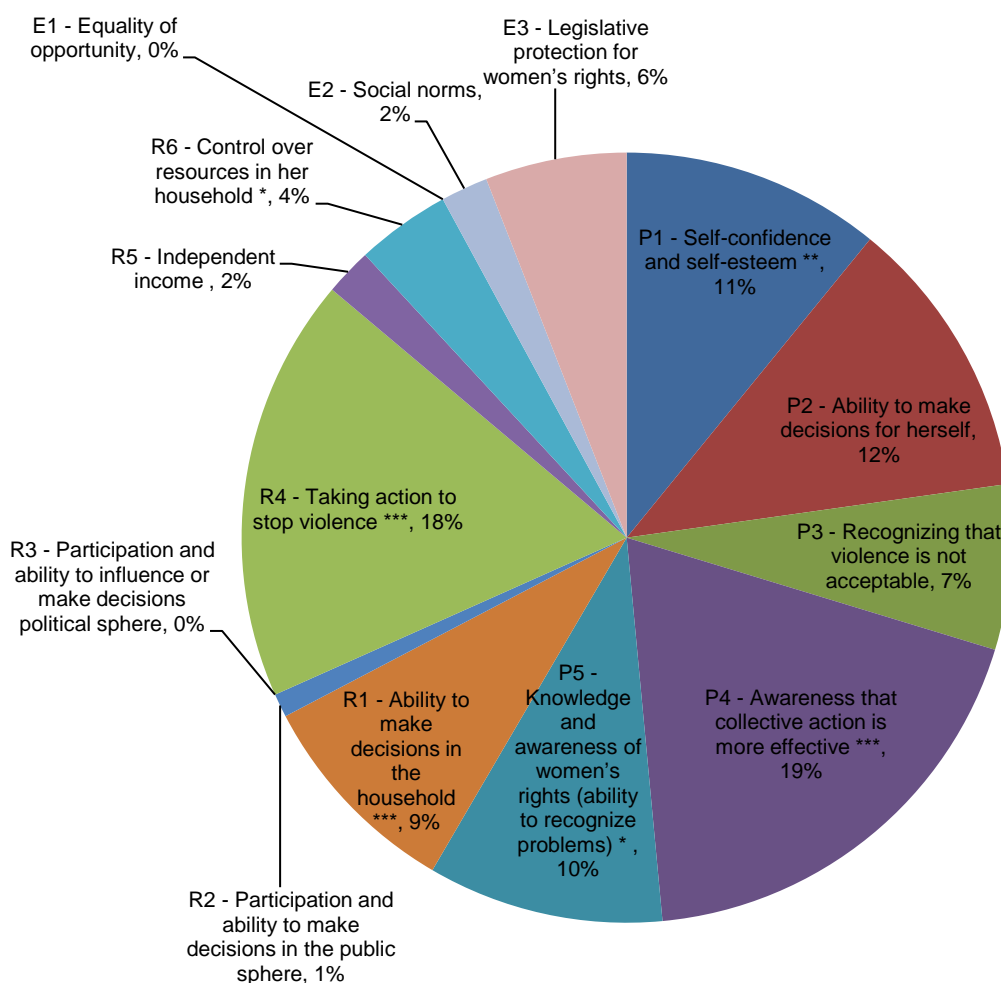
The project was still being implemented when the evaluation was conducted in November 2016 in the regions of Tunis, Kelibia, Sousse, Kef and Kasserine in Tunisia. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of the AMAL project in Tunisia in promoting women's empowerment and achieving its objectives: increasing women's awareness of their political and socio-economic rights, and supporting women to play a more active role in the political and socio-economic life of their community and country. The evaluation adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design comparing outcome indicators from a randomly selected sample of women who had been directly involved in activities rolled out under the AMAL project with women selected from comparison groups.

# MEASURING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Oxfam has developed a tool based on a composite index to measure women's empowerment – a complex and hard-to-measure concept. The tool is based on a framework that remains unchanged, while the characteristics and indicators that make up the index change from context to context, aiming to capture the characteristics of an 'empowered woman' in the particular socio-economic context of the analysis. The evaluation identified 14 characteristics that describe an empowered woman in Tunisia. Each characteristic was transformed into an indicator and measured using individual questionnaires.

The evaluation also employed an innovative approach based on a Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) to reveal the relative importance of each indicator. A DCE is a stated-choice method that consists of presenting hypothetical scenarios to respondents in order to reveal their preferences. Responses were then used to provide relative weights for the individual indicators, reflecting respondents' revealed preferences and opinions on what an empowered woman in Tunisia looks like. According to the DCE exercise, it appears that the most important characteristics for describing an empowered woman in Tunisia are her awareness of the benefits in participating in collective actions, followed by her ability to take actions to stop violence. A full list of indicators used for measuring women's empowerment and the relative weights are provided in the figure below.

**Figure 1: Indicators used to measure women's empowerment weighted using the Discrete Choice Experiment**











# RESULTS







The evaluation found positive and significant results on overall women’s empowerment. Project participants scored positively, on average, in 58 percent of the indicators, compared with 51 percent for women not involved in the project. This difference is statistically significant, suggesting that the project had a positive impact on overall women’s empowerment. By using a weighted empowerment index the averages are reduced both for the intervention and comparison group, yet the difference is still statistically significant, confirming an overall positive impact of the project on women’s empowerment.

The evaluation provides good evidence that the project had a positive and significant impact on knowledge and awareness of women’s rights among women in civil society and in political parties. There is also compelling evidence that the project had a positive and significant impact on women’s participation in groups and events, as well as in the extent to which they take decisions in these groups and events.

Exploring other empowerment indicators, it appears that high numbers of women who participated in the project reported the ability to make decisions for themselves, and recognition of the unacceptability of violence (81 percent of the respondents reported being able to make decisions for themselves, and 84 percent reported that violence was unacceptable). However, these proportions are not statistically significantly different from the women in the comparison group. Measurements for women’s awareness of the benefits in participating in collective action also appears to be high both for women participating in the project (70 percent on average) and in the matched comparison group. While the difference is not significantly different from zero for the overall sample, this indicator is positive and significant among rural women.

**Table 1: Evidence of impact**

|   | Weight From DCE | Evidence of impact             |
|---|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Personal</b>   |                 |                                |
|  Self-confidence and self-esteem   | 11%             | No                             |
|  Ability to make decisions for herself                                     | 12%             | No                             |
|  Recognizing that violence is not acceptable                               | 7%              | No                             |
|  Awareness that collective action is more effective                        | 19%             | No<br>(Yes, among rural women) |
|  Knowledge and awareness of women’s rights (ability to recognize problems) | 10%             | Yes                            |
| <b>Relational</b>   |                 |                                |
|  Ability to make decisions in the household                                | 9%              | No                             |
|  Participation and ability to make decisions in the public sphere          | 1%              | Yes                            |
|  Participation and ability to influence or make decisions political sphere | 0%              | Yes                            |

|   |   |     |     |
|---|---|-----|-----|
|  | Taking action to stop violence            | 18% | Yes |
|  | Independent income                        | 2%  | Yes |
|  | Control over resources in her household   | 4%  | No  |
| <b>Environmental</b>  |   |     |     |
|  | Equality of opportunity                   | 0%  | No  |
|  | Social norms                              | 2%  | No  |
|  | Legislative protection for women's rights | 6%  | No  |

There is evidence of greater contribution to household income from women involved into the project. However, there is no evidence of greater household decision-making or greater control over household resources among project participants.

The evaluation also finds positive and significant results of the project on women's willingness to report a man in cases of being a victim of violence. While there is no evidence suggesting any negative effect of the project on women's exposure to violence, it is important to report that 35 percent of the women in the sample reported being exposed to at least one episode of psychological violence in the previous 12 months, and 14 percent reported at least one episode of physical violence and 3 percent reported at least one episode of sexual violence.

Finally, there appear to be no measurable differences between project participants and matched comparison women on indicators measuring social norms, legislative protection of women's rights and equality of opportunity.

## PROGRAMME LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

### **Consider mitigation activities for unintended effects, such as violence against women.**

The evaluation identified that overall 14 percent of the women interviewed reported at least one episode of physical violence. While there is no evidence that the project under analysis exacerbated this phenomenon, future projects working with women's empowerment are advised to closely monitor gender-based violence and introduce specific interventions to support victims of this phenomenon.

### **Identify strategies for supporting changes at environmental level.**

The evaluation found evidence of a positive and significant effect among women engaged in political parties and civil society organizations in improving knowledge and awareness of women's rights, as well as increasing participation and influence in the political sphere. However, the evaluation did not find changes in social norms, legislative protection for women's rights or equality of opportunity. While this may well be due to measurement issues, there is a

shared recognition among project partners that changes at environmental level require interventions on a more extended time-frame than the one conducted by the project, targeting social norms, beliefs and attitudes.

## **Consider sustainability during project design and implementation.**

The evaluation found a positive and significant effect among rural women on improving awareness of group participation and group decision-making. However, there are questions whether this effect will last into the future. The project did not have an exit strategy and operated under the assumption it would continue its activities in the future. It is therefore not clear whether its activities will sustain impact over time. Future projects are advised to operate considering sustainability planning exit strategies during the intervention design.

## **Consider engaging with different actors, including men and youth.**

The evaluation did not find evidence of impact in changing household decision-making and control over resources within the household. The evaluation recognizes that the project already directly worked with a variety of different types of women (i.e., urban women involved in political parties or civil society organizations, as well as rural women) and engaged with local and national actors for advocacy interventions on health-care coverage. To seek changes within the household, other projects have, for example, also experimented with working with both men and youth.



# NOTES

1 The word 'amal' is Arabic for 'hope'.

## Oxfam Effectiveness Reviews

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