

Management Response Template

Oxfam Management response to the review of *Women's Empowerment in Tunisia: Impact evaluation of the project 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership' in Tunisia (Effectiveness Review Series 2016/17)*

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Questions 1 – 10 will be published externally as a standalone document to accompany the evaluation in question. Please respond in full, without referring people to the detailed action plan (which will not be published).

Please remember that this part of the management response should be written in an accessible way for external audiences!

A: Context, background and findings

1. The context and background of the review, i.e. the purpose and scope of the evaluation.

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: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Middle East' (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 the component with greatest potential for future learning. As such, the results coming 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 on 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 of the evaluation was to evaluate the impact of the AMAL project in Tunisia in promoting women's empowerment and achieving its objectives: increase 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

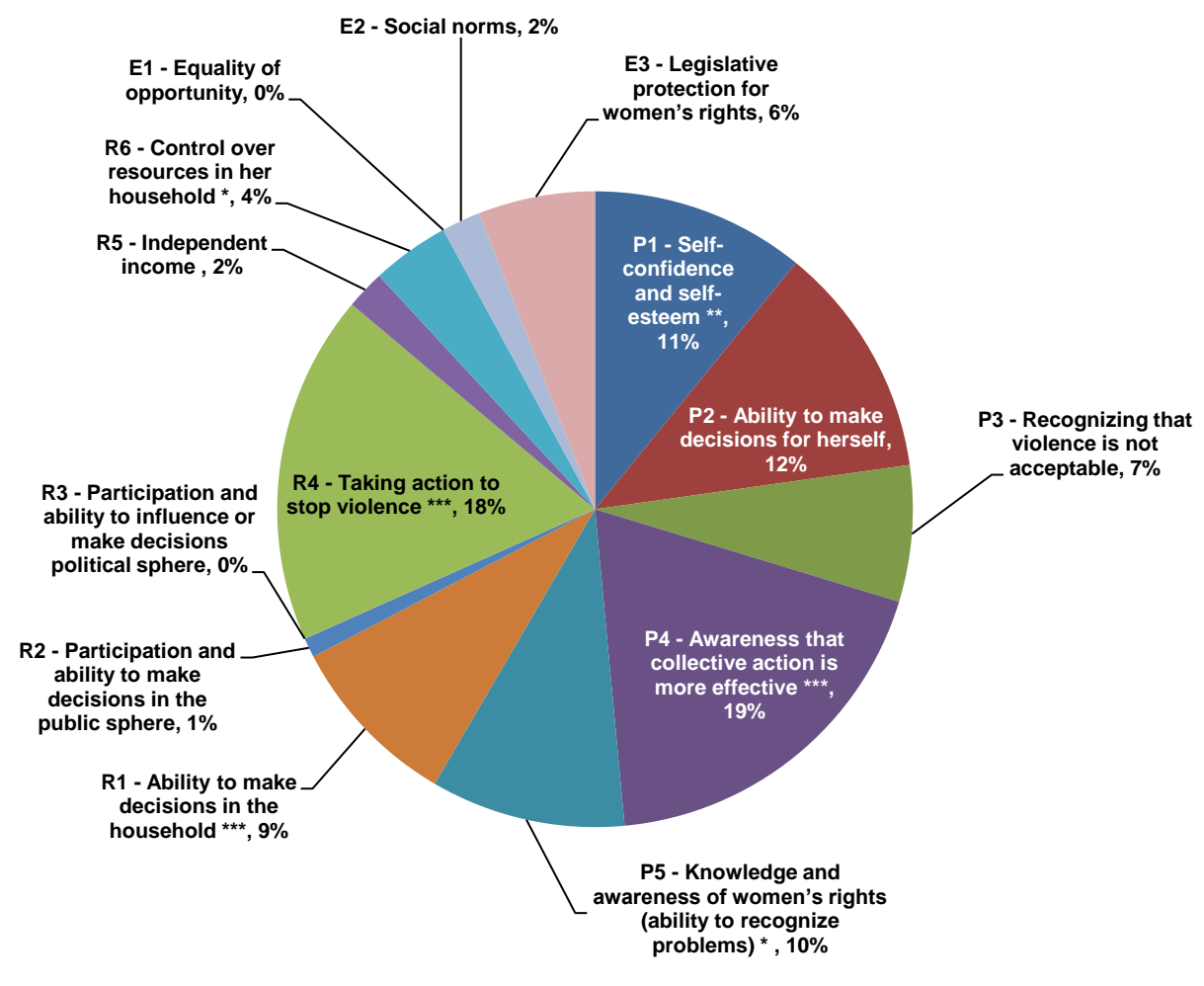
community and country. The evaluation adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design comparing outcome indicators from a randomly selected sample of women who had been directly involved in activities rolled out under the AMAL project with women selected from comparison groups.

Measuring women's empowerment

To be able to measure women's empowerment, Oxfam developed a measurement tool based on a composite index designed to evaluate this 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 socio-economic context of 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 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 with the Discrete Choice Experiment



2. Summary main findings and recommendations

The evaluation found positive and significant results on overall women's empowerment. Project participants score positively, on average, in 58 percent of the indicators, compared with 51 percent of 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 women who participated in the project reported high levels of 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. 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
Personal		
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 (Yes among rural women)
Knowledge and awareness of women's rights (ability to recognize problems)	10%	Yes
Relational		
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
Environmental		
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 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 more than 12 per cent 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 targeted 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 in the future. The project did not have an exit strategy and operated with the assumption to 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 decisions 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 (e.g., 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 experimented working also with men as well as with youth.

B: Oxfam's response to the validity and relevance of the review findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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

The overall findings indicating that the project positively impacted overall women's empowerment meets our expectations and project assessment. 3 years after closure of this project, the partners continue to share the positive learnings and vibes of the project's participants and to refer AMAL as a best practice to strengthen women's empowerment. Moreover, this impact research confirmed the lessons learned that were identified by the project team. In fact, it encouraged a stronger commitment to a longer-term programming and will also be very informative for the gender justice programme development.

However, in contrast to this assessment, Oxfam in Tunisia has considered the positive impact of this project on the capacity of local organisations to work on women's empowerment in its assessment of the project's effectiveness. We therefore evaluate more importantly the impact on the empowerment of women, as we assume that through local civil society organizations (CSOs) capacity building we have triggered a sustainable intervention and a long-term impact, going way going beyond the project duration.

In addition, acknowledging that the timeframe of this project (3 years) did not cover impacts forecasted within its theory of change based strategy (set between 5-10 years), and missed clear linkages to other ongoing projects, our expectations were met at the awareness-raising level on women's rights and on the power and capacity to challenge the environmental elements, rather than in the change itself. The intervention would have had more impact on women empowerment if it would have acted upon social and economic structural obstacles to achieve women empowerment.

However, the overall findings over violence against women and girls remain surprising, as the figures do not align with the ones referred to national studies. For example, 84 percent of respondents reported that violence was unacceptable while national studies refer to great acceptance and normalization of violence.

Considering the overall environment that prevailed during the project implementation period - security unrest, critical social, economic and political crisis directly impacting women and communities - the findings showing positive women's awareness of the benefits in participating in collective action confirm our assumption and flag a great opportunity for future interventions.

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

The review identified a greater impact on the personal and relational indicators than on the environmental elements. Indeed, this fits with the project intervention which was focusing on raising women's awareness about their rights and changing their own perception of their participation.

The 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 made decisions in these groups and events captured one of the major achievements of this project. As an example, the advocacy part of the work done with the partners and led by women in marginalized regions, significantly contributed in raising women's awareness on the greater effectiveness of collective action. In addition, the way the strategy was formulated allowed for specific capacity building for women to organize themselves and to be able to advocate for their inclusion in decision-making processes. Women and project partner's conviction of the

importance of leading collective battles for their rights came after a long process of collaboration between all actors involved in the campaign's design and implementation.

Women's participation was also underpinned by a great success regarding the officials' involvement. Despite a background encrypted by mistrust and even tensioned relationships between the communities (including women, and feminist NGOs) and public authorities, women's groups and the partner's organisations managed to engage successfully with officials.

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

The review shows no project impact on control over resources in the household. The impact on women's empowerment could also have been more significant, if the project intervention tackled economic empowerment. Indeed, the primary needs and adverse livelihood situations of women in poor, marginalized and low-income areas are one of the biggest challenges that hamper women's mobilisation for strategic needs (related to gender-based power relations).

Moreover, the lack of impact on household decision-making and control over resources within the household as well as the prevalence of violence on the project's participants indicate a weakness of men and boys' engagement strategies in the project. While several activities have allowed for a broad participation of men in project activities, there has been no specific strategy to ensure systematic involvement of men and boys in the project. It also highlights that the project wasn't sufficient to build a critical mass able to challenge social norms and to transform women and men's representation of women's role.

6. Summary of review quality assessment, i.e. quality of the review is strong/mixed/poor and short assessment of the process

The quality of the review is mixed; it succeeded in extracting good results and proposed a good framework, but some aspects are to be improved.

The participatory approach and design phase were limited by language barriers (no official translation for the tools neither for the design workshop was planned; loss of information due to language barriers with the Oxfam research team and partners).

For future work in impact research, it is recommended to provide partners with the relevant resources and tools, references and reading materials well in advance before the design workshop, and in an accessible language so they can prepare themselves accordingly.

7. Main Oxfam follow-up actions (This should be a summary of the detailed action plan, focussing on the key actions and timeframes, stated in table B. Information on actions should be specific and timebound. The detailed action plan is for internal use only and will not be published, so please do not "refer to the detailed action plan" in your response)

The AMAL project has been a source of inspiration for the team, it has not only influenced the thinking around the gender justice programme, but also the way gender mainstreaming must be done in other programmes.

Five major actions have been decided:

1) The systematization of learning processes.

The importance of sharing good practices and lessons related to the programme strategies and operations based on the challenges and success that the project experienced with colleagues from other programmes was identified as a key success factor to ensuring high programme quality. The results of the AMAL impact review will be also shared during a session with all colleagues.

The focus and capture of the empowerment notion in this review will be key to assess the theory of change of the Gender Justice programme and nurture the programme development which will start

in 2018. Systematical planning and monitoring reviews within all projects will need to be considered as a minimum standard in all projects and designed to inform the programme's theory of change and would need to be resourced accordingly.

2) Gender justice human resources strategy

One of the challenges within the AMAL project was the understaffing in country offices. Budget allocations allowed for one full time person (e.g., a programme officer). Thanks to external co-funding, additional resources (project officers and advocacy advisor) have been mobilized at the end of the project. This increased the quality of the intervention and allowed much more time on the field and with the partner. Therefore, a more in depth reflection at the programme development phase should document the human resources needed to deliver on the theory of change, which has already started in 2017 and should be finalized by end of 2018.

3) Oxfam gender mainstreaming

AMAL interventions included an Oxfam organizational element, to strengthen Oxfam staff empowerment. This included a gender and empowerment survey with all the staff, and also organizational recommendations. Additional funding available should support the CO to staff a dedicated gender mainstreaming officer whose role would essentially be to ensure organizational mainstreaming of gender at the office and partner levels when needed.

4) Elaborate the advocacy strategy during the design phase

A recommendation for future advocacy work is to design the advocacy strategy as early as possible to complement it with other project activities. For example, the strategy could capitalize on awareness raising sessions and youth networks to attract further attention and visibility to advocacy work. From the perspective of one programme approach, this should also be taken forward at the programme's design phase to ensure partners' input and participation is included. Also, proper staffing should be considered (e.g., a campaigns advisor) to ensure advocacy activities can be carried out appropriately.

5) Development of a Women Economic Empowerment strategy

In addition to incorporating a women's economic empowerment (WEE) component into our projects on women's political participation, we decided to build a WEE sub-programme under the Gender Justice programme, to ensure a holistic approach for women's empowerment and ensure our interventions tackle both primary and strategic needs. We already started the programme development work using Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment as a reference.

8. Any conclusions/recommendations Oxfam does not agree with or will not act upon - and why (this reflection should consider the results of the review quality assessment)

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

The exposure and acceptability of violence encountered in this assessment should be read in light of the national figures, which refer to a much greater prevalence, acceptance and normalization of violence. It might be that the project had a positive impact on the elimination of violence against women and girls thanks to its 'Do No Harm approach,' and the activities related to the elimination of violence against women and girls. The following are examples of partner's activities in this regard:

- Awareness-raising session on violence, through discussion groups with women, workshops of interactive theatre, information session on possible support in case of violence;
- counselling and hearing units for women victims of violence;
- national conference on preventing violence against women who are active in the public/political sphere, and communicating recommendations to the major political parties in Tunisia as well as to the High Independent Authority on Elections to consider them when drafting the election law of the upcoming local elections;
- national seminar for civil society organizations on the development of an advocacy strategy for the organic law on the elimination of violence against women and girls (adopted in 2017 and enforced in 2018).

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?** Please be as specific as possible and provide context where relevant, naming projects in full where learning from the review will be applied.

1) Exit strategies

One of the big challenges faced at the end of the project was to secure a second phase for AMAL. Despite all the efforts in fundraising, none of the initiatives have succeeded yet. This has created great frustration among partners who have felt that they are abandoning the women with whom they have worked and losing the momentum they have created through this project. We are going to make sure to plan exit strategies in collaboration with our partners for all the gender justice projects to ensure the sustainability of our interventions. This will require work on strengthening the pool of resources, the diversification of funding and the development of non-financial partnerships with the key actors of the projects.

2) Women economic empowerment programming:

Though the project aimed at building women's capacities and boosting the role of women in public life, it lacked an important component, especially for women in poor and marginalized areas, in the area of economic empowerment.

AMAL project allowed us to see the importance of realizing Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) to achieve empowerment for women. We therefore integrated this approach in the design of the second phase of our projects on women's political participation such as women on the frontline and AMAL. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find funding for these second phases.

We are looking for support in the development of the WEE sub-programme. As we don't have a programme manager in place, we would like to see the possibility for OGB to support us in the development trajectory of this sub-programme. The Rapid Care Analysis methodology would also help us to build the WEE sub programme, as it is core to capture the primary and strategic needs. Inclusion of Tunisia in OGB RCA initiatives (as a focus country on the project proposals they submit or as a peer reviewer of the Tunisia proposals including RCA, trainings, etc.) would help us to strengthen this component.

3) "ENOUGH!" challenging Social norms

This review confirmed that changes at environmental level require longer term interventions, with specific interventions to tackle norms, beliefs and attitudes. Oxfam in Tunisia is preparing its ENOUGH campaign, challenging and changing harmful norms underpinning violence against women and girls. Oxfam in Tunisia's operational plan (2016-2020) emphasizes the gendered social norms change, and using the ENOUGH campaign as the umbrella for the Gender Justice programme in Tunisia.

4) Involving men and boys:

While several activities have allowed for a broad participation of men in project activities, there has been no specific strategy to ensure systematic involvement of men and boys in the project. A strategy on involving men and boys will be developed for the Gender Justice programme and intervention on positive masculinity integrate into future project proposals.

10. **Additional reflections** that have emerged from the review process but were not the subject of the evaluation:

1) Gender justice human resources strategy

One of the challenges within the AMAL project was the short-staffing in country offices. Budget allocations allowed for one full time person (e.g., one programme officer). Thanks to external co-funding, additional resources (project officers and advocacy advisor) could be mobilized at the end of the project. This increased the quality of the intervention and allowed much more time on the field and with the partner. The mobilization of appropriate human resources (HR) will nurture our internal

reflection on our HR strategy, in order to allocate as far as possible, the necessary human resources according to the dimensions of the project and our desired added value. This process should start in 2018.

2) Importance of storytelling to amplify women's voices

During and after the project implementation the following reflections emerged:

- How to plan documented stories that could be inspiring and shared? Indeed, some undocumented episodes were very important and weren't explored enough. For example, women who were working for a factory in Azmour (Kelibia) were able to mobilize the support of local unions to oblige the owner not to change the factory localization, and to collectively defend the labour rights of women working there.
- How to make sure that individual and collective stories are used to promote a larger scale change? As advocacy led in the zones of intervention with women beneficiaries, how can we succeed in improving women's lives through better access to free health care, and have this scaled up to the rest of the country? Building on this would help in challenging social norms significantly.

