

## Management Response Template

**Oxfam Management response to the review of *Women's Empowerment in Honduras: Impact evaluation of the 'Promoting Women's Engagement in Governance' project***  
(Effectiveness Review Series 2016/17)

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### A: Context, background and findings

#### 1. The context and background of the review

Oxfam GB's Global Performance Framework is part of the organisation's effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, as well as enhance learning across the organisation. 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 'Promoting women's engagement in governance in Honduras' (HONC16) was one of those selected for an Effectiveness Review in the 2016/17 financial year.

#### Evaluation design

The Effectiveness Review took place in June 2016 in Honduras. It intended to evaluate the success of the 'Promoting women's engagement in government in Honduras' project in achieving its objective of strengthening women's political empowerment. The project was finalized in December 2015, so the evaluation is assessing the impact of the project six months after its conclusion.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, employing a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design combined with a qualitative component.

The quantitative impact evaluation aimed at measuring change that is causally attributable to and representative of the project intervention. The evaluation design involved comparing 200 women that had been supported by the project with 292 women in neighbouring communities that had similar characteristics to them in 2008, but who had not participated in the project. A total of 492 women were interviewed using household surveys. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and baseline differences between the households surveyed in project and comparison communities to provide additional confidence when making estimates of the project's impact.

The qualitative component consisted of focus group discussions with project participants in three departments. They served to gather additional information about the project at a national level, and to highlight lessons from aspects of the project that the quantitative portion of the evaluation was unable to address.

#### Project description

The project began in 2013 and lasted two years. During this period the project directly supported a collection of women's networks in three departments in the west of Honduras (Lempira, La Paz, and Intibuca). It provided space for communication between the regional and national level networks, while supporting their organisational capacity. It also promoted dialogue between women's networks and municipal government, lobbied key political actors, and supported efforts to direct municipal funds according to women's needs. Finally, the project provided support to institutionalize and implement

strategies aimed at preventing violence against women.

## Results

The evaluation found positive and significant results on overall women's empowerment. Quantitative data analysis identified that the project had positive and significant results on various indicators of empowerment at the personal level (such as knowledge of rights and unacceptability of violence), relational-level indicators (such as group decision making and share of household income) and environmental-level indicators (awareness of municipal resources for women). Overall, women in project communities scored positively in 55 percent of Women's Empowerment Index indicators, compared with 45 percent for women from comparison communities.

The Effectiveness Review provides evidence that the project had a positive and significant impact on indicators referring to knowledge of individual rights, willingness to defend rights, and willingness to report violence. There is also evidence to suggest that the project increased women's likelihood of deeming violence against her unacceptable, though results in both intervention and comparison groups are very positive. The degree of personal autonomy is high in both the intervention group and the comparison group, though the evaluation finds no significant difference between the two. Finally, there is no evidence of significant impact in terms of other indicators measuring personal empowerment (self-confidence and opinion on women's economic roles), and the low values for each suggest room for improvement.

Regarding relational indicators, participants were significantly more likely than the comparison respondents to have reported influence in group decision-making, higher shares of household income, and ability to influence local policies. However, there is no evidence of impact in the other two spheres of decision-making (political and household) examined in the evaluation.

Additionally, when asked about their perception of social norms in their community (for example, community members' attitudes towards women's economic or leadership potential) project communities and comparison communities exhibited no difference. However, project participants were more likely to be aware of municipal resources for women, suggesting that the project had some limited positive impact at the environmental level of empowerment.

## Summary results of the characteristics of women's empowerment

Level	Characteristic	Linked to project logic	Evidence of impact
<b>Personal</b>	Self-confidence	Yes	No
	Individual knowledge of rights	Yes	Yes
	Unacceptability of violence	Yes	Yes
	Personal autonomy (freedom of movements)	Yes	No
	Willingness to influence and defend her own rights	Yes	Yes
	Willingness to report cases of violence	Yes	Yes
	Opinion on women's economic role	No	No
<b>Relational</b>	Group decision making	Yes	Yes
	Household decision making	Yes	No
	Share household income	No	Yes
	Influencing in local policies	Yes	Yes
	Political decision making	No	No
<b>Environmental</b>	Social Norms	No	No
	Awareness of resources for women	Yes	Yes

The evaluation also investigated additional indicators outside of those used for the Women's

Empowerment Index. First, evidence suggests that project participants were more willing to report violence to authorities, but there is no difference between intervention and comparison groups on exposure to violence. Project participants were more likely to have heard of violence committed against women close to them, though it is unclear whether this is a result of increased incidence or increased awareness of violence. Project teams should exercise careful monitoring of cases of violence in future projects in order to identify and mitigate any potential unintended consequences. Regarding political indicators, there is no evidence that political group participation differs between women in the project and comparison groups, but project participants were more likely to have attended political events such as marches and protests than women from the comparison group.

Finally, the qualitative component explored the interconnections between national-level influencing and community-level activities. It found some evidence that the national-level activities were instrumental in increasing knowledge of their rights and supported to vocalize their needs and advocate for their rights at local level. Focus group discussions also revealed some up-ward stream of information from local to national, specifically on health, violence, and education. The focus groups also highlighted a need for the national-level activities to be more transparent in their allocation of funds, in order to foster trust and understanding of the use of network resources.

## 2. Summary main findings and recommendations

### **Programme learning considerations**

#### **Consider expanding activities promoting women's political influence.**

This evaluation finds positive and significant impact on women's ability to influence change, as demonstrated by a range of indicators (for example, knowledge of rights, influence in local policies, and participation in political events) as well as qualitative results. Given the impact of these community-level activities, future projects are encouraged to learn from these successes, so as to encourage women's advocacy in additional community-level policies. These activities could also be broadened to achieve policy objectives on a broader geographical level.

#### **Consider revising programme logic to make causal chain for certain goals more explicit.**

The evaluation did not provide evidence of positive impact for a few outcomes explicitly stated in the logic model, specifically self-confidence and household decision-making. However, for contribution to household income – an outcome not as well defined by the theory of change – the project proved very effective. Consider revisiting the logic model, reconsidering assumptions and identifying gaps in the causal chain that may have impeded impact or created unexpected positive change. For example, what additional steps or activities might be necessary to improve self-confidence? What aspects of the project led to an increase in women's contributions to their household income?

#### **Consider altering the targeting strategy.**

From the evaluation it emerged that project participants were more likely than the comparison respondents to be already participating in groups and political activities. Additionally, project participants were more highly educated and from wealthier households, on average. The project team is encouraged to explore alternative targeting strategies to examine if project activities have even stronger impacts with women who could be considered more vulnerable.

#### **Promote transparency regarding activities and funds used at the national level.**

Responses from focus groups highlighted the positive impact of local women's involvement in activities at the national level. Still, some expressed concerns over the use of national-level funds. While this does not necessarily signal misuse, it does suggest that focusing on transparency of funds at the national

level and clearly communicating how these finances are allocated could serve to further strengthen the trust and collaboration between networks.

**Further explore how women allocated their share of the municipal budget, as these may have caused unexpected positive impacts.**

Results suggest a positive impact on women's contribution to household income. While it is still unclear exactly how the project contributed to this outcome, it is likely that project women effectively used the five percent of the municipal budget to fund new economic activities. An increased understanding of the specifics of these activities may allow future projects to replicate this positive impact.

**Explore activities to empower women at the household-level**

Programme women displayed higher levels of empowerment in group decision-making, an outcome explicitly linked to their involvement in women's networks. However, another indicator focusing on women's sphere of influence in the household, opinion on women's economic role, showed no effects. Future projects can build on the successes of this programme by targeting household-level power relations to further empower women in various areas of their lives.

**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?**

Overall, the findings of the review concur with our own expectations of the project's effectiveness. However, we feel that the conclusion drawn on the area of personal autonomy could have been more nuanced, given that there was evidence of impact on four of the seven indicators. Furthermore, our own experience, and that of our project partners, is that an improvement in women's self-confidence was observed because of the project, in contrast to the findings of the review.

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

Women's awareness of their rights, and their political participation to claim these rights, which resulted in increased access to resources from local authorities, can be considered a particularly strong area.

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

The areas of self-confidence, personal autonomy and household decision-making, which were highlighted as having little or no impact in the review, indicate that there is still much to be done to promote women's empowerment at the household level.

**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 was strong as was the process undertaken. The lack of a final report in Spanish makes difficult the sharing and discussion of results with local partners and beneficiaries.

- 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)

1. To continue supporting women’s organizations and leadership at community and municipal level to strengthen women’s participation and influence in community and municipal level policies.
2. To foster stronger links between women’s organizations working at local level and national level women’s rights organizations and coalitions. In particular, Oxfam will prioritise support for national coalitions of women’s organizations that are open to the participation of local women’s organizations, especially those from rural areas.
3. To implement Oxfam’s caring work methodology at household level, with the objective of redressing gender power imbalances so that women have a greater say in decisions taken and to ensure a more equitable distribution of workload in domestic, reproductive and productive activities between the men and women in the household.
4. To intensify support to women’s organizations at local and national levels to advocate for a greater allocation of public recourse to fund the issues of practical need and strategic interest that they themselves identify and prioritise, through gender sensitive public budgeting and social audit exercise.

- 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*)

None.

- 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.

The project was finalised before the current OCS and programme were formulated. The new OCS has prioritised a focus on women’s rights, specifically in the areas of economic empowerment, transformational leadership, prevention of violence and access to justice. The new programme integrates these three thematic areas as per a one programme approach, has a tighter geographical focus and works at both local and national levels with women’s rights organizations and alliances and including pilots in urban areas. This has involved the redirection of unrestricted funding away from historical partners and priorities, and the raising of new funds aligned with these new priorities and channelled primarily through women’s rights organizations.

This has enabled us over the past three years to expand activities promoting women’s political influence (R1) in local and national government (projects: Ciudadanía activa de las mujeres para fortalecer la democracia en Honduras – AECID, Voces e iniciativas comunitarias para crear espacios más seguros en América Latina y el Caribe – IDRC, Acciones de promoción de acceso a la justicia de grupos vulnerables y veeduría social del sector justicia – UE). The theory of change, results framework and MEL framework of the new programme is also, in our opinion, much more in line with Oxfam’s ambition for influence in networks and makes the causal chain for certain goals more explicit (R2). We have a much more focused advocacy agenda directly linked to local level interventions (e.g., the Credimujer initiative aimed at established a national state credit programme for rural women). We are now working with a much more diverse alliance of women’s organizations, both rural and urban, which has helped to overcome the lack of communication that existed between local and national levels as per R4. Feedback mechanisms from national to local levels are included in the AECID project. In the area of economic empowerment, the learning on household level empowerment has been built into projects developed within the framework of the enterprise development programme, for example the inclusion of rapid care analysis in the Apisililian project and the Tropisabor and Estevia proposals (R6).

While we have continued to support local level women’s networks in their advocacy with municipal governments, we have not systematically analysed the impact of municipal resources assigned to them. This is partly due to a reorientation of state funds over the last four years, which has effectively earmarked a large part (40%) of municipal budgets as contributions to the national governments “Vida Mejor” programme, which includes conditional cash transfers. We have carried out a social audit of this programme and its impact on women.

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

None.