



Women and children sitting in a square. People in the Lake Chad Basin region have been suffering from an ongoing conflict between armed groups and the government. Many have fled their homes and are now displaced. Photo: Tom Saater/Oxfam Novib.

CHANGE GOAL EVALUATION: LEARNING FROM OXFAM'S RESILIENCE-BUILDING INTERVENTIONS

Executive Summary by John Twigg, A. Bahadur, V. Le Masson, R. Price, and F. Risi.

This report presents the findings of a study by a team from the Overseas Development Institute that was commissioned by Oxfam.¹ The study's main purpose is to provide Oxfam with knowledge about the outcomes of its resilience-building initiatives, in particular what has been learnt about how changes have been achieved. The research addresses five strategic learning questions to be answered using documents (such as evaluation reports, research and learning documents) and primary data (key informant interviews). The aim was not to carry out a comprehensive analysis of Oxfam's work in resilience, but to capture significant learning and evidence from that work. Oxfam will use the results to show how it is contributing towards achieving the Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013–2019, specifically regarding resilience, and to inform the planning process that will define the Oxfam Strategic Plan for 2020–2026.

The research studied a sample of Oxfam's resilience-building programmes and projects covering a range of geographies and contexts, types and scales of intervention, and outcomes. Many of these sought to achieve resilience through economic empowerment, particularly involving livelihood support and development (community savings schemes featured strongly in a number of programmes); others were more closely linked to disaster risk reduction (DRR) or humanitarian interventions. Many were responding to the stresses experienced or anticipated from climate change, in dryland and other contexts. The study looked at programmes in Africa (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Senegal, Mali, Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia), Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India), the Middle East and North Africa region (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Yemen), Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti) and Melanesia (Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands).

The review focuses on five strategic learning questions for resilience that were set by Oxfam. These related to:

1. how Oxfam is strengthening transformative capacity when building resilience;
2. the different types of collaborations, alliances and partnerships Oxfam is engaging with in resilience programming;
3. how Oxfam's resilience programming is building capacities and promoting leadership of local actors in locally-led resilient development processes, including climate change adaptation (CCA), DRR, and humanitarian action;
4. the degree to which context analysis that informs resilience programming is inclusive and participatory, and how its findings are translated into programming; and
5. how Oxfam is learning about resilience programming, how that learning influences adaptive management and contributes towards transformation.

The main findings of the study, relating to the five strategic learning questions, are as follows:

Transformation: Oxfam's programmes are contributing to increased transformative capacity. Vulnerable and marginalized people are securing greater control over resources, greater agency and autonomy. Projects are delivering innovations, creating shifts in policies and institutions, and delivering lasting and sustainable gains. There is scope to deliver more comprehensive transformation, to build transformative capacity from the beginning and to deliver more benefits at scale. A shift in perspective may be needed, with longer-term and more strategic transformative visions. Oxfam should consider if projects and programmes are genuinely and intentionally transformative, and what are the main drivers of transformative change. Oxfam needs to consolidate and articulate a clear concept of transformative capacity to help programme managers. Methods should be developed to measure and evaluate transformative capacity more effectively.

Partnerships: Oxfam's approach to partnerships is based on trust, equality and respect for autonomy. Multi-stakeholder partnership remains the key partnership delivery mechanism. This approach encourages collaboration with a wide range of development actors and across scales. Collaboration with local and community-based organisations is fundamental to Oxfam's approach: the most effective entry point for strengthening transformative capacity and resilience is the local level. There are challenges in effective integration of DRR/resilience and humanitarian activities and actors, but there are signs of progress; the 'localisation agenda' may stimulate further collaborations.

Local capacities and leadership: Community-based organisations (CBOs) played a central role in building local resilience capacities. Formation of community-based groups and organisations for managing risks and disasters was a key driver of resilience-building in Oxfam projects. Oxfam supported CBOs in a variety of ways. Capacity building made CBO members more proficient and confident, and strengthened organizational abilities. There was widespread community support for disaster-focused CBOs and high levels of community participation. Community action planning was a key element in activating communities for change. The exercise of democratic processes in CBOs was important for group formation and development, while election of women to leadership positions was transformational.

Context analysis and inequality: A human-rights based approach guides Oxfam's resilience programming, underpinning Oxfam's priority to support gender justice and to address inequality between social groups. Programmes aim at supporting people's rights and well-being. The goal to promote gender justice to build resilience largely shapes Oxfam's programmes, although integration of the approach is not yet consistent across programmes. There is a need for more systematic consideration of inequality, addressing the needs of a wide range of marginalised and excluded groups, and for more thorough context analysis in programme design. There is also very limited analysis of the intersectionality of social identities that influence people's vulnerabilities.

Learning: Oxfam staff recognize the importance and the challenges of learning. Oxfam and its partners put considerable efforts into the design and use of methods, and tools for planning and evaluation. More work is needed to identify

change beyond the household or local levels, and beyond the life-cycle of individual projects and programmes. Active knowledge sharing is encouraged but it is not always clear how learning is being incorporated, transferred or used to adapt project activities. There should be more application of systems thinking that recognizes interdependencies between the social, political and environmental domains. Oxfam's investment in global and regional knowledge hubs has considerable potential as a support for the many 'learning journeys' that the organisation is undertaking.

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