

## Management Response

### Oxfam Management response to the review of LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTH SUDAN:

*Impact Evaluation of the Peace and Prosperity Promotion Programme (SD04)*

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#### What is the purpose of an evaluation management response (MR)?

A management response enables us to document the key learning generated from the project evaluations whilst also ensuring that the report is given careful consideration by relevant stakeholders.

The management response should:

- 1) Include a summary of the reflections of your team and program/project stakeholders in relation to the evaluation’s findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- 2) Detail actions that will be taken to respond to the evaluation findings;
- 3) Offer an opportunity for all relevant project stakeholder to comment on the utility of the evaluation process and final report.

#### 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’. One key focus is on the extent to which the projects have promoted change in relation to relevant OGB global outcome indicators. The global outcome indicator for the livelihoods thematic area is defined as ‘total household consumption per adult equivalent per day’. This indicator is explained in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

The project ‘South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Programme (SD04)’ was one of those selected for an Effectiveness Review in the 2016/17 financial year. The project activities were implemented by Oxfam GB in conjunction with the National Relief Development Corps (NRDC) for overall implementation and with the Department of Agriculture of South Sudan for specific activities (trainings in agronomical practices). The project started in October 2012 and was completed in April 2016.

The project’s overall objective was to improve the food security and income of vulnerable men and women, build conflict transformation capacities and build government and community capacities, to

promote safety. It is important to note that the project was first implemented in Upper Nile State, but when the war broke out in December 2013, it was transferred to Rumbek Centre County in Lake State. This report will focus on the impact of the livelihood component of the project in Rumbek Centre County implemented between June 2014 and December 2015.

The project took place in four payams,<sup>i</sup> which were selected based on the difficulties experienced by farmers: low rainfall, poor access to markets, low capacity in crop production, and a lack of agricultural inputs. The livelihood component of the project targeted six crops for household consumption and for sale to wholesalers and local traders in the local community: groundnuts, sorghum, kudru, okra, cucumbers and onions. Other crops were grown in the project area but were not directly supported by the project. These included maize and palm. The farmers were provided with the necessary inputs and technical advice on improved methods of farming. Demonstration plots for women vegetable producers were developed, and vegetable producers were encouraged to form groups. Exchange visits were also organized. Village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) were created, trainings to support household businesses were held, and cash grants for household businesses were given.

The livelihood component of the project was intended to benefit 1,200 households (that is, approximately 9,000 individuals), through increased agricultural productivity, increased value-addition and increased sales and revenues. Overall, the livelihood component of the project aimed to develop sustainable livelihood opportunities and increase household income.

#### Evaluation approach

The review adopted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design, which involved comparing households that had been supported by the project with households that had not been supported by the project, but had similar livelihood characteristics in 2013, before the project was implemented.

The Effectiveness Review was carried out in five payams in the Rumbek Centre County. A subsample of households that had participated in the livelihood component of the project was randomly selected to be interviewed. For comparison purposes, interviews were carried out with farmer households from villages that were not involved in the project: comparison villages, all in the same part of one payam, were deemed to have had similar characteristics to the implementation villages in 2013.<sup>ii</sup> Non-participant households were randomly selected and interviews were conducted.

In total, 308 project participants and 385 non-participants were interviewed. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and socio-economic differences between the project participants and non-participants, to increase confidence when making estimates of the project's impact. As the project targeted households that were already involved in growing the main crops, the project focused on groundnut, sorghum and vegetables for its agricultural and livelihood component. We took into account which crops households declared growing in 2013 in the analysis, among other characteristics. It is possible that some unobservable characteristics also influenced the decision to participate in the project (such as interest by participants), which we cannot account for.

## 2. Summary main findings and recommendations

The main component of the project under review focused on improving agricultural inputs for project participants. The data indeed suggest that more households received seeds (groundnuts, sorghum and vegetables) thanks to the project, and that they received trainings on planting groundnuts and sorghum, and on the use of fertilizer.

In the year preceding the survey (October 2015 to September 2016), usage of plough and power tillers was higher in the intervention group than in the comparison group. For the main crops in the area (sorghum, maize, groundnut, sesame),<sup>iii</sup> land preparation took place in early 2016, after the end of the project, which would suggest a continued increased usage of distributed tools. Similarly, in the year preceding the survey, significantly more households used improved seeds or seedlings in the intervention group than in the comparison group (34 percent of households against 26 percent). However, this is a smaller proportion of households than that of households having received seeds since the project started; indeed, the use of improved seeds may not be carried over from one season to the next. The project also apparently encouraged participants to adopt organic farming techniques: more households than in the comparison group produced organic fertilizer and farmed organically.

This seems to have resulted in an increase in the share of households growing the targeted crops (groundnuts, sorghum, okra, kudru, cucumbers and onions), and diversification in this set of crops in the year prior to the survey. This also seems to have resulted in a change in crops that were not targeted by the project and measured in the survey: palm, which very few households grow, and maize. Some 50 percent grew maize in 2013, and 56 percent of project participants in 2016. The project also led to an increase in the volume of production for all the targeted crops, except for okra and onions. The volume of production of maize was not significantly affected by the project. Even though an increase in volume is observed for palm producers, farmers who were already engaged in palm production, or who have started between 2013 and 2016, are very few, are more likely to be among the richest households and more likely to be engaged in growing almost all of the eight crops measured in the survey. The effect on palm production may hence be very specific to those palm producers.

The project put emphasis on value-addition by crop processing. It seems that the project succeeded in changing behaviours of sorghum and okra producers (relatively more likely to process than similar comparison producers). Similarly, among producers of groundnuts, sorghum, cucumbers, kudru or okra, project participants were more likely to sell some than non-participants. Crops are mainly sold to local traders and intermediaries, or at local markets, among both project participants and non-participants.

The project also supported non-agricultural activities through training on business plans. More households were trained on business plans in the past three years than in the comparison group (although only 17 percent of households) but less intensively (those who were trained received fewer training sessions than in the comparison group). Thirty percent of project participants received VSLA kits, which represents a seven percentage-point increase compared to the comparison group. The share of households that received cash grants or credit at a lower rate is not different between the two groups.

This support of the project towards non-agricultural activities was aimed at improving revenue diversification. We indeed observe a larger share of households receiving monetary income in the 12

months preceding the survey from farming, livestock or activities carried out off the farm. In 2016, South Sudan experienced hyperinflation,<sup>iv</sup> a setting in which it is likely that in-kind transactions may be higher than cash ones. This Effectiveness Review focused on measuring monetary income. If the increased share of households receiving monetary income among project participants is balanced out by a decrease share of households doing in-kind transactions, compared to the group of non-participant households, the survey would not capture such a mechanism. However, measurement of income through consumption and measurement of asset-based wealth will confirm the results on the increase in the share of households receiving income from different sources.

We indeed observed higher food consumption, and total consumption (driven by food consumption, no difference in non-food consumption) among project participants, which suggests that the project was successful in improving the livelihood of the project participants. Measurement on the one hand of asset-based wealth highlights that the project participants were better off than non-participants in September 2016, but also on the other hand that assets and living conditions of the non-participants had particularly deteriorated between 2013 and 2016.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that livestock ownership overall decreased in the surveyed population, which suggests an overall deterioration of livelihood condition. The project contributed to increasing ownership in poultry, sheep and goats at the time of the survey, but also an increased share of households had received income from selling livestock in the last 12 months. This suggests that in the short run, the project may have helped households facing shocks through livestock sales to maintain their consumption or make investments.

Livelihood components of this project were implemented in order to build peace: the project focused on bridging the gap between community institutions and farmers and enhancing participation of women and youth in community groups. No significant effect is observed on awareness of respondents of communal plans (only 41 percent of project participants are aware of the existence of such plans). A larger share of project participants knows who the community leaders are, compared to non-participants (52 percent as against 39 percent).

Overall, the project increased women's participation in groups by 15 percentage points, and particularly in women's associations. It is worth underlining that participation of women is low in farmers' groups (29 percent among female respondents in the intervention group), and that this was not affected by the project. It is significant to note that the project did not have any impact on the quality of participation: overall, only 26 percent of respondents in the intervention group have a say in a group's decisions, and this is not different between project participants and non-participants. In addition, a smaller share of women in households who participated in the project is confident in participating in meetings than in the comparison group (77 percent against 84 percent, significant at 10 percent only).

The project did not have an impact on female respondents having a say in the household's decisions (a quarter of respondents are involved in household decision-making) and they are less likely to take decision by themselves or influence others' decisions in the intervention group than in the comparison group. Female respondents' say in making decisions about their own movement is still quite low (39 percent on average in the intervention group). Finally, more respondents in project participant households declared that the share of their contribution to the household's resources has increased since 2013, compared to non-project participants.

One caveat of the measurements presented in this Effectiveness Review arose from the fact that the survey focused on eight crops, identified as the crops targeted by the projects (groundnuts, sorghum, kudru, okra, cucumbers, onions) and the main crops grown by project and comparison households in addition to the targeted ones (palm and maize). Based on FEWS NET 2013 report and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2013 report, other main crops in the county include millet, sesame, cow peas and pumpkins. Anecdotally, from other parts of the survey, 16 percent of households ate home-produced tomatoes in the last seven days (tomatoes are identified by African Development Bank (ADB) 2013 report as high-value crop for both domestic and external markets). Hence it is likely that other crops were grown by both project participants and non-participants, sesame being the most widely grown in the area.

If the project enabled farmers to improve their production, processing and sales of the targeted crops at the expense of other crops, such as sesame, we do not have direct information on this in the dataset. However, other data available suggest that there was a substitution effect on processing behaviours, but that the overall effect on income is positive. Indeed, on the one hand, the share of households using equipment and processing machines was slightly reduced by the project; on the other hand, even though processing of some of the targeted crops increased for project participants, the share of households earning revenue from processing stayed the same between the two groups. That suggests that project participants switched from processing some crops they grew towards processing more of the targeted crops, and that the overall effect on bringing more households towards crop processing is close to being nil. Processing is an activity traditionally undertaken by women; this substitution could hence be an effect of their not being able to extend their workload, given other farming and household commitments. It could also be that households who are processing are processing a larger share of their production.

Finally, more project participant households declared receiving monetary income from farming (of any crop), and income measured through household overall consumption and asset-based wealth was higher among the project participants than non-participants.

**Key results of this Effectiveness Review**

Outcome	Evidence of positive impact	Comments
Adoption of agricultural technology	Yes	The project led to increased usage of improved seeds, ploughs or power tillers, production and usage of organic materials.
Crop diversity	Cannot conclude	The project led to an increased number of crops grown among the eight crops that the survey focuses on. However, it is likely that some widely-grown crops, mainly sesame, were missed in the survey. We cannot conclude whether the project’s focus on a few crops led to abandoning the growing of other crops.

		Results on maize and palm do not suggest abandonment.
Increased produced quantity of groundnuts, sorghum, cucumbers, kudru, okra and onions	Yes (4 crops out of 6)	The project increased production of groundnuts, sorghum, cucumber and kudru for the producers of those crops. The project also increased the share of households producing each of those crops, and the other targeted crops.
Increased access to markets	Yes	A larger share of producers of groundnuts, sorghum, kudru, okra and cucumbers sold some of their harvest in the last 12 months, but among those who sold some crops, they were as likely to sell to the market centre as non-participant farmers.
Revenue diversification	Yes	The average number of sources of monetary income is higher among project participants than non-participants.
Overall household income (Global Indicator)	Yes	An effect on food consumption is observed. No effect on non-food expenditures could be detected (more likely to have been affected by difficulties of recalling information in a context of hyperinflation).
Asset-based wealth index	Yes	A positive effect of the project was observed (and a deterioration of assets in the comparison group).
Women's participation in groups	No	We observed an increase in women's participation in groups in the intervention group (through participation in women's groups). Participation of women in farmers' groups, cooperatives, credit or micro-finance groups and disaster management groups is still low (respectively 29%, 27%, 18% and 11%) and was not affected by the project. Participation in group decision-making was not different between project participants and non-participants (and was low: only 26% of respondents are involved in group decisions in the intervention group).

Programme learning considerations

**Explore the possibilities of fostering collective marketing to improve access to market**

In this project, vegetable producers were asked to form groups in order to facilitate adoption of improved agricultural practices of production and processing, but no emphasis was put on marketing. For non-vegetable producers, no emphasis was put on involvement in or formation of farmers' groups.

More project participants produced and sold the targeted crops than non-participant households. These were sold mainly to traders or in market centres; project participants and non-participants were as likely to sell these crops to traders or market centres. Joining forces in marketing may bring more farmers to accessing markets and help farmers getting a better price, and reducing costs of, and time devoted to, selling produces.

**Encourage plan development to be more inclusive and improve communication of the plans to village members**

Fifty-nine percent of project participants are not aware of the existence of community plans, and this is not statistically different between project participants and non-participants. While the programme supported plans' development at the payam level, this suggests that plan development could be more inclusive, and that plans could be better communicated to foster awareness and ultimately the active participation of citizens.

**Support women's empowerment through leadership in mixed groups and sensitization of men**

The focus of the project on vegetable production (four of the six targeted crops), and on processing – activities undertaken traditionally by women – led to a large involvement of women in the project. The vegetable producer groups created by the project were mainly female groups; VSLAs were initially mixed groups, with a majority of female participants. However, based on discussions with the project team, most men in these groups drop out, most likely because they were not interested in the VSLAs. The fact that other groups were already open to them may have been a factor in this decision too. This is reflected in the data through more female respondents in project participant households regularly attending meetings of a group, and particularly of a women's association, than non-participants. However, this did not translate into more involvement in decision-making within those groups, nor in overall confidence in participating in meetings. In fact, an overall decrease in confidence in meetings is observed. Future projects should consider actively promoting women's leadership in decision-making in groups and accompanying women to build confidence in taking part in mixed assemblies and in speaking-up and making their voices heard. Men will need to be involved in this process, to listen to and discuss issues brought up by women.

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

**3. Overall, do the findings of the review meet with you own expectations or assessment of the project's effectiveness? Was anything identified which was surprising?**

We agree with the overall findings of the review result. The findings are not surprising at all and, as it can be seen from the response below; Oxfam South Sudan has incorporated most of the recommendation of the findings in the design of subsequent proposals and these include the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) supported Fortifying Equality and Economic Diversification (FEED) project (2015-2018); the European Commission supported Pro Resilience Action (PROACT)

project (2016-2018) and the Department for International Development (DFID) supported Humanitarian and Resilience (HARISS) Programme (2016-2019).

**4. Any conclusions/recommendations which the country team does not agree with or will not act upon and why**

The conclusion and all the recommendations are well taken, and the country program has already considered them to inform our subsequent resilience programming.

**5. Main follow-up actions**

The main follow up actions that Oxfam South Sudan has taken from this review exercise is to:

- Strengthen market-based approaches in our Emergency, Food, Security and Livelihoods (EFSL) interventions, facilitate access to local credit for small holding producers, improve income saving practices and support revitalization of local markets through strengthening local traders, value chain analysis and supporting the establishment of marketing groups.
- Build the capacity of women to help improve their participation and decision making at household and community level.
- Build the capacity of community-based structures and civil society organisation (CSOs) to ensure participation of community members at different levels and to hold the government accountable.

**6. How do you plan to use the evidence which is generated from this review? Please be as specific as possible.**

After the completion of this project, the country program managed to secure the GAC funded FEED project. The learnings from South Sudan's Peace and Prosperity Promotion programme (SSPPP), specifically on women's participation and decision making has been taken forward among many community level structures, such as the farmers field school, honey producer groups, marketing associations at county and Payam level and a significant number of women were placed in decision making positions such as groups, chairperson role and treasuries.

**7. How do you plan to apply the learning from this review to relevant or new projects in the future? Please be as specific as possible and provide context where relevant, naming projects in full where learning from the review will be applied.**

The recommendation to improve access to markets was taken forward during the design of the FEED project and a one stop centre was established at county and Payam level to link farmers for collective production, bulking and marketing. The county one stop centre was managed by the county marketing association whilst the mini one stop centres at Payam level were managed by the Payam marketing association.



**8. Is there any support your team would require in order to maximise the use of the evidence generated from this review?**

Financial support from affiliates and donors is required to replicate and scale up the gains of this project to other areas.

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

Some other reflections about the project are; -

- The project has made significant contribution in terms of building the capacity of local authorities e.g. the county department of agriculture and peace commission in Lake state. However, there is no capacity assessment made to witness the improvement in service delivery.

The project was not effective in strengthening the capacity of local partner organizations.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Payam is the second-lowest administrative division of South Sudan.

<sup>ii</sup> The project was initially planned to be implemented in another part of this payam, but because of insecurity that arose there in 2014, implementation was interrupted after seed distribution. Accessibility of these villages was reduced and neither the project officers during project implementation, nor the surveyors at the time of this Effectiveness Review could go to this part of the payam. In the part of the payam that formed the comparison group of this study, peace committees were formed at the onset of the project, but following conflicts that had arisen in the other part of the payam, activities were not conducted.

<sup>iii</sup> FEWS NET, 2013, *South Sudan Livelihood Zones and Descriptions*

<sup>iv</sup> According to the National Bureau of Statistics of South Sudan, the country experienced an annualized inflation rate of 682.1% September 2016 (time of the survey).