

Management Response

Oxfam Management response to the review of Resilience in North East Ghana – Impact Evaluation of the Climate-Resilient Agricultural and Food Systems (CRAFS) project (Effectiveness Review Series 2017/18)

Prepared by:	Mohammed Anwar- Sadat Adam		
Contributors:	Abdul Razak Mohammed		
Signed off by:	Tijani Hamza, Country Director		
Date:	16.10.2019	Country/Region/Campaign:	Ghana

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 each year for an evaluation of their impact, known as an 'Effectiveness Review'. During the 2017/18 financial year, the Climate-Resilient Agricultural and Food Systems (CRAFS) project in the northern regions of Ghana was selected for an Effectiveness Review. This project took place in four districts of the Upper East, Northern and Upper West regions, between April 2015 and March 2018, by Oxfam and PAS-Garu, PARED, ProNet North and NANDRIDEP. The CRAFS project aimed at building the resilience of women and men by promoting resilient livelihood activities and improving food supply, while regenerating the natural resource base.

The project activities first aimed at raising awareness throughout the districts on climate change impact, the need to adapt to it, and the restoration of the natural resource base. This included participatory vulnerability risk assessment and dissemination of the results at the district level, provision of sensitization materials to bush burning practices and the broadcasting of radio agricultural programmes with a focus on conservation agriculture practices¹ and climate change adaptation. Climate change is creating more and more difficult conditions to grow food, and CRAFS focused on promoting agricultural practices that would not deteriorate the

¹ Conservation agriculture is defined by the FAO as a 'farming system that promotes maintenance of a permanent soil cover, minimum soil disturbance (i.e. no tillage), and diversification of plant species. It enhances biodiversity and natural biological processes above and below the ground surface, which contribute to increased water and nutrient use efficiency and to improved and sustained crop production'.

resource base further and provide food during both rainy and dry seasons. Diversification of livelihood activities was also promoted, through providing training and inputs for activities that are not dependent on land access and are sustainable from a natural resource management perspective (such as beekeeping or tree nurseries, for example). Protection and management of the natural resource base was also supported through village committees' support.

These activities took place at different scales: district, community, household and individual, women and men. Indeed, the project logic took into account the fact that gender norms manifest in different responsibilities within the household and livelihood activities for women and men, constrained in part by different access to land and access to liquidity to buy inputs.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The Effectiveness Review, for which the fieldwork was carried out in February and March 2018, was aimed at evaluating the success of this project in building resilience capacities. The Effectiveness Review focused on the Northern and Upper East regions.

A quasi-experimental impact evaluation design was used to measure the effect that is causally attributable to – and representative of – the project's intervention. The evaluation design involved comparing the households of project participants to households from nearby communities who are thought to have had similar characteristics to the project participants, before the project was carried out. Because of the high coverage of radio programmes on agricultural practices and climate change (of the shows supported by the project or other similar shows), this review focuses on the impact of CRAFS activities, excluding radio messaging and other wide-coverage messaging (through billboards for example). Similarly, Oxfam and partners are not working in isolation, and participation in any village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) is widespread in the review areas (comparison and project groups), in spite of CRAFS' support of the creation or strengthening of VSLAs.

First, 14 comparable communities were identified following the criteria used for selecting the 10 CRAFS communities at the onset of the project in the Northern and Upper East regions. In the CRAFS communities, a random sample of households whose members had participated in CRAFS was selected, and compared to a random sample of households in the comparison communities.

Within the household, the main women and men decision-makers were surveyed separately for an individual survey, and then together for a household survey. A total of 1,005 households were surveyed, 369 in the CRAS communities and 636 in the comparison ones. 1,962 individuals took part in the survey: 972 men and 990 women, main decision-makers. 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 and individuals surveyed in the CRAFS and comparison communities, to provide additional confidence when estimating the project's impact.

Resilience was assessed through examining 32 characteristics that are thought to be associated with the capacity to absorb, adapt or transform. A list of the resilience indicators, their distribution per capacity, and a breakdown of the results for each is shown in Table 1 of the report. Multi-dimensional indices of resilience, and of resilience capacities were developed at the household level, taking into account household-level characteristics, individual level characteristics for women and men individuals, and intra-household dynamics (through involvement of different individuals in decision-making processes and access to resources).

2. Summary main findings and recommendations

CRAFS had a positive and significant impact on the overall resilience index, at 57 percent on average in the intervention group, while households in the comparison group scored positively on 52 percent of indicators (a difference significant at 1 percent).

It appears that the project did not have a measurable positive impact on absorptive capacity indicators. Only one of the 11 indicators appear to be positive and significant: access to remittances, although this is not directly linked to the project logic. No significant impact is observed on average on diversification of income sources, crop diversification, dietary diversity, availability of food at the beginning of lean season 2018, quantity of food, access to drinking water and feeling of preparedness in case of low rainfall during rainy season or heavy flooding. A negative impact on this last indicator is observed among households whose main decision-maker was a woman in 2014.

The project seems to have had a positive and significant effect on indicators of adaptive capacity through access to credit and control over its use within the household, control over decisions to sell livestock heads within the household and participation in groups (stronger for women-headed households). There is no evidence of impact on average on cattle vaccination, savings, ownership of fungible livestock, productive asset ownership, social support network, adoption of improved climate SMART agricultural practices, knowledge of conservation agricultural practices, knowledge of climate change's impact, understanding of climate change, control over decision to sell livestock heads or attitude towards change. However, among households whose main decision-maker was a woman at the onset of the project, we observe improved ownership of fungible livestock and productive asset ownership, which contributed to building the adaptive capacity of such households in particular.

There is evidence that transformative capacity was built thanks to better awareness of existing regulation, better interaction with district institutions and more control over income within the household (all stronger for women-headed households). While there is no overall impact on women's access to land nor on opinion on women's political role, we have observed better access to land for women among households in which a woman was the main decision-maker at the onset of the project, but a negative impact on opinion on women's political role. In addition, there is no significant impact on attitude towards change, education of children, acceptability of (unpaid) care work being done by men, ability to support a partner in unpaid care work, feeling heard when voicing an issue in village assemblies, belief in collective action's effectiveness and opinion on acceptability of violence inside the household.

When it comes to looking at different steps along the theory of change, we observe that a higher share of respondents received information or training sessions on VSLAs in the CRAFS areas than in the comparison ones, and there is evidence for the VSLAs in CRAFS areas to be working differently from in the comparison communities. Participation in bush fire committees is also a key component of the project logic. Such committees are in place in the comparison areas, and participation is not significantly improved by CRAFS overall (although more women attended meetings of such a committee as a result of the project – not significant but close to the 10 percent threshold).

Overall, climate change awareness is high in both comparison and CRAFS communities. CRAFS's climate change awareness raising activities resulted in better awareness on whether regulation on bush fire was in place at the community level or not among women. Similarly, while participation in village meetings is high for both comparison and CRAFS communities, CRAFS has an impact for both men and women on awareness of community's action plan. Among them, awareness of the plan being built into district and national plan is very different by gender (lower for women respondents than men respondents).

CRAFS has a focus on diversification of livelihood activities, in particular through off-farm activities, which are less constrained for women, and through distribution of small ruminants. This resulted in an impact on decision-making and control over resources within the household; more women have a say in decisions related to livestock raising activities (decisions over the activity itself, and the generated revenue), an area where fewer women are involved than men in the first place.

Wider access to credit and slightly improved access to savings for women and men (although this is not significant) are observed as a result of the project. This enhanced access to credit seems driven by access to credits from VSLAs for both women and men. Hence, CRAFS seems to have enabled better functioning or richer VSLAs (ceiling reached), and/or involvement in several VSLAs for participants, resulting in an enhanced access to credit. The project did not result in larger spent in investments or overall improved access to assets. This raises questions around the amounts of credit or additional revenue obtained as a result of the project, which may not be enough to result in investments. Note that a significant impact for women-headed households on access to savings and livestock ownership is observed, which seems to be a reflection of the targeting focus of the livestock component of the intervention on women-headed households.

There is no evidence that food security, measured by two indicators at the household level, was improved by CRAFS. However, there seems to be evidence for a differential impact for men and women, which will require further investigation (see programme learning considerations): women respondents are significantly more likely to have reduced the size of meals in the seven days prior to the survey (while this indicator is not significantly different among men).

Finally, CRAFS seems to have resulted in an improvement in the natural resource base, as self-assessed by respondents.

PROGRAMME LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

Consider complementary strategies to ensure livelihood activity diversification translates into higher income, access to savings and assets for women and men

CRAFS led to more involvement for women in decision-making over some activities and the revenue generated from these within the household. It also led to improved access to credit for both women and men, but this did not result in more productive asset ownership – in men-headed households, improved wealth or investments. Further exploration is needed to better understand what the amounts borrowed through VSLAs are used for, and if the amounts are sufficient to allow for significant investments. This also raises questions around the revenue generated at household level thanks to the diversification strategy, and for women and men within households. This is particularly critical in households traditionally identified as being men-headed (as we notice an impact on productive asset ownership for women-headed households).

Improved market access for off-farm products (cooperative to improve bargaining power in price negotiation, supported transportation, etc.)² and/or facilitated and safe access to institutions that enable access to credits of higher amounts, may be considered as areas of development for CRAFS.

Challenging social norms and current task distribution within the household when it comes to unpaid care and domestic work is another area to facilitate women's access to income.

² Through the Gendered Enterprise and Markets programme (2014–2018), Oxfam and partners worked on enhancing market linkages, for women in particular, in rural areas in Zambia, Bangladesh and Tajikistan. The final evaluation report will be published and recommendations could be drawn from it on the appropriate approach to develop.

Consider strengthening activities which could lead to a better enforcement of bush fire regulations and tackle root causes behind current occurrences of bush fires

Sixty percent of respondents participate in bush fire committee meetings and, overall, respondents assessed that bush fires have happened less since the rainy season of 2014 and the dry season of 2014–2015 (90 percent in the CRAFS community). CRAFS resulted in higher shares of women being aware of the existence of bush fire regulations, and such regulation seems widely in place (91 percent of respondents reported being aware of it in the CRAFS areas). However, among respondents who are aware of the regulation being in place, approximately a third of respondents are aware of such regulation not having been enforced, women in particular. Bush fires are a source of degradation of natural resources (soil fertility, tree coverage). Oxfam and partners could explore further what are the reasons behind recent bush fire occurrences and which dynamics lead to existing regulations not being enforced. This will enable revision and strengthening of the activities on the matter.

Build on the current integrated approach to enhancing resilience capacities and explore additional areas that could contribute to enhancing well-being further

This review highlights a few additional areas to explore to contribute to enhancing resilience capacities. First, while CRAFS resulted in better land access for women in women-headed households, land access for women within men-headed households is still a major constraint to women's access to revenue from on-farm activities. Second, 80 percent of respondents agree or partially agree that 'violence inside the household can be justified in certain circumstances' in the CRAFS villages (and only 8 percent disagree with the statement). While this review does not explore prevalence of domestic violence, this may be an important aspect to take into account in the project's context.

Consider current barriers to enhancing food security and potential differentiated risks within the household, to improve project strategy on the matter

Food security is a major concern in Ghana's northern regions, and the data show that 82 percent of households were worried about not having enough food during the lean season 2017, that is between April and September. At time of the survey (February–March 2018), two thirds of respondents declared that they had had to reduce the size of meals in the previous seven days because there was not enough food. This was not impacted by the project activities overall. In addition, among women, women from the CRAFS communities were more likely to have reduced size of meals. This needs further investigation to understand what the mechanisms are behind this result (are women reducing the size of meals for themselves only or for the whole household? Was the size of meals initially improved, and then reduced at the time of the survey?) and make sure that future projects take this gendered effect into account.

Take a more strategic approach to evaluation design, looking for synergies between baseline activities and final evaluation ones

To investigate questions around the impact of the project on women and men, this Effectiveness Review deployed a quasi-experimental ex-post methodology. Extensive inputs of project staff, partner staff, the survey team and inhabitants of the project areas were required to identify suitable comparison communities and identification of relevant indicators of resilience capacities. However, it would have been better to have had these discussions before the project activities began. This could have enabled the implementation of a stronger impact evaluation

design if the comparison group had been established before the project started and baseline data had been collected in a large enough number of project and non-project communities.

While inception and baseline activities were key elements of CRAFS design, and several studies were implemented to adapt and monitor the project, a more holistic approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning could have brought these activities together with the final evaluation in a more articulated way.

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?

Generally, the report was well written and concise. The findings and recommendations showed signs of a progressive project and strong assessments.

Following from the above, management has therefore endorsed and accepted the key finding and recommendations from the effectiveness review of the CRAF Project. These have been accepted because they represent the true reflection of the achievements from the implementation of the project as set out in the terms of reference for the review. Secondly, the findings also highlighted key lessons and recommendation that will inform future programming at Oxfam in Ghana. While management would not claim credit for all the impact on the lives of women and men in the project communities, we do acknowledge that because of our interventions, the initiative has leveraged resources and benefits to the communities as well as facilitated a coordinated approach towards building resilience capacities in Northern Ghana. This report has come to provide Oxfam in Ghana foundation for further project effectiveness and by extension program quality and accountability.

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

No

5. Main 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) Ensure that findings and recommendations are taken note of and applied in the implementation in subsequent phases/renewals.
- 2) Publish the findings
- 3) Circulate the final report with project constituents

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

Results will be shared with partners, collaborators and staff and also to the public via the Oxfam website. This report has come to provide Oxfam in Ghana foundation for further project effectiveness and by

extension program quality and accountability. The evidence will inform any future resilience programming in Ghana. Additionally, the evidence will inform the future country strategy.

- 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.

To enhance learning and accountability, Oxfam will share key findings and recommendations during annual monitoring visits to the project partners, local authorities and community representatives. This will be further shared during the program quality review (October 2019) and the annual learning review (March 2020) where partners, local authorities and communities will be present.

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

The team will need support to produce simplified case studies from the evidence that can be shared widely. For example, presentation of the findings and recommendations to the Resilience Knowledge Hub through webinar.

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

No