

Oxfam Management Response

Management Response to the Gendered Enterprise and Markets (GEM) Final Evaluation in Zambia

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| Date: | <i>Date MR signed off</i> | Country/Region/Campaign: | <i>Zambia; SAF Region</i> |

The answers provided below will be published externally as a standalone document to accompany the final evaluation report. Please remember that this should be written in an accessible way for external audiences

1. Overall do the findings of the evaluation concur with the Oxfam expectations or other assessment of the project?

Our view is that findings from the evaluation portray a fair picture of our expectations from the project assessment. This was evidenced through the evaluation process employed in terms of the mixed method approach used to gather perspectives from different project stakeholders, while proven scientific methods of analysis were employed to assess delivery of the different project components. This process gives us confidence that findings from the assessment are a true reflection of the project performance.

2. What areas of the project were particularly effective, and why?

One of the many areas where the project performed effectively was the engagement of private sector firms, which included agriculture input suppliers, service providers and commodity buyers. This contributed largely to improved access to markets by smallholders in the two value chains. We are also confident that the relationships established between smallholders and these market actors will continue in the long term.

The project also did well in promoting women's economic empowerment. This was seen through increased women's involvement in attractive value chains, such as dairy, and increased assertiveness, leadership and decision making both in groups and at household level. It is certain that this empowerment will outlive project life.

Despite a few challenges cited in the evaluation report, the project had on board very committed partners that connected very well with the communities where the project was implemented. This goodwill allowed for smooth delivery of the project, while engagement of government officials, the private sector and other stakeholders was also made easy.

3. What areas of the project were less effective, and why?

While the project took significant steps to engage with policy makers through the multi-stakeholder forum, our view is that we could have done better at influencing policies around the soya bean and dairy value chains for more systemic impact.

4. Please comment on the quality of the final evaluation report and findings.

- We have no doubt that the final evaluation report and findings therein are of good quality and give a fair reflection of the findings from the project.
- To strengthen the narrative in some sections, it would have been better to also make reference to project documents, such as annual reports.

5. Please comment about the evaluation process (e.g. design, fieldwork, participation, communication with evaluation team, etc.), and any suggestions for how to improve the conduct of evaluations in future.

- Our view is that the evaluation process was well conducted from the design, data collection and dissemination of findings with active participation of project staff from the country programme, project partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. This provided an opportunity for input and feedback through the whole process.
- In future, we would recommend that the time lag between data collection and sharing of reports is shortened to ensure that feedback on the reports is provided in a timely manner. This would also help to inform future programming in country.

6. What conclusions/recommendations from the evaluation report will be taken forward, and how?

- We see multi-stakeholder forums in the provinces as a key mechanism in linking our local initiatives to the national level. The need for greater consideration of the sustainability and composition of the forums is a useful recommendation to the Country Programme that we will take forward with interest.
- We agree that changing social norms takes time. In GEM, we endeavoured to take an integrated approach to addressing issues of gender-based violence and the disproportionate care burden on women working with the Women Rights programme. We have continued working with local structures, such as traditional leaders, schools and the church, to address these social challenges.
- The recommendation on value chain selection resonates well with our learning in other projects where short term price fluctuations on crops such as vegetables were less disruptive than on field crops with a single annual growing season. The fact that crops with shorter growing periods tend to have stronger impact on income compared to crops grown once a year further supports this recommendation.

7. Are there any conclusions/recommendations that are not agreed with or will not be acted upon, and why?

We find all the recommendations in the evaluation report very useful. Our interest is to determine practical ways to use them in our current and future programmes.

8. Are there any additional reflections that may have emerged during the evaluation but were not the subject of the evaluation?

The idea that the project promoted diversification of enterprises by farmers is one such reflection. Before the project, farmers heavily relied on the cultivation of maize and a few other crops. As a mechanism to increase resilience to both economic and climatic shocks, the project encouraged production of a wide range of crops.

The social support systems that the project contributed to through producer groups, as highlighted in the evaluation report, contributed to a good sense of belonging among participating farmers.