

## Oxfam Management Response

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

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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?

Considering the progresses against impact indicators the findings of the evaluation are quite satisfactory. It has reflected the overall results obtained by the project. The achievements and challenges are well identified. But in some areas, it could be articulated and analysed more distinctly. For example, the evaluation has discussed about the policy changes, but it could be similarly important to analyse the changes in the behaviours, attitudes of the key stakeholders and practices where the project also had a lot of efforts. In case of multi-stakeholder forum, it has only mentioned about what it is doing. But it could be worth mentioning the challenges of establishing the multi-stakeholder forum and the strategies taken to ensure its sustainability.

In case of access to finance, the evaluation didn't take into consideration the complexity of geographical contexts of the project location. There is not a single evidence of access to formal finance of the char community before implementing the project. But, the project has created evidence of accessing to formal finance by the small holder community. There is not clear analysis of how and why the project has achieved this. It was the result of continuous advocacy by the project staff and community. Moreover, the project has resulted in another project (Business Partnership Platform - BPP funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs of Trade – DFAT of the Australian Government) with active engagement of the private sector to ensure the formal access to finance of the same milk producing community as well as access to renewable energy that has not been mentioned in the evaluation report. It was the result of project interventions as the project has been able to graduate the milk producing community and make them ready for formal finance to further flourish their dairy business.

In some areas, the report has not reflected all the interventions or measures taken by the project to address some specific areas that were innovative and appropriate for certain contexts. For example, to mitigate the disaster risks and climate change hazards the project initiated number of semi-structural interventions in collaboration with the local government. That was not mentioned in the report. In addition, it was a key outcome of the local level advocacy conducted by the community people themselves to engage the local government authority with the development processes. Apart from that, Milk Collection Centre (MCC) and Feed and Fodder Banks (FFB) were innovative and effective business models for market development in the hard-to-reach char areas. The report could better analyse or articulate the effectiveness, challenges and areas of improvements to make the interventions more functional and sustainable. The Milk Chilling Plant, the key example for private sector engagement was not reflected in the report which could be highlighted for uplifting the forward

milk market in that local context and ways of working with private sector to engage them in the development processes.

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

GEM was a market based project to create examples and evidences for connecting and linking the isolated community with mainstream markets. The private sector engagement was one of key area of achievements where the project has effectively engaged the leading private sector companies in both forward and backward markets. It was also very much effective to sensitise the government duty bearers to provide their services in the community. As a result, the project has generated the evidence of increasing the household income considering the income quality and quantity in an appreciable manner. To create the national level advocacy platform for influencing policy and practices, multi-stakeholder forum is an innovative and effective model. The project has also created examples of women leadership and their engagement in economic activities through MCCs, FFBs, PGs and CBOs. The RCA tools has enabled to sensitize the broader range of stakeholders including community people. The project is also effective to generate the evidence of women decision making power both in day-to-day household level as well as community level.

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

The project should have more focus on the sub-national level multi-stake holder forums to make them more functional and sustainable. The leadership of the forums should be on private sector and milk producing community.

In terms of climate change and disaster management, the project has emphasized more on local level advocacy rather than national level. To address the climate change issues, the project has focused on adaptation approaches where mitigation techniques were not so evident.

In terms of the sustainability of the innovative business models like MCCs and FFBs, it is still challenging as the businesses are headed and led by the women.

As GEM was not a market development project and has been implemented under the REECALL flagship program in Bangladesh, market system influencing is still to be worked out with strong focus on Value Chain based market development approach.

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

The quality of final evaluation is satisfactory. It has taken into consideration almost all the issues for which the project was designed. The indicators are addressed and analysed rightly. However, there are some areas which could be focused more that is mentioned here as mentioned above.

**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.**

The design, field work and overall methodology of the evaluation was appreciable and participatory. There was a national consultancy team along with the global team who collected data from the field. The quality of data was satisfactory. But, in some cases it was found that the national consultancy team has communicated with some of the stakeholders via online to collect qualitative data. Moreover, the feedback on the draft report from the country team were not addressed and incorporated in a considerable manner.

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

The recommendations of the evaluation report are important. The recommendations can be used for internal and external learning through publication, learning and dissemination events and workshops, media publication etc. Among the recommendations, the one related to multi-stakeholder forum would be taken forward by 'engaging more private sector and government actors, develop an action plan with tangible milestones, and create a fund for its future activities'. Access to credit related recommendation would also be taken forward.

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

The recommendations are overall agreed, but in some cases appropriate articulation is needed. In terms of improving access to market, the project has undertaken a lot of interventions like establishment of MCCs, FFBs, Chilling Plants etc by establishing functional linkage with the private sectors. But the recommendation has not reflected that. The project has faced some sort of challenges for implementing innovative business models that were essential for smoothing the access to markets. It is due to ensuring the women participation and empowerment, and geographical contexts of the project. So, here the recommendation should be on how to address the women's access to market related issues and issues considering remote geographical contexts rather than comments on project's market development approaches.

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

N/A