

Oxfam Management Response

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

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Date:	<i>12/11/2018</i>	Country/Region/Campaign:	<i>Tajikistan</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?

In overall terms, the GEM evaluation design, process and execution was rigorous and relevant. The evaluation has made a very significant contribution to the learning process and towards the accountability of the project to its stakeholders. The evaluation results are mostly aligned to the anticipated impact of the project, as envisioned by the project implementation team. It was gratifying to see that the evaluation reported a positive impact of the project on all the major goals. There was a shortfall in the impact related to core gender indicators, which could be due to design flaws but most likely due to the short duration of the project. Gender norms and attitudes (like decision making) shift more gradually and are influenced by several factors, many of which are beyond the scope of a women in agriculture development programme. In a nutshell, the result of the project has generated a solid body of evidence that can be used for future programme design and for influencing and advocacy.

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

The project was very effective in building the capabilities of women smallholder farmers to self-organize and claim their rights in developing resilient livelihoods. The women farmers' institution facilitated by the project directly supported women to access, manage and control resources connected with production and marketing of agriculture produce. The knowledge and adoption of new climate-resilient agriculture has generated a wider impact in the region, supporting Oxfam's larger programme in resilient livelihoods in the country. Women involved in producer groups, developed confidence to successfully negotiate with local government and with market agencies to claim equitable return from their produce. The economic empowerment achieved by the women is likely to have a lasting impact on changing gender roles in a country where economic and social discrimination against women is widespread and pervasive.

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

As the evaluation results have indicated, project impact on the capacity of the women to participate in decision making at household level was limited and was still at the lower level in the neighbourhood and community. The project focus was largely on building the organization of women smallholder farmers and in transferring business skills for more a profitable agriculture value chain. There were no defined goals on indicators beyond economic empowerment, such as social and political empowerment, which probably play a major role in leveraging women's ability to voice their demands and claim their rights. The impact on building an equitable market system was limited. Markets are

governed by a complex mix of formal policies and informal norms, and in the context of Tajikistan, markets are notoriously under-performing because of the weak enforcement of property rights and a convoluted tax regime that makes any reform process extremely challenging. In such overarching conditions, the project focused on addressing issues like wider and more equitable distribution of market information, which helped women farmers to achieve better profitability. However, for a lasting impact, systemic reforms in the policies and regulations governing the market will be essential.

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

The overall quality of the final evaluation report and findings is remarkable. Institutionalizing such a rigorous approach to evaluation in all Oxfam programmes is highly desirable. This will help us to report impact accurately and reliably, derive solid learning for future and support agendas for influencing and advocacy. The Management Information System, developed for tracking project performance, complemented the evaluation process very well. The evaluation helped in developing a high quality learning document and human stories, which were disseminated to stakeholders.

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 of evaluation was of a high standard. I would recommend keeping the control group size smaller as beyond certain level (with same confidence level and confidence interval) adding more to the size of sample has a negligible impact on statistical accuracy. This will save on resources. Another area for attention is attribution analysis, which is important in evaluation design where treatment and control groups are assigned after the completion of a project. This helps in overcoming the familiar limitation of self-selection bias in such designs.

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

Using a gender lens, we will put stronger emphasis on enterprise development and markets to have a deeper impact on creating sustainable livelihoods. Based on the lessons of the project, Oxfam is already in process of rolling out an ambitious enterprise cluster development programme in both the north and south of the country. The women's producer groups will be the main drivers of the emerging enterprise cluster, with a key role for the private sector in infusing equity and expertise to build the enterprise. A new Public-Private Partnership model is being developed where local government contributes infrastructure, and private companies work with women producers to kick-start processing and value addition enterprise in the new regions.

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

None

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

None