

ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE AND RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

Thinking and acting for transformative change

This discussion paper helps us to better understand formal and informal accountable governance structures in resilient development and how resilient development programming contributes to transformative and systems-level change. Four emerging themes were identified as part of the research: accountable governance; systems; transformative change; and partnerships. Between them they paint a picture of how Oxfam builds resilient development through accountable governance processes, which has various implications for what we do and how we work.

Oxfam Discussion Papers

Oxfam Discussion Papers are written to contribute to public debate and to invite feedback on development and humanitarian policy issues. They are 'work in progress' documents, and do not necessarily constitute final publications or reflect Oxfam policy positions. The views and recommendations expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Oxfam.

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program. The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government. For more information, or to comment on this paper, email Elsa Carnaby elsac@oxfam.org.au

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| SUMMARY | 3 |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| 2 LEARNING FROM THE LITERATURE | 5 |
| WHAT GOVERNANCE IS / GOVERNANCE AS A SYSTEM..... | 5 |
| EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS / ACCOUNTABILITY | 6 |
| CONNECTEDNESS / HOW STAKEHOLDERS ARE LINKED | 6 |
| PROCESS / HOW THE SYSTEM BEHAVES..... | 6 |
| 3 EMERGING THEMES | 7 |
| ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE | 7 |
| SYSTEMS..... | 9 |
| PARTNERSHIPS | 11 |
| TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE | 13 |
| 4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK | 16 |
| WORKING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE | 16 |
| UNDERSTANDING CHANGE | 16 |
| WAYS OF WORKING..... | 17 |
| WORKING WITH DIFFERENCE | 17 |
| THINKING BEYOND TOOLS | 17 |
| WHERE LEARNING FITS | 17 |
| WHAT MORE TO LEARN..... | 18 |
| ANNEX | 19 |
| A DIVERSITY OF TOOLS AND METHODS..... | 19 |
| REFERENCES | 21 |

SUMMARY

This discussion paper was commissioned by Oxfam Australia and supported by the Australian Government to better understand formal and informal accountable governance structures in resilient development and how resilient development programming contributes to transformative and systems-level change. This is based on the belief that a purposeful and shared strategy is required to enable systems-level change that builds resilience at scale and addresses the inequality of risk and vulnerability.

Four emerging themes were identified as part of the research: accountable governance; systems; transformative change; and partnerships. Between them they paint a picture of how Oxfam builds resilient development through accountable governance processes, which has various implications for what we do and how we work.

First, while working at a systems-level is complex, it is essential if our work is to contribute to change over time and across multiple spaces, contexts and actors. Second, while transformative capacity and change needs to remain a priority, we need to recognise and value different perspectives on what is considered transformative within and across contexts. Third, working with partners to bridge and connect systems, levels, spaces and actors is a key strategy for supporting change. This highlights how Oxfam needs to partner purposefully and further unpack the capabilities and skills that are required to initiate, navigate and facilitate a diverse range of relationships and stakeholders to achieve change at scale. Fourth, there are many different entry points and dimensions which affect the focus and nature of the change for resilient development, and we should be comfortable with these differences. Fifth, developing and resourcing intentional reflection and learning processes and approaches is central to supporting and understanding how change happens at a systems-level and what our contributions are to those changes. If systems-level change requires processes that are agile, adaptive, iterative and non-linear, we may need to see a shift beyond project-centric monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) to more programmatic level learning about how change happens over time. Last, all this points to areas where further learning and experimentation would be valuable. This raises questions about how we learn about what works, in what combinations, with what kind of resourcing, contributing to what kind of shifts and recognising whose perspectives inform how we value and understand change.

1 INTRODUCTION

Oxfam's resilient development projects and programs¹ work with civil society, communities, governments and other actors to facilitate shifts in power, strengthen accountable governance and influence structural change. Traditionally, resilient development initiatives have focussed on community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR). A purposeful and shared strategy is required to enable systems-level change that builds resilience at scale and addresses the inequality of risk and vulnerability.

There appears to be limited learning and evidence of the contribution of resilient development initiatives to systems-level changes in power structures, policy, regulation, practice, behaviour and social norms. Oxfam is therefore carrying out a phased learning enquiry² to explore accountable governance in resilient development projects and effective strategies for achieving systems-level change. Oxfam began working on this issue having noticed that resilient development programs were including influencing work more frequently in their programming design and implementation. It was important to understand how and why this was happening, in order to maximise learning to support more strategic approaches for systems-level change.

The first phase of enquiry (in 2018) provided analysis and learning from practice about why and how a focus on accountable governing outcomes emerges in resilient development projects.³ It explored influencing tactics in resilient development projects by analysing Oxfam's policy and program guidance and practice-based literature on resilient development, together with experiences of projects in four Oxfam country programs: Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vanuatu. This investigation identified three 'lenses' for analysis:

- Levels of governance: representing *where* Oxfam is seeking to influence and strengthen governance within resilient development programs.
- Domains of change: understanding *what* outcomes might contribute to resilient development.
- Influencing tactics: understanding *how* Oxfam and its partners are seeking to bring about systemic change for improved governance within resilient development programs.

The research undertaken in Phase 1 was a driver for shifting Oxfam's perspective and thinking from a focus on influencing as a strategy for enabling a change in discreet outcomes to thinking about contributions beyond the project level towards systems-level change and accountable governing. The second phase (June-September 2019) aimed at better understanding formal and informal accountable governance structures in resilient development and how resilient development programming contributes to transformative and systems-level change. This included questions about change pathways, stakeholder relationships and capacities to contribute to change at scale, and changes to norms and practices. The research comprised:

- a short review of key published literature relating to resilience and accountable governance;
- a review of Oxfam program documentation and related material most relevant to the research (focusing on the Mekong regional water governance program and Oxfam Pakistan's programs on water governance);
- interviews and group discussions with key informants from across Oxfam (and one external who has worked with Oxfam);⁴
- two collective webinars (referred to as 'sense-making exercises') with a wide range of staff from Oxfam Australia and country partners; and
- feedback from expert informants within and outside Oxfam.

The sense-making process provided an opportunity to review, discuss and develop the ideas that have emerged to date. Participants in the two webinars found the research to be helpful in framing and discussing relevant issues, and the act of engaging different stakeholders created a platform for ongoing reflection. This report summarises key issues raised during the research and identifies areas where further reflection is needed to expand Oxfam's understanding of accountable governance and resilient development. This was a relatively small-scale study,

drawing on a selection of the most relevant recent literature and a sample of key informants and webinar participants: it should be seen as a starting point for future research, analysis and discussion.

It is anticipated that a third phase learning inquiry will work with country teams on the transition from research into practice, with particular focus on determining the resources, capacities and skills needed by Oxfam staff and partners to effectively contribute to systems-level changes for accountable resilient development outcomes.

The enquiry is based on applied, collaborative, action-based research. The learning is 'emergent': i.e. relatively open-ended, evolving and adapting as it progresses, creating spaces for ongoing reflection, dialogue and questioning. It seeks to bridge practice and analysis, identifying 'critical touch points' for progress in a way that is useful for operational programs. Learning is an iterative process of thinking and reflection. Ideas are developed and tested, analysis and findings are reviewed and teams regularly 'check in' on their analysis. This process seeks to make abstract concepts more understandable and stimulate 'almost intuitive' adaptation of thinking and practice throughout the project cycle. It also stimulates discussion about alternative ways of thinking about resilient development and implementing initiatives to achieve it.

The findings presented below draw on all of the research: the literature review, key informant interviews (KII) and webinar discussions. They potentially have wider implications for how Oxfam goes about its programming, how it learns, where it fits within larger systems and what is realistic and achievable. As expanded below, four key themes or 'areas of enquiry' emerged as significant from this second phase of research: (1) accountable governance; (2) systems; (3) transformation; and (4) partnerships. These are outlined and discussed below, together with implications for programming approaches, tools and methods in different contexts.

2 LEARNING FROM THE LITERATURE

In preparation for the interviews and group discussions, an initial literature review was undertaken to identify understandings of 'accountable governance' for resilient development. This was based on a search of academic literature since 2015 using combinations of the terms "accountable", "governance", "resilience" and "resilient development": 21 documents were initially selected for review, subsequently reduced to 11 documents that were particularly relevant and informative.

The literature review identified four main themes as particularly relevant to accountable governance for resilient development: what governance is/governance as a system; equity and inclusiveness/accountability; connectedness/how stakeholders are linked; and process/how the system behaves.

WHAT GOVERNANCE IS / GOVERNANCE AS A SYSTEM

Governance has been described as 'the structures and processes by which societies share power'.⁵ Progress towards accountable governance and change requires understanding governance as a system resulting from the interaction of many different actors, institutions, stakeholders, information flows, patterns of influence and incentives. Governance is founded on multi-stakeholder involvement, including both formal and informal institutions, as well as rules and norms guiding social and organisational behaviour. It is also multi-faceted, comprising laws, regulations, negotiations, elections, consultations, protests and other decision-making processes. Working with or within a governance system requires more emphasis on process, problem solving and investment in long-term efforts to build trust and achieve change.

Accountable governance systems are multi-layered and polycentric (i.e. with multiple centres of authority) and have distributed decision making. They have legitimacy (for example through

democratic structures) and they are adaptive, making ongoing changes at different levels and times. There is capacity for self-organisation, adaptability and experimentation. Institutions are willing to reform and seek to avoid institutional path dependency and lock-in effects. In accountable governance systems, authorities are obliged to provide information and explain decisions and actions or inactions and can be sanctioned if they fail to do so. Many principles and mechanisms support this: transparency, independent monitoring, separation of powers, legal recourse, budget control and an active media.

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS / ACCOUNTABILITY

The system ensures delivery of effective social, environmental and economic outcomes. Accountable governance and its stakeholders aim to achieve more inclusion and aspire to social justice as the central goal of good governance. Protecting rights and pursuing social justice are key actions in building capacities to manage resilience. Accountable authorities who pursue the just distribution of benefits and involuntary risks, increase the adaptive capacity of vulnerable groups and society as a whole.

All social actors (public and private sectors, civil society) participate and are represented in public life on equal terms. There is awareness of barriers to participation in decision-making and efforts are made to overcome these. Power relations are acknowledged and there is awareness of underlying issues of power and representation. Stakeholders accept their responsibilities.

CONNECTEDNESS / HOW STAKEHOLDERS ARE LINKED

Communication is open and transparent, allowing for discussion and debate. There is mutual learning, communication and networking between multiple actors. Collective learning processes, sometimes starting from technical issues, can build trust and open space for dialogue on aspects of governance where there may be competition or dispute (for example relating to representation, authority and accountability). Roles are defined and agreed, and the system and its stakeholders are responsive to dynamic risk contexts of uncertainty and complexity. Large-scale or transboundary co-operation connects multiple stakeholders horizontally and vertically, builds relationships and works across different scales: this is valuable in slowing or avoiding crises and obtaining resources.

PROCESS / HOW THE SYSTEM BEHAVES

The system addresses strategic plans and day-to-day practices through diverse strategies, offering choices and flexibility (and managing the disruption this can cause). Resilience is addressed as a 'process of negotiation' (Harris et al. 2018) rather than a definite goal or outcome. There is a willingness to reinforce or to challenge norms, which may lead to fundamental changes. It is acknowledged that strategies and values may be contested and that trade-offs are essential and inevitable (for example between short- and long-term benefits; between different social groups and interests). To mitigate this, there is iterative engagement between different actors and interests across spatial and temporal scales.

Governance systems need to be both stable and flexible/adaptable, but the dynamic tension this creates is recognised, together with the need for productive balance between stability and flexibility. Systems are self-correcting and enable innovation, especially to address difficult problems (for example through policy entrepreneurs, new narratives and interpretations). Ongoing institutional maintenance is required because institutions are neither static nor permanent: they adapt through dynamic institutional creation, maintenance and disruption. Decentralisation without accountability may reduce capacity to manage resilience.

3 EMERGING THEMES

The research process identified four key emerging themes: accountable governance; systems; transformative change; and partnerships, which are discussed below.

ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

Key findings

- Accountability should be seen as an essential and key feature of all forms of governance.
- Power relationships and how power is exercised are key issues in the governance of risk and resilience.
- Accountable governance is a key process supporting pathways to resilience.
- More thought should be given to what 'accountable governance' means in risk and resilient development contexts.
- There does not appear to be a common understanding of accountable governance within Oxfam and its partners.
- Oxfam is deploying a wide and increasingly varied range of strategies to engage with accountable governance structures and improve enabling environments for change.

Oxfam's work is grounded in ideas of participation, voice and empowerment. It is essential to understand how power is exercised and risk is governed. Governance comprises 'the structures and processes by which societies share power'.⁶ It is founded on multi-stakeholder involvement, including formal and informal institutions, as well as rules and norms guiding social and organisational behaviour. It is multi-faceted, comprising a range of decision-making processes (for example negotiations, consultations, elections, protests, and regulations). The literature review indicated that working with or within a governance system requires more emphasis on process, problem solving and investment in long-term efforts to build trust and achieve change.

The concept of accountable governance (or governing) increasingly appears in resilience and climate change literature and Oxfam's own literature and discourse.⁷ In Oxfam's Framework for Resilient Development (FRD), 'accountable governing' (defined as 'processes that secure accountable and enabling states and institutions') is one of six social change processes that support pathways to resilient development.⁸ The Framework deliberately uses the term 'accountable' alongside 'governing' to capture Oxfam's ideals of accountability to citizens regarding risks, capacities and vulnerabilities: therefore, Oxfam programs seek to hold stakeholders and other development actors, such as government and private sector, accountable.

Accountable governance leads to policy change and indirectly to changes in social norms and practices – and hence creates pathways to resilient development outcomes. Progress towards accountable governance and change requires understanding governance as a system resulting from the interaction of many different actors, institutions, stakeholders, information flows, patterns of influence and incentives. It is an important counterweight to the abstract, theoretical nature of some resilience and systems-thinking, which often fails to recognise that resilience is related to individuals, groups and places, it is not power-neutral, and it may not be distributed equally in society.⁹

Within Oxfam, it is recognised that there are many kinds of accountable governance structures and processes, and many potential ways of working with them. Nevertheless, key informants indicated that the term 'accountable governance' is still often seen as unclear and/or abstract by donors and within Oxfam itself, where staff may have difficulty in configuring the concept and what it means for implementation. There does not appear to be a common understanding of accountable governance within Oxfam and its partners, who tend to talk in more general terms

about 'governance'. Further exploration of this may be required to fully understand why this is the case. More thought should be given to what 'accountable governance' means in risk and resilient development contexts. Key informant (KI) conversations on the subject raised issues of civic space, participation and inequality as possible entry points to further exploration. Discussions during this research suggest that a more operational framing may be helpful, looking more at how to support or interact with accountable governance systems in different contexts. Accountability should be seen as an essential and key feature of all forms of governance rather than a property of particular governance types. All stakeholders should be engaged and accountable and all stakeholder relationships should embody some degree of accountability. This raises the question of accountable governance as a context-dependent concept. It may be that ideas of both governance and accountability have to be re-examined in different contexts. This could be seen as positive, in that stakeholders actively engage rather than just accepting existing definitions.

Key issues in the governance of risk and resilience are; power relationships and dynamics over time; how power is exercised (which is linked to voice, empowerment, knowledge and information); and who is responsible to their own constituencies and other stakeholder groups. In general, more learning is needed about different actors and their relationships over time and across different governance spaces. Oxfam deploys a variety of power and gender analysis tools and methods in its programming, enabling learning, participation and action. This was described as a pragmatic, grounded approach, seeking to ensure that power analysis captures local realities. At the same time there were calls for deeper and more focused power analysis that could be used to support more targeted interventions and stakeholders, although it was not clear what these might consist of.

Oxfam is deploying a wide and increasingly varied range of strategies to engage with accountable governance structures. Traditional (linear) approaches started by implementing projects and programs on the ground at household and local levels, then scaling up impact and using the results to inform advocacy, with formal government institutions as influencing targets. Now a wider range of approaches have emerged, focusing more on unpacking government and other (formal or informal) governance structures and improving enabling environments for change. It is not clear as to why this has evolved. This seems to be more a way of thinking than a precisely defined process. It is taking a broad view of everyone who might be involved and thinking about when, how, and if to engage with them. A frequently cited example of this is the Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) program in Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique, which adopted an intermediary role, seeking to strengthen relationships and co-ordination mechanisms between government institutions, non-government organisations (NGOs) and development partners, using social learning, multi-stakeholder dialogue and other processes. This led to more joined-up approaches on the ground and significantly reduced the risks associated with climate change and disasters.

Accountable governance is also seen (in the words of one key informant) as 'relational governance'. Relationships and the associated rights of partners and communities to be seen and heard are at the heart of governance systems. There are multiple entry points for accountable governance initiatives and arguably a range of potential roles for Oxfam. For example, in Pakistan there has been a three-year process of 'structured influencing' by Oxfam at all levels of water governance from the National Disaster Management Authority and Ministry of Climate Change down to district level. Oxfam Pakistan's work with government is part leadership, part strategic partnership; it also involves institutional strengthening and capacity building. The Mekong Regional Water Governance Program's (MRWGP) strategic approach promotes more equitable and inclusive water governance decisions in the Mekong river basin by enabling communities and civil society – particularly, women, indigenous people and people with disabilities – to engage with networks, governments, the private sector, and regional institutions, to advocate for their needs and rights in water governance decisions.

It appears that Oxfam is playing more of an enabling (and less visible) role rather than leading and implementing directly. For example, the MRWGP is seeking to find ways to bring together consortia or partnerships without seeking a leading role for itself, so that partners can continue to strengthen their ability to advocate for more inclusive water governance. This shift in Oxfam's role is said by some key informants to be partly due to the localisation agenda, and in some places to diminishing civil society space, but it also puts more emphasis on Oxfam's convening roles (for example making and supporting connections, creating spaces for policy dialogue, convening stakeholders, brokering agreements) and involvement in alliances, forums, networks and consortia (which become important mediums of change, enabling voices to be magnified,

and building coalitions of advocacy across boundaries); and linking local issues and debates to national, regional and global levels.

This also implies greater emphasis on development of strategic, long-term perspectives, together with building trust, for example, through participatory decision-making processes, collaborative ways of working, transparency, and in-depth collaborative learning cycles and reporting. Significant resources and time are required, based on understanding of what changes are realistic and what strategies, interventions and skills are needed to achieve them. Flexible funding and grant-making arrangements can support such processes.

Oxfam is trying to improve its understanding of processes in resilience and transformation practice. The literature and KII's indicate that such processes should be agile, adaptive, iterative, and additionally non-linear while happening at different speeds. There should be willingness to innovate, a long-term vision and broader framing of issues, strategic thinking and interactive learning. Making this shift in approach takes time and requires a long-range view of what changes are likely, and what strategies, interventions and skills are needed. This process nearly always involves tackling power relationships and dynamics.

SYSTEMS

Key findings

- Oxfam seeks to improve its understanding of systems, how it can contribute to change at a systems-level, and what a systems-approach means for its ways of working.
- Oxfam is moving beyond the boundaries of traditional projects and programs towards a broader, more fluid approach informed by systems-thinking.
- Oxfam works with multiple systems of different types, at different levels and scales, playing an important convening role; it is putting more emphasis on connections across systems; multi-stakeholder partnership strategies and institutional strengthening and capacity building.
- Oxfam's ability to manage the complexity of relationships is key to credibility and success.
- Whilst seeing the 'big picture' is essential to understanding systems and system change, it can often be difficult to see the whole system or identify clearly Oxfam's role within that system.

All human societies and their institutions exist within linked social and ecological systems that are complex, adaptive and inherently unpredictable.¹⁰ Systems are constantly in flux and may have 'multiple possible development pathways or trajectories'.¹¹ Academic research suggests there is also a high degree of ambiguity and unpredictability in complex and dynamic systems. KII's and webinar participants agreed that more thinking is needed on how Oxfam's work can contribute to positive systems change.

Oxfam works with multiple systems of different types, at different levels and scales. Some are very large-scale, such as the MRWGP, which is relatively unusual for Oxfam in being transboundary, covering several countries in the Mekong river basin and engaging with regionally focused bodies, national governments and civil society organisations, as well as seeking to include the voices of indigenous communities. The MRWGP's strategic approach is to enable more equitable and inclusive water governance decisions in the Mekong river basin by enabling communities and civil society – particularly, women, indigenous people and people with disabilities – to engage with networks, governments, the private sector, and regional institutions to advocate for their needs and rights in water governance decisions. The strategy is designed to provide principles and spaces for work in the Mekong Region as a whole, to lay out the priorities and approaches which need to shape Oxfam's water governance activities, and to enable Oxfam and its partners to respond to emerging needs and opportunities in a strategically coherent way.

Oxfam plays an important convening role in making and supporting connections; creating spaces for policy dialogue; bringing stakeholders together; brokering agreements; involvement in alliances, forums, networks and consortia (which are important mediums of change, enabling voices to be magnified); and linking issues and debates across local, national, regional and global levels. Oxfam's ability to manage this complexity of relationships is key to credibility and success. It also requires more emphasis on developing strategic and long-term perspectives; relationships and building trust; collaborative working; participatory decision-making processes; in-depth learning cycles and transparency. Significant investment of resources and time are also required.

Oxfam is beginning to move beyond the linear and results-driven boundaries of traditional projects and programs towards a broader, more fluid approach informed by systems-thinking. Systems often lack a clear shape and form, or definable boundaries; and actors in the system may have shifting roles. Oxfam is seeking to improve its understanding of systems, how it can contribute to change at a systems-level, and what a systems-approach means for its ways of working.

Whilst seeing the 'big picture' is essential to understand systems and system change, in practice it can often be difficult to see or delineate ('unpack') the whole system, or to identify clearly Oxfam's role within that system. Project documents capture only a part of this and KIIs acknowledged that the abstract term 'system' can be difficult to understand. Systems must be set into actual contexts (social, economic, environmental, etc.) to be more understandable to staff and partners. It was also acknowledged that it can be very difficult to see a system in its entirety (what does it mean to be part of a 'system'?) and it was therefore important to focus on different actors' abilities to innovate and adapt within systems, or on specific parts of the system where change is possible. This is a rational approach where resources are limited, and efforts must be focused. The importance of undertaking power, political economy and stakeholder analysis was identified frequently in the KIIs and sense-making exercises and this is clearly widespread, but it was not clear from the conversations exactly how these analyses feed into programming and practice. This needs further consideration to more fully understand the implications for practice.

As projects evolve, it is notable that they tend to develop a more 'organic' analysis of systems' dynamics, complexity, power relationships and influence, which can help programs to add value. It is not always clear as to what drives or enables this process of evolution, however it shows a shift in thinking and approach over time. Programs build up layers of analysis over time to progress from local- to systems-level perspectives. An example is the urban resilience program in Bangladesh: this began with conventional participatory vulnerability and capacity analysis (PVCA) addressing flooding and blocked drains; then developed to work on household rubbish collection and disposal; and from this moved on to consider broader rights and responsibilities relating to waste management and engaged in dialogue with local government. Processes such as these are accompanied by shifts in mind-sets: looking beyond short-term interventions to more fundamental issues and systems-perspectives. Nevertheless, work to make livelihoods more resilient by communities is an essential element of interventions, to complement awareness-raising and capacity building. This may help to keep projects 'grounded' by anchoring them in the everyday realities of poor and vulnerable communities.

Engaging with complex systems requires a range of adaptive strategies for working with diverse governance structures and improving enabling environments. Oxfam is putting more emphasis on connections across systems (vertical, horizontal, multi-tiered); multi-stakeholder partnership strategies at different governance levels; and institutional strengthening and capacity building. This involves balancing and linking efforts at community and larger systems-levels.

As webinar participants pointed out, Oxfam as an institution with multiple partnerships globally; it is therefore both a system in and of itself while being part of a system wherever it engages locally. It is important to understand this when working towards changes in policy, attitudes and practice within the organisation. However, the question does not appear to have been given much attention within Oxfam. Further reflection on Oxfam as a system and its possible effects could therefore be helpful.

PARTNERSHIPS

Key findings

- Oxfam works with many other actors at different scales; much of its work is facilitating partnerships and engaging different stakeholders.
- Partnership building and maintenance is challenging, requiring particular skills in negotiation, facilitation, communication and networking.
- Oxfam needs to be both strategic and flexible in forming and sustaining partnerships.
- Working with communities and their organisations remains central to Oxfam's work. Community disaster organisations remain key partners on the ground and Oxfam is effective in promoting greater inclusiveness in community planning and decision making.
- Oxfam may need to adopt a more strategic approach towards understanding, communicating and working with (or against) private sector actors at all levels in the context of resilient development and accountable governance.
- Oxfam needs to consider how to engage with a much more diverse range of actors, particularly those that are informal, emergent and spontaneous (for example digital communities and new social movements).

Partnerships underpin systems and governance regimes, acting as connectors that allow Oxfam to work within and across systems. A recent study of Oxfam's resilience work identified multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key delivery mechanism for resilience, together with the importance of engaging a wider range of development actors, while developing platforms and alliances, and expanding vertical and horizontal linkages.¹² Oxfam's approach to development in the past has been characterised as relatively linear: beginning with individual projects, then scaling up these initiatives, and finally drawing on their achievements for advocacy. More recently there has been a shift of approach towards developing partnership strategies with (and within) governance systems; and on widening the range of partners involved. A prime example of this is the ACCRA program which, instead of seeing government as a lobbying target, sought to 'unpack' government structures and engage local and national government institutions as partners in long-term relationships. Capacities and trust among the different stakeholders were enhanced through working together on issues and making connections across ministries and levels (the process was also assisted by having seven years of flexible funding from DFID).

Oxfam works with many other actors (principally national and local government, civil society organisations and communities) at different scales (regional, national, local) in a layered approach. A good example is the MRWGP, which has established good relationships with over 40 partners (civil society organisations, river networks, academic and research institutes, government agencies, the private sector, communities). The MRWGP also works with government agencies on water governance at regional, national and local levels. This scale of partnership is seen as encouraging to donors, such as DFAT, because mobilisation and engagement can be quickly facilitated by and through Oxfam. It also appears that more and more national and sub-national forums and networks on DRR and resilience are becoming established, often with extensive organisational memberships: these are a potentially powerful strategic resource.

Much of Oxfam's work is facilitating partnerships and engaging different stakeholders. Oxfam needs to be strategic and flexible in forming and sustaining partnerships, which is acknowledged to be challenging. Partnership building and maintenance requires particular skills (for example negotiation, facilitation, communication, and networking) and some participants in this research questioned how many Oxfam offices possess the skills for this. Nevertheless, many examples of effective partnership-building were given. In Mindanao, for example, where there is a strong civil society and local government is engaged, Oxfam has helped to build connections and partnerships between local governments, civil society organisations and communities through involvement in a broad base of activities on the ground.

Working with communities and their organisations remains central to Oxfam's work and many projects focus on NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs) and women's organisations. The ODI's 2018 study on Oxfam's resilience building interventions identified CBOs as key resilience actors, providing entry points to societal engagement and acting as change agents. It also highlighted the importance of women's empowerment and assumption of leadership roles, as well as noting that local governments were key partners in many Oxfam programs.¹³ Community disaster organisations remain key partners on the ground and Oxfam is heavily engaged with them, not only on resilient development but also in training and building local leadership capacity. In Pakistan, Oxfam sought to build and reinforce local DRR capacities through creation or revitalisation, of Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and their sub-groups (responsible for early warning, emergency response, first aid, search and rescue and relief). These also made a significant contribution in promoting community engagement with union council and district disaster management institutions. District-level DRR resource centres were set up to offer space for staff discussions and planning, and for coordination and information sharing between communities and district government departments. This also points to the issue of understanding work with particular partners as just one part of a wider system.

Oxfam is effective in mobilising communities, promoting greater inclusiveness in planning and decision making (for example by supporting women, in particular, to be more involved in planning and decision making) and supporting community engagement and co-ordination on DRR with local government institutions. In Bangladesh (REE-CALL program) and Pakistan, Oxfam has effectively supported women's inclusion, engagement and empowerment in community disaster organisations.

Oxfam appears to be pragmatic and knows where power lies, enabling it to provide links and act as broker between government and other stakeholders. For example, Oxfam Pakistan is engaged in a wide range of relationships with government, civil society, community organisations, academia and the private sector, working at all levels from national to local. 'Brokerage' and 'convening' were frequently used terms in the KIIs and sense-making exercises, but this obviously can cover a range of activities in different contexts. Further clarification of such terms may be needed to improve understanding of the range of brokering and convening roles that are possible in accountable governance and resilient development, together with their effectiveness in different contexts.

Oxfam is increasingly seeking to engage with a wider range of stakeholders and partners, which also holds its own potential challenges in terms of defining Oxfam's role and legitimacy. This includes seeking more active and equitable engagement with the private sector in Asia (for example in the MRWGP and in Bangladesh) and some of Oxfam's northern affiliates have teams dedicated to private sector engagement. There is a recognised need for a more strategic approach to this issue. However, there appears to have been relatively limited conversation to date with the private sector, especially at local levels. More exploration is needed into the relevance and roles of the private sector in accountable governance.

The type, extent and success of engagement varies greatly between countries, programs and partnerships. Campaigns holding business to account (for example regarding fossil fuels, labour rights, and regulations) can create adversarial situations. Private sector actors may be sensitive about relationships with NGOs where civil society space is constrained. In other contexts, relationships may be more collaborative – one KI suggested that in reality there was often a 'thin line' between challenging the private sector and working with it. There seems to have been more progress with collaboration on practical matters relating to areas which provide both commercial and social opportunities, notably financial services (insurance and risk transfer; micro-credit), technology (for example mobile phone applications for communicating weather forecasts and warnings, improved irrigation technologies, digital money transfers), capacity building (for example business development training) and humanitarian logistics. There was talk of Oxfam adopting more of an 'impact investor' role in future to support micro-enterprises and start-ups.

Oxfam may need to adopt a more strategic approach towards understanding, communicating and working with (or against) private sector actors at all levels in the context of resilient development and accountable governance. The sector could also become involved in Oxfam's work to improve market access for people living in poverty – indeed it was suggested that Oxfam might consider using market-based approaches as a way to engage and use this as an entry point for making private sector actors more accountable. Given Oxfam's increasing

engagement with the private sector, which in itself is part of a larger governance system, there is an opportunity for Oxfam to more purposefully influence its accountability.

Some of the documentation and conversations suggested that Oxfam has relatively little structured or strategic engagement with academia on evidence-gathering and analysis. However, this was challenged by some key informants and participants in the sense-making exercises. It appears that collaboration with academic institutions is not particularly visible. However, research and relationships with academic institutions have been important components of the MRWGP; there are said to have been a number of collaborations in Pakistan; and Oxfam Bangladesh is working more closely with universities and think tanks.¹⁴ Nevertheless, greater efforts could be made to involve local academic institutions and scientists in strategic as well as one-off partnerships. Oxfam can also provide added value in highlighting important social issues (for example gender, inclusion, and power relationships) and making research accessible to partners and communities. Good-quality data – on challenges and the demonstrated impact of Oxfam programs – is essential when arguing for positive decisions and convincing governance actors.

Some KIs suggested that Oxfam needs to consider how to engage with a much more diverse range of actors, particularly the informal, emergent and spontaneous: for example, digital communities (including the use of potentially disruptive tools of information and communication technologies and social media) and new social or political movements (such as the street protest movements of the ‘Arab Spring’) which may come into being rapidly and have loose organisational structures with dispersed leadership. What types of partnership are appropriate or desired here? A few participants in the sense-making exercises felt that more emphasis on citizen ‘voice’ was needed rather than viewing citizens and civil society as just partners in delivery. Another missing actor was the media, which can play a very important role in making systems accountable and transparent. More thought is needed on how to engage with these actors.

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Key findings

- There is still much to learn about transformative change processes and how to use or adapt to them.
- In many cases, transformative change is achieved through multiple incremental changes over time; and it may be difficult to identify the impacts of particular changes or actors on the system.
- Terms such as ‘transformative’, ‘transformative capacity’ and ‘transformative change’ are understood differently or may be difficult to understand. Transformative change will look different to different stakeholders.
- Stakeholders need to be clear during program design and implementation about the transformations they wish to achieve.
- Transformation is not necessarily about scale: it can take place at individual and community as well as higher levels.
- The contexts in which Oxfam works can also undergo transformations including demographic shifts, urban growth, and a range of technological, socio-economic and political innovations.

The concept of transformation is a key element in systems and resilience thinking and approaches. In theory, transformative capacity goes well beyond absorptive capacity (which aims at maintaining or restoring stability) and adaptive capacity (which aims at flexibility through incremental adjustments): it should create transformative responses and lead to substantive change.¹⁵ The 2018 ODI report on Oxfam’s resilience-building work argues that transformation implies elasticity, diversity, innovation (of processes and methods; institutional relationships;

technological), awareness and empowerment (particularly through CBO formation); and policy and governance changes. Transformation appears in system-level shifts delivering benefits at scale, increasing empowerment and women's influence on decision making.¹⁶

An understanding of change (and what it means) and process (what a system does to enable it to adapt) is also vital to achieve positive change and promote resilience and transformation. Oxfam and its partners recognise that there is still much to learn about transformative change processes and how to use or adapt to them. Appropriate processes (at all levels) will be agile, adaptive, iterative, and often non-linear, with long-term vision and interactive learning. In many cases, transformative change is most likely to be achieved through multiple incremental changes over time, though it may be difficult to identify the impacts of particular changes or actors on the system as a whole.

The KIs and discussions at the sense-making exercises showed that terms such as 'transformative', 'transformative capacity' and 'transformative change' are not clear to many working in and with Oxfam, are understood differently by different stakeholders, or are simply difficult to understand. One KI described talking about transformative capacity as a 'difficult discussion'. This is not surprising, given the inconsistencies and ambiguities about concepts and definitions in some of the resilience literature.¹⁷ There is a degree of subjectivity here: transformation is driven by a variety of individuals, groups and institutions, who have different perspectives of what is transformative. Moreover, it can be very difficult for stakeholders to perceive and understand the whole system that they are engaged with, including where power lies and is exercised.

Within Oxfam, transformative capacity is usually understood as the capacity to make intentional change to stop or reduce the drivers of risk, vulnerability and inequality, and ensure the more equitable sharing of risk so it is not unfairly borne by poor and vulnerable people. Greater focus on institutional and other stakeholder capabilities for transformative change within systems may appear more relevant to stakeholders than trying to comprehend systems and transformation – and hence may provide an entry point for engagement with this bigger concept. The KIs and webinars indicate that it is increasingly being recognised within Oxfam that transformational change can be intentional (deliberative) or unforeseen, but this is not a linear process: it is often more iterative and adaptive, progressing at an uneven pace. This requires supporting interventions to be flexible and adaptive, innovative where necessary, forward-looking and based on long-term vision, strategic thinking and interactive learning.

In Oxfam Pakistan, transformation was seen as changes in practice that were sustainable, positive and system-wide. For example, securing inclusion of gender and disability in Pakistan's national climate and disaster strategy was said to be potentially transformative – if such inclusion could filter down to operational decision-making levels. More generally, transformation is associated with addressing the root causes of poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation, and with promoting rights-based thinking and practice. For example, Oxfam influenced changes to disaster management legislation in Bangladesh, whereby the government recognised the legal rights of disaster-affected people to assistance: this was described as transformative.

Transformation in Oxfam's work is not necessarily about scale (although it is often assumed that it has to be on a large scale), and it can take place at individual and community as well as higher levels. Some basic changes (for example access to infrastructure and water and sanitation facilities) can be experienced as transformational. Devolution of country-level strategic planning to Oxfam country offices was identified by several KIs as potentially transformative for Oxfam itself as an organisation, by shifting power. It may also give Oxfam more scope to influence change at country level.

Transformative change towards accountable governance should be conscious of power relationships and imbalances. It should include recognition of people's rights to agency and voice, and greater capacity and opportunity for participation. Changes in women's roles, space, empowerment, leadership, rights (including gender justice) are a strong indicator of transformation (power distribution in society is a fundamental issue in all areas of development). The very high level of involvement of women and people with disabilities in disaster planning decision-making processes in village and union disaster management committees as a result of an Oxfam Pakistan project was clearly seen as transformational by local stakeholders. Here, women took positions of authority and responsibility in VDMCs and often leveraged the VDMC to accomplish broader developmental goals including education for girls and campaigning for better health facilities.

However, participation by itself is not necessarily an indicator unless it leads to empowerment, and there is a need to find out more about how resilient development projects enable participation and leadership (particularly that of women). Intersecting inequalities do not feature in the evidence and are still under-researched,¹⁸ although the Mekong Regional Water Governance program, which made inclusion its overarching principle, is placing more emphasis on understanding and addressing intersectionality of different forms of marginalisation and exclusion of people and voices in water-related planning, decision-making and implementation.

Greater control seems to be an indicator of transformation (such as a project in Afghanistan where communities believed they had gained more control over their lives through improved livelihood opportunities and income). Influencing political development and change is commonly viewed as transformational (such as the inclusion of gender and disability in Pakistan's national climate and disaster strategy). Linking stakeholders together in collective action is sometimes seen as transformational. For example, Oxfam's work on water supplies in informal settlements in Vanuatu linked communities, private sector suppliers and government actors to create highly effective local committees addressing water issues, waste and electricity provision. Attitudinal changes are arguably a key indicator of transformation, such as the perceived shift from fatalism to belief in the possibility of resilience among communities in Fiji after Tropical Cyclone Winston.

At what point does 'change' become 'transformation'? Viewing transformative change in terms of specific thresholds to be crossed may not be useful, since it can be unclear how thresholds are defined or measured.¹⁹ Discussions with KIs suggest that thinking in terms of 'transformative pathways' (i.e. adaptive processes) and taking interim 'micro-steps' towards change (i.e. small changes with potentially long-term impacts, or moving progressively from local interventions on the ground to addressing wider policy issues) may be more practical and shifts attention towards realisable gains. Examples provided included one from Chad, where a mix of local actors were brought together through the PVCA process to shape local development plans.

In the MWGRP, there is a recognised need for 'non-linear pathways of change' to be made explicit and to acknowledge the degree of risk and unpredictability in complex and dynamic systems across several countries and where there are entrenched powerful interests. Shocks and stresses can create opportunities to change approaches and systems, as in Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam in 2015, where Oxfam utilised its existing institutional relationships to bring about much stronger vertical and horizontal linking of diverse local actors in DRR and climate change adaptation.

Conventional monitoring does not capture system-level change, although use of systems mapping tools can lead to involvement of actors in MEL and attributive analysis. Where the 'big picture', trends and attribution are unclear (as in many cases) it may be more practical to focus on transformative capacity (i.e. the ability of a system and its actors to reinvent, innovate, adapt, etc.). Power and systems analysis – carried out at the beginning of program design and continually reviewed during the program cycle – may help to unpick this.

Resilient development and accountable governance are context-specific in practice, and these contexts may themselves undergo transformational shifts. Substantial technological, social, economic and political changes and innovations are taking place in many countries and societies, in some cases rapidly. There are significant demographic trends in many countries where Oxfam is working: in particular population growth, a growing cohort of young people (many of whom are excluded from employment and public space) and mass migration from rural to urban areas. New communities and new generations of leaders will emerge over the coming years with different perspectives (such as attitudes towards diversity and inclusion, sources of information and ambitions). These changing demographics imply a need for more emphasis on the needs of young people and their participation in social and political movements. Approaches and interventions to strengthen resilience will have to adapt quickly to such operating contexts. For example, the MRWGP was aware of a shifting context in the growth of an informed middle class and greater information sharing through digital media changing what people know about energy and the politics of economic growth.

Urban growth is a characteristic of many countries and regions where Oxfam works on resilient development, yet there was very little mention of urban issues and contexts in the documents and programs reviewed or the KIs. Urban governance structures and stakeholders are similarly overlooked, although Oxfam is said to be getting better at working with municipalities. This suggests that Oxfam may not have a clear perspective of what urban resilience transformation

means. It is also unclear how Oxfam should go about resilient development in contexts of insecurity, conflict and lack of social cohesion, where civil society's openings for debate and engagement are very limited, or where there are powerful, armed non-state actors. If the creation of democratic spaces fosters accountability, then the shrinking of such space presents significant barriers to making risk governance more accountable. KIIs and the sense-making exercise identified a knowledge gap here, but also recognised that these can be spaces for 'micro-changes' or 'micro-steps' in resilience building.

Oxfam can draw on its extensive experience of working and adjusting its strategies in such contexts, in countries where state infrastructures are weak, under different regulatory environments and in a variety of cultural contexts (such as patriarchal societies and patronage systems). Adaptive management is very important in such contexts, based on power and stakeholder analyses and recognising that systems are constantly changing. Oxfam needs to determine the boundaries of its role in different contexts (for example direct or indirect influence). Transboundary programs offer further challenges. Oxfam appears to have relatively little experience of this but MRWGP's experiences demonstrate that it is possible to work and interact effectively across national boundaries and the diverse stakeholder groups involved at sub-national, national and regional levels.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

WORKING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The analysis affirms that working at systems-level is complex but essential to contribute to change over time and across multiple spaces, contexts and actors. This scope of change requires a landscape and programmatic view together with long-term thinking to ensure awareness of the multiple dimensions, drivers and entry points that shape the systems in which Oxfam works. Working at systems-level means that actors often have only a partial view and do not always recognise their roles and influence on the system. Working across systems requires making purposeful choices about where and how to act to contribute and support sustainable change that is valued by communities. This can include programmatic approaches to long-term change over time – ranging from flexible multi-year initiatives to smaller projects with defined contributions – that can leverage broader outcomes. Oxfam always needs to anchor its work in the everyday realities of the people who are most affected by change. Entry points to change are diverse, but there is a common need for linking and facilitation. A practical way to approach systems may be to shift thinking towards capabilities – what actors will do differently and how that may come about.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

Transformative capacity is a priority but a challenge to link to practice. We often overlook the small but important steps towards change. It is important to reflect on whose perspectives are considered when we describe and assess changes across systems and how this is valued. There are multiple valid perspectives on what is valued as change within and across contexts. It is particularly important to understand that systems-level change is constant, non-linear and happens in multiple spaces and levels from household to community to societal. This requires thinking about the multiple pathways and interdependencies within systems that need to be understood to adequately assess the complexity and meaning of change. This more broadly confirms the FRD emphasis on systems and transformative capacities for change, but also indicates the need for more learning on the dynamics and nature of social change processes. There is still much to learn about transformative change and processes. This can include engaging with how to understand changes in worldviews and mind-sets.

WAYS OF WORKING

Working with partners to bridge and connect systems, levels, spaces and actors is a key strategy for supporting change. This highlights how Oxfam needs to partner purposefully and further unpack the capabilities and skills that are required to initiate, navigate and facilitate a diverse range of relationships and stakeholders to achieve change. Looking forward, there are issues about the role of Oxfam in convening alliances for change. This means that Oxfam needs to further articulate and learn about its role in change processes (convener, broker, facilitator) while also considering the next iteration of its strategic contribution in the system. For example, in the context of localisation, how does Oxfam shift its focus or role as a potential partner to ensure that local resources are fully engaged and self-determining and to be responsive to emerging citizen movements and multiple approaches for amplified and stronger citizen voice? To enable flexible and adaptive partnership approaches across diverse stakeholders Oxfam also needs usable and bespoke systems and processes.

WORKING WITH DIFFERENCE

Teams develop contextually grounded understandings and interpretations of accountable governance. The analysis reinforces that Oxfam makes choices about the most effective focus across multiple levels of governance, including formal and informal spaces and processes. This is not necessarily a problem where the approach and practice are determined according to context. Phase 1 of the project suggested that influencing and accountable governance are at times seen as synonymous. However, they may have different entry points and dimensions which affect the focus and nature of the change for resilient development. This study affirms that accountable governance is an important factor in achieving systems-level change, but we also need to learn more about the implications this has for effective resilient development approaches within and across systems.

THINKING BEYOND TOOLS

One of the cautions expressed by participants in this project was to avoid putting too much emphasis on the use of tools and methods. Tools by themselves are not a solution to problems (for example, identifying power structures is still a long way from overcoming power imbalances). However, their appropriate use and application are relevant to resilient development and accountable governance.

Resilience-focused tools are important providers of information, but there are questions about how data can be turned into learning, how to assess different contributions to learning, how learning is revisited as programs and contexts change, and how learning contributes to adaptive programming and system change. It became clear during the learning inquiry that there is a need to explore the intersection between tools and wider engagement strategies more thoroughly. The emphasis needs to be more on mind-sets than tools themselves and how to use their findings. There is also a question about how many tools are needed or useful when it might be better to have more time for reflection and analysis.

Oxfam is tracking change better (through improved MEL) and has a strong desire to learn, but the shift towards a broader learning culture and a knowledge-based organisation is often obstructed by learning pressures. Institutional constraints such as lack of time, insufficient management support, staff turnover and demands of grant management and compliance can limit bandwidth for deep thinking and debate.

Finally, it is important to remember that 'resilient development' is not necessarily a simple or clear concept. This suggests that the meaning of resilient development may have to be constantly negotiated and renegotiated on the ground.

WHERE LEARNING FITS

Developing and resourcing intentional reflection and learning processes and approaches is central to supporting and understanding how change happens at a systems-level and what our

contributions are to those changes. If systems-level change requires processes that are agile, adaptive, iterative and non-linear it also follows that learning processes and approaches need to support this through more regular, interactive, intentional, critical thinking and reflection opportunities. This may need to see a shift beyond project-centric MEL to more programmatic level learning about how change happens over time. This raises questions about the capability, skills and resources needed within Oxfam and other actors in the system to facilitate and enable a learning-centred approach. It also reflects the importance of understanding and perceiving the effects of mind-sets, ways of working and ways of thinking on how change happens in resilient development and accountable governance. The analysis suggests that it is important to understand learning as a process that needs to be an integral element of the strategy (for example opening up and holding spaces for being able to observe and make sense of the change that is happening across multiple domains, pathways and processes).

WHAT MORE TO LEARN

All of the above point to areas where further learning and experimentation would be valuable. One important issue that is not addressed in detail in the analysis is changes in gender relations supported by attitude, norm and behaviour change. Program design and MEL approaches are possible entry points for taking more of a learning-centred approach to explore how change happens over time. This raises questions about how we learn about what works, in what combinations, with what kind of resourcing, contributing to what kind of shifts and recognising whose perspectives inform how we value and understand change.

ANNEX

A DIVERSITY OF TOOLS AND METHODS

Many tools and methods are used by Oxfam to examine resilient development, power relationships, stakeholders, civic space and accountable governance, giving program planners and implementers a wide menu of options. These are used creatively in different spaces and situations to enable learning, participation and action (for example in Myanmar Oxfam used complexity theory to understand trends and long-term conflict). It is a challenge to manage this diversity of methods and tools, provide adequate training, and choose tools that are most appropriate to different questions. In practice, different forms of analysis are not always connected to one another and the target groups for their findings may be unclear. There appears to be a tendency to invent new tools rather than use existing ones.

Oxfam's accessible and applicable Framework for Resilient Development is the core resource in this context and is potentially transformational in reframing problems and ensuring a holistic perspective.²⁰ It is said to be helpful in understanding processes, contexts, governance actors and partnerships. Several MEL frameworks have been developed in response to and alignment with the FRD. In India, its introduction is said to have changed the way Oxfam India viewed projects and contexts, making it look beyond a service delivery model and to begin to learn and experiment with a more holistic model that also includes advocacy and influencing beyond the community level.

Of particular importance is the way the Framework links resilience with social, developmental and governance processes – Oxfam stakeholders emphasised how important it is for resilience to be a bridge across themes and not a separate strand of work. The Framework emphasises equity and inclusion ('leave no one behind' is taken seriously) and creates space for raising difficult issues (for example LGBTQ+ rights). Equity and inclusion issues are often not integrated well into resilience thinking and some Oxfam stakeholders questioned if the Framework is managing to reframe resilience as a developmental issue, although that is its clear intention.

KIs acknowledged that there is more work to be done to bring development and resilience together. In Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, Oxfam's resilient development learning events have included a process of finding common understanding of key terms and working out ways of defining and explaining these at local level in local languages.²¹ There appears to be no specific tool for accountable governance or agreed ways of measuring it. The Local Adaptive Capacity framework developed by ACCRA focuses on the process (intangible, dynamic) and dimensions of adaptive capacity more than capital and resource-based components.

The Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA) toolkit supports the Framework as a core programming resource and is widely used.²² VRA can be helpful in creating multi-stakeholder and multi-level processes and networks, and in defining 'learning agendas' (i.e. forms of learning and their usefulness, processes for making or influencing change, learning questions, improved knowledge management systems in programs). Significantly, it looks at landscapes as both social and ecological systems (and is often referred to as a 'landscape approach'),²³ providing a holistic view of vulnerability, recognising the need to look beyond community and local approaches and seeking to link actors at different governance levels to analyse problems and design programs. In Pakistan the results of VRAs and Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPAs) have been brought into policy processes. The VRA process is said to shift ways of viewing issues, bringing in people who are less visible and traditionally have no voice. In Chad, the VRA application involved a mix of actors, leading to more inclusive discussions resulting in influencing local development planning through a series of 'micro-changes'.

Other examples of tools relevant to governance and resilient development given by KIs were: PVCA (includes understanding how decisions are made), learning cycles, LAPAs (working with communities and other local stakeholders; developing gender markers), political economy analysis), power and systems analysis, gender action learning systems (a community-led empowerment methodology which aims to shift existing cultural and social norms and has become a regular part of programming), gender impact assessment, stakeholder mapping, spider webs (mapping who does what) and complexity theory (used in Myanmar to understand

trends and long-term conflict). Oxfam Spain and Latin America and Caribbean affiliates have developed a 'political capture' tool that goes further than conventional power mapping to deconstruct inequality. Additionally, a citizen voice and action tool supports communities to understand rights and entitlements, building towards realising them through advocacy efforts. In the REE-CALL project in Bangladesh, the 'most significant change' technique enabled identification of transformative elements of the project.

Oxfam's application of tools reflects its institutional structures and constraints. For example, governance tools are said to sit in a governance 'silo' although they could be applied more to long-term development. There is potential for wider application or use of a greater range of tools from different 'spaces'.

REFERENCES

ACADEMIC LITERATURE

- Apgar M et al. (2017). *Identifying opportunities to improve governance of aquatic agricultural systems through participatory action research*. Ecology and Society 22(1) 9.
- Béné C, Godfrey Wood R, Newsham A, Davies M (2012). *Resilience: New Utopia or New Tyranny? Reflection about the potentials and limits of the concept of resilience in relation to vulnerability reduction programs* (Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper #405)
- Beunen R, et al. (2017). *Governing for resilience: the role of institutional work*. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 28: 10-16.
- Bongo P, Manyena B (2015). *From 'government' to 'governance': tensions in disaster-resilience leadership in Zimbabwe*. Jamba: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies 7(1) art 188.
- Bowen K, et al. (2017). *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: towards addressing three key governance challenges – collective action, trade-offs and accountability*. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 26-27: 90-96.
- Béné C, Godfrey Wood R, Newsham A, Davies M (2012). *Resilience: New Utopia or New Tyranny? Reflection about the potentials and limits of the concept of resilience in relation to vulnerability reduction programs* (Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper #405).
- Cannon T, Müller-Mahn D (2010). *Vulnerability, resilience and development discourses in context of climate change*. Natural Hazards 55: 621-635.
- Chaplin D, Twigg J, Lovell E (2019). *Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building*. London: ODI.
- Elmqvist T et al. (2019). *Sustainability and resilience for transformation in the urban century*. Nature Sustainability 2: 267-273.
- Fraser A, Kirbyshire A (2017). *Supporting governance for climate resilience: working with political institutions*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Green D (2016). *How change happens*. Oxford: Oxfam GB.
- Hahn T (2011). *Self-organising governance networks for ecosystem management: who is accountable?* Ecology and Society 16(2) 18.
- Harris L, et al. (2018). *Negotiated resilience*. Resilience 6(3): 196-214.
- Hemachandra K, et al. (2018). *Role of women in disaster risk governance*. Procedia Engineering 212: 1187-1194.
- Jimenez A, et al. (2016). *Accountability in WASH: a reference guide for programming*. New York: Unicef.
- Lebel L, et al. (2006). *Governance and the capacity to manage resilience in regional socio-ecological systems*. Ecology and Society 11(1) 19.
- Walker B, Salt D (2006). *Resilience thinking: sustaining ecosystems and people in a changing world*. Washington DC: Island Press.

OXFAM AND OTHER AGENCY DOCUMENTS

Carnaby E, Pilkinton J (2018). *Influencing and accountable governance to build resilience at scale*. Powerpoint presentation. Oxfam Australia.

Pettengell C (2019) *Resilient Development Learning Package*. Oxfam Australia. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/resilient-development-learning-package-620885>

Deasey M et al. (2019). *Report on final evaluation: inclusion project*. Oxfam Mekong Regional Water Governance Program.

Jeans H, Thomas S and Castillo G (2016). *The future is a choice: The Oxfam framework and guidance for resilient development*. Oxfam Great Britain.

Morchain D, Kelsey F (2016). *Finding was together to build. Resilience: The vulnerability and risk assessment methodology*. Oxfam Great Britain.

OECD (2014). *Accountability and democratic governance: orientations and principles for development*.

Oxfam Pakistan (2015). *Oxfam Country Strategy Pakistan 2015 – 2020*.

Oxfam Pakistan (undated). *Women, water and peace-building: stories of change*.

Oxfam Australia (undated). *Final project report: building resilient communities through inclusive disaster risk reduction in Pakistan*. Internal report.

Oxfam Australia (undated). *Project impact documentation: building resilient communities through inclusive disaster risk reduction in Pakistan*. Internal report.

Storey J (2019). *Policy influencing and outcomes of the Mekong inclusion project*. Oxfam: Mekong Regional Water Governance Program.

Twigg J, Bahadur A, Le Masson V, Price R, Risi F (2018). *Learning from Oxfam's resilience-building interventions: Evaluation of the Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-19*. Oxfam Intermon, unpublished.

US-Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Water/Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (undated). *Water Scarcity in Lower Sindh: Reality vs Myth*.

Webb J, Boydell, E (2018). *Contributions to Strengthened and Accountable Governance by Resilient Development Projects* Oxfam Australia, unpublished.

NOTES

- ¹ Much of Oxfam's development work builds resilience, though it may not be identified specifically as resilience programming.
- ² Entitled 'Contributions to Strengthened and Accountable Governance by Resilient Development Projects'
- ³ Webb and Boydell (2018).
- ⁴ For ethical reasons, key informants were anonymised, and were asked to sign a consent form before being interviewed.
- ⁵ Lebel et al (2006).
- ⁶ Lebel et al (2006).
- ⁷ It is said to be becoming 'socialised' in Oxfam.
- ⁸ Jeans et al (2016).
- ⁹ Cannon and Müller-Mahn (2010); Béné et al (2012).
- ¹⁰ Walker and Salt (2006).
- ¹¹ Elmqvist et al (2019): 270.
- ¹² Twigg et al (2018).
- ¹³ Twigg et al (2018).
- ¹⁴ Oxfam also worked with four academic partners in the ASSAR (Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions) consortium; and it has worked with universities in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.
- ¹⁵ Béné et al (2012).
- ¹⁶ Twigg et al (2018).
- ¹⁷ See Elmqvist et al (2019).
- ¹⁸ Chaplin et al (2019).
- ¹⁹ Twigg et al (2018). Note the difficulty of identifying thresholds for transformation.
- ²⁰ Jeans et al (2016).
- ²¹ Pettengell (2019).
- ²² Morchain and Kelsey (2016)
- ²³ For example, in Mindanao the landscape approach helped to understand governance systems within ecological (i.e. watershed, river basin) systems.

Oxfam Discussion Papers

Oxfam Discussion Papers are written to contribute to public debate and to invite feedback on development and humanitarian policy issues. They are 'work in progress' documents, and do not necessarily constitute final publications or reflect Oxfam policy positions. The views and recommendations expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Oxfam.

For more information, or to comment on this paper, email Oxfam Australia's Disaster Risk Reduction Advisor Elsa Carnaby elsac@oxfam.org.au

© Oxfam International February 2020.

This paper was written by John Twigg, Jayne Pilkinton, Elsa Carnaby, Charlotte L. Sterrett and Liz Hogan. Oxfam acknowledges that this learning inquiry was enriched through the contribution of Oxfam colleagues globally and from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Mekong Water Governance Program who generously shared their practice perspectives and other colleagues who work in resilient development programs who took the time to share their considerable knowledge and insights through the consultation process and through their review of draft versions of the report.

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam Australia for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78748-600-3 in February 2020.
DOI: 0.21201/2020.6003 Oxfam Australia, 130-138 Leicester St, Carlton, VIC 3053, Australia

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 19 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit www.oxfam.org.

| | |
|--|---|
| Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org) | Oxfam India (www.oxfamindia.org) |
| Oxfam Australia (www.oxfam.org.au) | Oxfam Intermón (Spain) (www.oxfamintermon.org) |
| Oxfam-in-Belgium (www.oxfamsol.be) | Oxfam Ireland (www.oxfamireland.org) |
| Oxfam Brasil (www.oxfam.org.br) | Oxfam Italy (www.oxfamitalia.org) |
| Oxfam Canada (www.oxfam.ca) | Oxfam Mexico (www.oxfammexico.org) |
| Oxfam France (www.oxfamfrance.org) | Oxfam New Zealand (www.oxfam.org.nz) |
| Oxfam Germany (www.oxfam.de) | Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) (www.oxfamnovib.nl) |
| Oxfam GB (www.oxfam.org.uk) | Oxfam Québec (www.oxfam.qc.ca) |
| Oxfam Hong Kong (www.oxfam.org.hk) | Oxfam South Africa (www.oxfam.org.za) |
| Oxfam IBIS (Denmark) (www.oxfamibis.dk) | Oxfam KEDV (www.kedv.org.tr) |



www.oxfam.org

