



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

**Effectiveness Review Brief: Impact evaluation of
the BASIC START in the Bangsamoro project**

EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW SERIES - 2018/19

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Oxfam GB's Strategic Evidence Framework is part of the organisation's effort to deliver on its commitments to be accountable to its wide range of stakeholders and to support Oxfam (or others) in improving practice informed by evidence.

Each year, several 'mature' projects are selected at random for an evaluation of their impact, known as an Effectiveness Review. These Effectiveness Reviews are conducted under five thematic areas; Livelihoods; Resilience; Sustainable Water; Women's Empowerment and Good Governance.

The project 'Building Autonomous and Stable Institutions and Communities through Socially Cohesive, Transparent, Accountable and Responsive Transition (BASIC START) in the Bangsamoro', was one of those selected for the Effectiveness Reviews in the 2018/19 financial year. This summary outlines the top findings resulting from the impact evaluation conducted 18 months after the project closure.

The full technical report can be accessed [here](#).

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This Effectiveness Review brief was produced by Sarah Davies using content taken from the Effectiveness Review report by Jaynie Vonk for Oxfam GB. Lay-out and graphic design was done by John Mark Dionson. The Effectiveness Review can be viewed or downloaded [here](#).

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

The BASIC START (Building Autonomous and Stable Institutions and Communities through Socially Cohesive, Transparent, Accountable and Responsive Transition) in the Bangsamoro' project was carried out in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the Philippines between April 2015 and August 2017, by Oxfam together with four implementing partners Al Mujadilah Development Foundation (AMDF), United Youth of the Philippines Women (UnYPhil-Women), Tarbilang Foundation, and Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE Act 1325).

The project aimed to promote women's empowerment and peacebuilding in the region. Activities focused on ensuring people recognise the identity, diversity, unique needs and aspirations of the Bangsamoro, working with local leaders and citizens to develop and implement inclusive development plans and achieve greater social accountability, prioritising and resourcing essential services to support human development and gender justice to benefit women in the Bangsamoro.

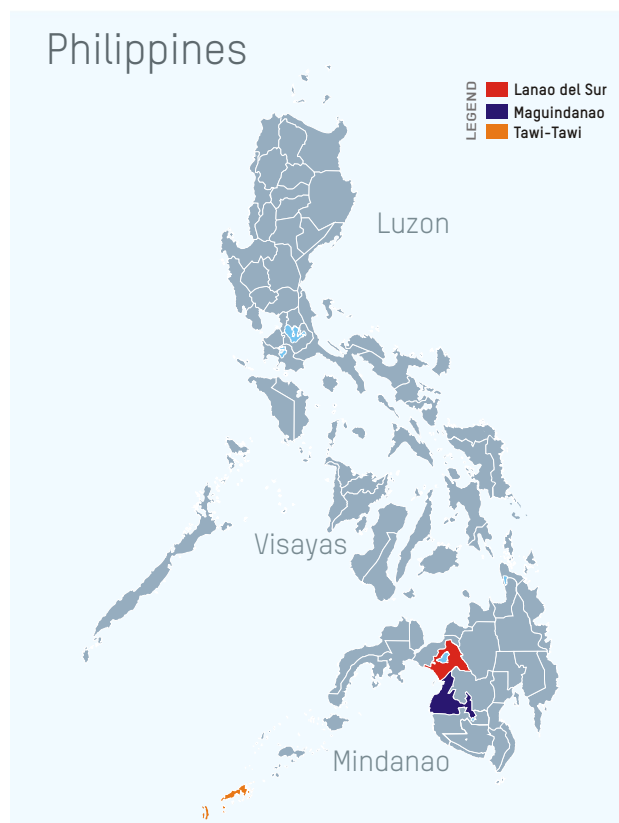


Figure 1: Map of the Philippines with the three provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Tawi-Tawi highlighted (OCHA, 2019)

EVALUATION APPROACH

- An impact evaluation was carried out in January-February 2019. The objective was to evaluate to what extent the BASIC START project increased women's empowerment.
- The evaluation used Oxfam's Women's Empowerment (WE) index which recognizes three levels where change can take place personal, relational and environmental (see Figure 2).
- The review also explored in more detail the impacts of the project on women's political participation in the peace process, whether women's economic participation in livelihood activities had reduced conflict, changes in social norms, and exposure to violence.
- A quasi-experimental evaluation design was used to assess impact among individuals in rural and urban communities where the project was active in comparison to individuals in similar communities where no projects like BASIC START were known to have been implemented. A total of 1,256 interviews were completed 537 in the intervention group and 719 in the comparison group.

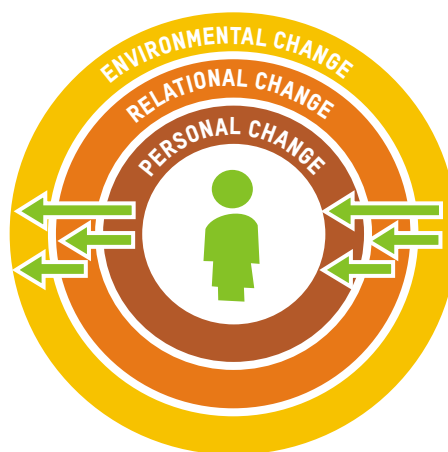


Figure 2: Oxfam's Women's Empowerment (WE) index framework

RESULTS

Overall, the review found that the BASIC START project had a positive impact on Women's Empowerment. The following summary describes both intended and unintended changes caused by the project at each level of the Women's Empowerment Index:

PERSONAL:



Personal autonomy - women who are ordinary citizens increased their ability and confidence to make decisions about themselves (impact for this indicator was not found among leaders¹ or overall).



Recognizes women's political role - women who are ordinary citizens increased their overall recognition in women's political role (impact for this indicator was not found among leaders or overall). In general, opinions among women were positively impacted regarding specific questions about women's right to participate in civil society, their role in peacebuilding and reconciliation, and women's participation in political affairs and the peace process.

RELATIONAL:



Women reported greater **participation in and perceived influence over community affairs**. They especially increased involvement in managing and taking important decisions in community groups.



Women indicated that they now have a more **equal say in decision-making regarding household unpaid care work**.



Results varied concerning **control over her own body** including sexual and reproductive health (**SRH**) and gender-based violence (**GBV**). In Tawi-Tawi, women reported increased control over their own bodies, while in Lanao del Sur women reported decreased control and significantly more exposure to violence themselves, particularly psychological violence (impact for this indicator was not found among women in Maguindanao or overall). Overall, acceptance of child marriage decreased.

ENVIRONMENTAL:



Ordinary citizens and younger women² increased their **belief that laws and policies are supportive of women** (impact for this indicator was not found among leaders, older women or overall).



In Tawi-Tawi, women reported decreased **participation and influence in political affairs and the peace process** (impact for this indicator was not found in the other provinces or overall).



Women increased their **belief that social norms open spaces for women to freely participate in social, political, and economic activities**. This impact was seen overall and was especially true in Tawi-Tawi and among ordinary citizens. However, in depth review reveals relatively low support for gender equality in access to jobs and salaries, indicating there is more work to be done.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS:



The project had a **significantly larger impact on younger women** (less than 40 years old), changing attitudes, beliefs and participation associated with Women's Empowerment.



Economic participation in livelihood activities - no impact was found on decreased conflict (related to women's business activities) because of the project. The review did indicate that more women started a new business in the last 3 years with support from the project in Lanao del Sur. However, in Tawi-Tawi, women were less likely to continue with their new businesses after the project ended.

PROGRAMME LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

- ☑ **Explore new ways to recruit project participants who are not currently involved in community groups, political affairs, and public events.**

The review highlights that the women who participated in the project were already relatively active citizens understanding how to better engage those who may not yet be active citizens could achieve more impact.

- ☑ **Develop strategies to work more with ordinary citizens and younger women.**

Ordinary citizens well as younger women are less empowered overall and this suggests more progress could be made by working with them. (This does not preclude also working with leaders and older women).

- ☑ **Consider mitigation activities for unintended effects, such as gender-based violence.**

All projects working on women's empowerment are advised to closely, but carefully, monitor gender-based violence and take additional measures to support victims.

- ☑ **Address social norms for gender equality in job opportunities and salaries.**

While not the main focus of the project, this theme appears to be something which can be addressed more and carried forward in other programmes in the region.

NOTES

- ¹ Women identified themselves as either 'ordinary citizens' or 'leaders', including elected, appointed, religious, and traditional leaders, within their communities.
- ² Impacts were evaluated by age group younger women (less than 40 years old) and older women (aged 40 years and older).

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