

Management Response

Oxfam Management response to the review of Good Governance in Malawi: Impact evaluation of the ‘Strengthening Land Governance System for Smallholder Farmers in Malawi’ project (Effectiveness Review Series 2019/20)

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What is the purpose of an evaluation management response (MR)?

A management response enables us to document the key learning generated from the project evaluations whilst also ensuring that the report is given careful consideration by relevant stakeholders.

The management response should:

- 1) Include a summary of the reflections of your team and program/project stakeholders in relation to the evaluation’s findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- 2) Detail actions that will be taken to respond to the evaluation findings;
- 3) Offer an opportunity for all relevant project stakeholder to comment on the utility of the evaluation process and final report.

1. The context and background of the review, i.e., the purpose and scope of the evaluation.

Oxfam GB’s Strategic Evidence Framework is part of the organization’s effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, as well as enhance learning across the organization. Under this Framework, a small number of completed or mature projects are selected each year for an evaluation of their impact, known as an ‘Effectiveness Review’. The EU-funded Strengthening Land Governance System for Smallholder Farmers in Malawi project was selected for an Effectiveness Review during the 2019/20 financial year. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess two focal outcomes of the project, including investigating processes by which these outcomes were achieved and assessing the significance of the consortium’s contribution to the realization of these outcomes.

Please see the Executive Summary of the full evaluation report for further details and key findings, lessons and recommendations.

2. Overall, does the country team agree with the review findings? Are there any conclusions and/or recommendations which the country team does not agree with or will not act upon and why?

I generally agree with the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations of course with exceptions.

On focal outcome 1, I do not agree with the assertion on Hypothesis 3, namely that a main influencer in shaping the passing of the new land related laws was ActionAid and that they supported the Gender Network, with the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus on this. Being privileged to have served both Government and transitioning to Oxfam, I know that it was due to Oxfam’s tireless efforts to unlock implementation of the project that Oxfam kept convening, influencing and mobilising support for enactment of the land bills. It is on record that Oxfam funded the consultant who analysed the bills to assess whether they were adequately gendered and also funded the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus/committee meeting among other several meetings to mobilise support for enactment of the land bills. ActionAid was an invited participant to the meeting convened by Oxfam, and they made a presentation at this meeting on women’s land rights. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that influencing enactment of the new land laws was not the primary objective of the ‘Strengthening Land Governance Systems for Smallholder Farmers in Malawi’ project, but was done (not using the EU project resources but other resources) with the aim of unlocking implementation of the project which had been put on hold due to lack of the enabling legal backing at the time.

On focal outcome 2, since the completion of the evaluation in July 2020, additional land certificates have since been processed with all stakeholders involved and District Land Registrars have signed and sealed the certificates. Land certificates in Phalombe have since been issued by the Minister Responsible for Lands, symbolic presentations for owners in Kasungu and Rumphi were done by the Deputy Minister of Lands and tentative plans are underway (with extra precautions in place due to COVID-19) to issue the certificates in Kasungu and Rumphi by March 2021.

While certificates are key to security of tenure, in the absence of certificates for land owners in Kasungu and Rumphi, this security is in the interim guaranteed by the land records including the adjudication records and maps which are kept securely at District Land Registrars’ office. All of these have since been established and the office of the Surveyor General serves as a repository (being custodian of land information and spatial data).

The project has also managed to forge partnerships between Oxfam, government and local CSOs and rural women’s movements on land governance, and such relationships have continued to exist beyond the project. Oxfam has continued to be recognised by stakeholders on land governance in the country including that it served as a portal for knowledge management and sharing based on the consortium’s experience in piloting implementation of the country’s land related laws. Oxfam has also shared its expertise with the US Government (on the development of the Second Compact for Malawi under the Millennium Development Trust), the Government of Flanders and the World Bank (on the Shire Valley Transformation Program).

3. How do you plan to use the evidence which is generated from this review? Please include main follow-up actions.

The project wound up. However, government and stakeholders have taken it on, to scale up implementation of the land laws and their review.

Oxfam has been consulted by the Malawi Human Rights Commission and has made its submissions. Oxfam will continue to engage so that the lessons and issues generated from implementation of the pilots inform the review process and eventually revised land related laws particularly for the Customary Land Act 2016. This is currently happening and will continue until the government has finished the consultation process and sent the amendments to Parliament for deliberation. Oxfam will also use the knowledge from the review to support Southern Africa Region in its programming on land governance in the region.

4. Is there any support your team would require in order to maximise the use of the evidence generated from this review?

Yes, as the project was running on a restricted contract. Knowledge management would require resources so that we can produce knowledge products to help in disseminating land governance instruments in the country. As noted in the evaluation, our ability to effectively engage with government and other stakeholders by way of convening, advocacy and influencing has not been without resources. Support would therefore be required to be able to continue with the convening work to ensure that the laws are effectively reviewed to the satisfaction of the communities that we serve.

5. Are there any additional reflections that have emerged from the review process that you want to share?

Due to the Effectiveness Review process needing to be completed during the 2019/20 financial year in which this project was selected, this review was done within a very restrictive time frame. This has resulted into what can be considered as misrepresentations of facts, with additional progress made after the evaluation, and thus has been limited in capturing what would have been ideally end-products in terms of outputs, lessons and issues. Future reviews need to be well planned with the country team before execution.