Management Response

Oxfam Management response to the review of “Building peace by securing rights for victims of conflict and violence in Colombia” Project [Construcción de paz a través de la consecución de los derechos de las víctimas del conflicto y la violencia en Colombia].

Effectiveness Review Series 2018/19

Prepared by: Sandra Patricia Mojica
Signed off by: Aida Pesquera – Country Director
Date: 18th July 2019
Country/Region/Campaign: Colombia/LAC

A. Context, Background and Findings

1. The context and background of the review

This report presents the results of the assessment of the advocacy work carried out by Oxfam in Colombia and its network of partners as part of the project “Building peace by securing rights for victims of conflict and violence in Colombia”, implemented between March 2015 and May 2019, with funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

The project that aims to strengthen the capacities of “citizens, victims and human rights and peace organisations to assert and restore their rights and establish a more favourable environment for their recognition” is aligned with the strategy of Oxfam in Colombia through the Programme for the right to full justice and a life free of violence for victims, women and girls. The project was implemented over a period of four years (2015-2019) with a total budget of EUR 2,670,948.

The Effectiveness Review (ER) is a thorough, detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the project. This evaluation protocol designed by Oxfam GB is based on the qualitative research methodology known as “process tracing”, which seeks, firstly, to identify evidence that can establish a link between the intervention under assessment (causal mechanism) and the outcomes observed and, secondly, to study other possible causal narratives that may have influenced the outcomes achieved. Thus, by comparing the evidence found for each of the causal narratives, it is possible to understand the contribution made by the project according to the ER framework defined between the programme team in Colombia, Oxfam GB and the consultant.

Based on the logical framework of the project, the outcomes chosen to carry out the ER were outcomes 1 and 5: 01: Strengthening the capacities of organisations for women who are victims of sexual
violence, land claimants, relatives of missing persons and local human rights defenders and their skills to demand their rights to truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. And **05:** Increasing the recognition and protection of human rights through advocacy aimed at the Colombian State and the international community, as well as visibility among civil society.

Based on these two outcomes and in line with the “process tracing” that underpins the ER, the team reconstructed the Theory of Change (ToC) of the project, defining three areas of study and the following central questions to guide its assessment:

**Intermediate Outcome 1:** “Human rights and victims’ organisations are empowered and increase their capacities to claim and advocate for victims’ and human rights within the peace-building process”.

**Q1:** To what extent has this project been able to help its partner human rights and victims’ organisations to gain a greater capacity for both individual and collective action in order to demand the re-establishment of victims’ rights and promote an environment that is favourable to the protection of such rights?

**Intermediate Outcome 2:** “The capacity of human rights and victims’ organisations to incorporate a gender focus into their work is strengthened and greater coordination between women’s organisations and human rights platforms and organisations is promoted”.

**Q2:** To what extent has participation in the project helped to strengthen organisations’ capacity to incorporate a gender focus into their work and to increase coordination between women’s and human rights organisations?

**Intermediate Outcome 3:** “The advocacy work of partner organizations effectively contributes to making victims’ rights central in the regulation, set-up and functioning of the transitional justice mechanisms created as part of the Peace Accords”.

**Q3:** To what extent have the increased capacity and strengthening of organisations helped those within the framework of the project to be able to carry out effective advocacy work and monitoring actions that help to ensure that victims’ rights will be central to regulatory development and the functioning of the transitional justice mechanisms created as part of the Peace Accords?
2. Summary: Main Findings and Recommendations

The most significant findings and recommendations for the outcomes studied are detailed below:

1) Human rights and victims’ organisations are empowered and increase their capacities to claim and advocate for victims’ and human rights within the peace-building process. (01)

The assessment found evidence of strengthened capacities at different levels. Firstly, we can confirm that the project has made a positive contribution to reinforcing the internal administrative and management processes of some of the partners. Secondly, the data collected indicate that the environment of opportunity created by the project, particularly in terms of the economic support provided, has contributed significantly to strengthening networks and the collective coordination of project partners, both within themselves, in the case of platforms of victims, for example, and in relation to other civil society and key political actors. This coordination is not the result of the project as such, or of the project only, but we have observed that the support provided by the project has helped to keep certain hubs active, such as the working groups of Colombia Europe United States Coordination (CCCEU), and to guarantee quick reactions in the organisations’ relations with decision-makers, which otherwise would have been more difficult. This has ensured the active presence of the organisations in a series of key processes for the protection of victims’ rights. Lastly, and although it is an aspect that we have not been able to triangulate and analyse in more detail, we can confirm that the project has helped to disseminate the mechanisms and tools offered by the new transitional justice system for victims to claim their rights. By promoting greater ownership and use of them the project is expecting to facilitate victims’ action for the enforceability of those rights in the future.

Based on the data collected we can conclude that, in general, the project’s contribution to the creation of an environment of opportunity for the development or reinforcement of capacities that the organisations already had in place has been positive.

2) The capacity of human rights and victims’ organisations to incorporate a gender focus into their work is strengthened and greater coordination between women’s organisations and human rights platforms and organisations is promoted (02).

It should be noted that this outcome is not part of the project’s logical framework and was included during reconstruction of the ToC at the request of the Right to Justice Programme of Oxfam in Colombia, in the interest of understanding the extent to which the organisation’s programmatic focus is managing to permeate the dialogue with its partners and, in this case, making it possible to progress towards greater coordination between women’s and human rights organisations.

www.oxfam.org.uk/effectiveness
The review finds that the dialogue and joint work carried out has enabled some progress in relation to capacity-strengthening, achieving **gradual incorporation of the gender perspective in the work of several of the project partners**, which has translated into greater visibility in their work and greater understanding of the specific nature of the violence experienced by women in the context of the armed conflict.

On the other hand, we can see a small amount of progress in the mutual recognition between organisations involved in the project, as a first step towards building bridges between women’s and human rights organisations. However, these are preliminary and limited advances. In particular, we should mention the Corporación Mujer Sigue Mis Pasos (CMSMP), a relatively new organisation that has found in the project a useful framework in which to consolidate and grow, and above all to raise its visibility and position itself on wider platforms.

3) The advocacy work of partner organizations effectively contributes to making victims’ rights central in the regulation, set-up and functioning of the transitional justice mechanisms created as part of the Peace Accords (03).

Among these advances, the assessment found evidence at three different levels of the ToC. In each case, however, it is impossible to rule out the contribution of other factors, and the conclusion tends to be that the advances are the result of the confluence of multiple advocacy channels, including the partners’ activities.

- The data collected confirm that the partners have made a significant contribution to this outcome. Of particular note is the international denunciation and advocacy carried out, which makes it possible to exert indirect pressure on the Colombian government and helps to keep such issues on the agenda (e.g. the activities conducted to denounce the systematic murder of social leaders and human right defenders before bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), International Criminal Court (ICC) and United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

- The information collected indicates a significant presence of the partners, both in key legislative processes (e.g. Legislative Act 01) and in the constitutional review of the legislative framework approved for implementation of the accords and regulation of the mechanisms of the Integrated System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (ISTJRN). This presence has promoted the incorporation of legal guarantees for the protection of victims’ rights and has also slowed down certain “counter-reforms”, which entailed or could have entailed setbacks to such rights (e.g. the attempt to disqualify human rights defenders as judges of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) or
the creation of special courtrooms for hearings of members of the Army accused of serious crimes before the JEP).

Victims have begun participating in the institutions of the transitional justice system by submitting reports to the JEP and the Commission for Clarification of the Truth (CEV). Practically all the organisations consulted report activities involving the documentation of cases with support from the project. Their input is acknowledged as a valuable contribution to decision-making and the fight against impunity.

B: Oxfam’s response to the validity and relevance of the review findings, conclusions and recommendations.

3. Overall, do the findings of the review concur with your own expectations or assessment of the project’s effectiveness?

The findings of the review coincide with the expectations of the Oxfam in Colombia team, promoting important spaces for reflection and discussion to guide our initiatives and increase the political and technical support we give to our partner organizations in the country. The participatory nature of the review process from the outset should be highlighted. The meetings held for the methodological design and development were important to analyse the ToC as a team and look at the different projects (underway or in the process of being formulated), especially linked to the Right to Justice Programme. This stimulated better performance in terms of documenting implementation of the processes, defining scopes and criteria for capacity-building, formulation and circulation of the logical framework with the partners, and generation of periodic forums for analysis and monitoring, among other recommendations suggested in the review.

In relation to outcome 2, which was not part of the project’s logical framework but was included as an area of special interest by the team in Colombia in order to understand the extent to which the project contributed to incorporating the gender approach and greater coordination between women’s and human rights organisations, we acknowledge the preliminary progress that has been made in this respect within the framework of the project under review and the need for future opportunities to expand this area of work and jointly design with the partner organisations strategies to promote the coordination of agendas around the gender focus, specifying short-, medium- and long-term goals that facilitate monitoring of the process and identification of Oxfam’s contribution in this field.
4. Did the review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project?

The following areas identified by the review were considered significant:

Firstly, strengthening the capacities of the partner organisations has made it possible to increase the visibility of and take more effective action to address violence against women, understanding its specific nature. Similarly, this strengthening has promoted the production of information to provide to the justice bodies created by the peace agreement. The CINEP database is an example of a tool for the study that incorporates the types of victimisation experienced by women in the context of the armed conflict. Similarly, the “State crimes from the perspective of women” report also reflects the contribution of the project to the field of research and the great effort that the organisations are making to document patterns of sexual violence against women.

Secondly, the political context in which the project was carried out was marked by societal polarisation, the change of government and uncertainty about the future implementation of the peace accords, which made the advocacy actions undertaken especially important to improve assertion of the rights and political legitimacy of the organisations linked to the project. One area identified as making a strong contribution to the project was the advocacy and lobbying work carried out nationally and internationally to position the rights of victims of the armed conflict within the framework of the peace accords, promoting their implementation, especially in relation to the Integrated System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (ISTJRNR).

Thirdly, although one of the most significant challenges of the exercise was to demonstrate the specific contributions of the selected project outcomes, a task that requires having robust monitoring systems and greater research resources, the reviewer was struck by the fact that during the consultations with representatives of the partners, they never attributed the achievement of advocacy results to their organisations or particular people. This reflects the commitment to collective work and their awareness of the concurrence of various factors in progressing towards common objectives.

Lastly, the review highlights the importance of the spaces for dialogue promoted by Oxfam with the partners that have made it possible to incorporate the gender perspective in their work in a more substantive way and generate greater awareness and sensitivity in relation to gender. Similarly, the spaces for joint action and management units with the participation of the partners involved in the project were considered appropriate to coordinate actions and undertake joint analyses; indeed, their expansion and optimisation is suggested.

5. Did the review identify areas that were particularly weak in the project?

The review identified weak areas in implementation of the project related to the monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms with the partners. Particular mention was made of the need to consider...
carrying out further inception work for the ToC that enables the partners to have a common understanding of the outcomes and the expected materialisation of the strategies.

The project is assessed for its flexibility in supporting the partners in the usual areas of work, leaving to each one’s consideration the capacities they need to strengthen and how they want to use the resources. However, the review indicates that this flexibility should be complemented with mechanisms to promote collective strengthening processes and periodic assessments of progress. Likewise, another weak area identified in the project was the lack of clarity with regard to the notion of “strengthening capacities”. In future, it will be necessary to prepare common criteria, performing an initial assessment of each partner’s level of capacities and establishing short-, medium- and long-term goals, as well as areas for exchanging experiences between partners to facilitate monitoring, collective learning and the evaluation of outcomes.

Finally, the importance of giving more space to collective discussions and reflection on progress in implementation of the project, ensuring documentation of implementation of the process, is highlighted. The review underlines the importance of strengthening the management units and the joint action mechanism as key spaces for strategic analysis, monitoring and learning.

6. Summary of review quality assessment, i.e. quality of the review is strong/mixed/poor and short assessment of the process

The quality of the review is mixed due to time and resources. According to the methodological team, this type of Effectiveness Review and “process tracing” in which a large number of partners and actors participate requires more extensive fieldwork to make it possible to interview more key actors and visit the beneficiary rural areas to obtain more details about the complexities and specificities of the process and, therefore, greater objectivity about the performance of the project. However, the review exercise is viewed as extremely useful for Oxfam in Colombia, particularly for the Right to Justice Programme. The Effectiveness Review will constitute an input for assessment of the Programme (FY19-20) and the design of a new strategic focus. Meanwhile, its findings are significant for the monitoring and development of initiatives in the areas of capacity strengthening and advocacy to fight impunity, build peace and assert the rights of women and victims of the armed conflict in Colombia.

7. Main Oxfam Follow-up Actions

Addressing the recommendations of the Effectiveness Review, in FY19-20 the Right to Justice Programme team will carry out the following actions:
- Adaptation of participatory methodologies for the design and monitoring of projects that facilitate joint construction and circulation of the ToC or logical frameworks of the projects, guaranteeing a common

www.oxfam.org.uk/effectiveness
interpretation, clarifying the roles of the parties and establishing meeting spaces for the analysis and monitoring of progress.

- Joint preparation with the partners of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems appropriate for advocacy actions and gender mainstreaming, adopting participatory tools that stimulate analysis and the involvement of the different actors.

- Definition of ad hoc actions and allocation of a larger budget to strengthen the management units and joint action spaces as key instruments for the coordination of agendas and ownership of processes.

- Reducing the risk of uncertainty about the roles and scopes of the projects through clear and timely communication with the partner organisations aimed at increasing ownership of the processes by the organisations and primary beneficiaries and reducing the dependency on Oxfam. In addition, contribute to the organisational strengthening of the partners, improving their capacity to generate alliances and diversify their sources of sustainability.

8. What learning from the review will you apply to relevant or new projects in the future? How can the regional centre/Oxford support these plans?

As well as making it possible to undertake the actions described in section 7 more thoroughly, Oxfam’s support would be valuable for carrying out the following initiatives:

1) Organise the meeting to deliver the findings of the final evaluations of the “Building peace by securing rights for victims of conflict and violence in Colombia” project (AECID project). For this event, which is scheduled for November 2019 in Bogotá, Oxfam’s support is important to facilitate the participation of María Delgado (ER consultant), prepare and circulate communication materials on the process and guarantee the participation of the female members of the 12 partners and some key actors from the rural areas where the project was implemented.

2) Continue strengthening the quality of the programmes and the monitoring and evaluation capacity, establishing influencing/gender MEL capacities in the local team and developing new assessment and feedback exercises like the ER that make it possible to improve our work in Colombia with a view to creating a new national affiliate of Oxfam in Colombia and Oxfam’s new global strategy (OGS).

3) Support the mapping of international forums and organisations with a view to diversifying the sources of funding and ensuring the sustainability of the advocacy work carried out by the partner organisations of the Right to Justice Programme to build peace, fight impunity and ensure the non-violent management of conflicts in Colombia as processes that are also relevant for other societies.