Management Response

Oxfam Management response to the review of Livelihoods in the Eastern Province of Rwanda: The Enterprise Development Programme’s support to Tuzamurane cooperative
[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:

- Include a summary of the reflections of your team and program/project stakeholders in relation to the evaluation’s findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- Detail actions that will be taken to respond to the evaluation findings;
- 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.

The Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) started in 2008 in Rwanda. The core objectives of EDP are to:

- Build sustainable agricultural enterprises, providing them with grants and loans.
- Improve the lives of smallholder farmers, support women’s empowerment and seek wider systemic change.
- Involve supporters in governance of the programme, through an investment committee and board.

In working toward these objectives, EDP in Rwanda supported four enterprises in different value chains, with a total investment of £532,499 (64% of which was loans). This evaluation focuses on one of these enterprises – the Tuzamurane cooperative of organic pineapple growers, which processes and exports organic-certified dried pineapple to European markets. EDP began supporting the cooperative in 2015 and continues supporting it today.

Tuzamurane is located in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. It was created in 2005, formally registered as a cooperative in 2006, and its members have continued improving the quality of their produce. The idea of drying pineapple, organic-certified pineapple in particular, emerged in 2009. The cooperative and Oxfam began working together in 2010, and it obtained organic certification in 2013. In 2015, Oxfam in Rwanda worked with Tuzamurane to develop and submit a proposal for EDP support (funding and accompaniment). Support was approved in September 2015 and grants and loans were disbursed at the beginning of 2016.

At enterprise level, EDP’s support is expected to bring about an increase in production, diversification of production (resulting in risk mitigation and value-addition) and improvement in management. This should result in improved access to markets and job creation. This in turn is expected to bring about changes in the lives of the smallholder farmers involved with the enterprise – members of the cooperative and its suppliers, in the case of Tuzamurane. In particular, EDP’s support aims to bring about increased income and economic empowerment for women.
Finally, EDP’s support is expected to bring about a diversification of investors, in particular from the formal sector. Sustainability of the initial investment is reached when further investments can be accessed through banks, without EDP being guarantor for the loans.

This evaluation is part of Oxfam’s Effectiveness Review series, a series of impact evaluations of completed or mature projects, randomly selected each year for an evaluation of their impact. The Effectiveness Review series is part of Oxfam GB’s Strategic Evidence Framework and is part of the organization’s effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, and to enhance learning across the organization.

During the 2019/20 financial year, EDP in Rwanda was one of the projects selected for an Effectiveness Review. The decision to focus on one enterprise, Tuzamurane, was made in consideration of the available resources and in order to maximize learning.

Evaluation Approach

This impact evaluation was undertaken primarily to evaluate the impact of EDP’s support to Tuzamurane on household income of cooperative members and suppliers [collectively known as ‘contractors’]. Cooperative members are pineapple producers who supply pineapples to the cooperative based on contracts; they have also joined the cooperative through the payment of a membership fee, and as a result, are entitled to a share of the cooperative profits and to participate in the cooperative’s decision making through its General Assembly. Suppliers are also pineapple producers who have transactional supply contracts; however, they have not joined the cooperative and are not entitled to any of the broader cooperative profits (although they can access some of the same services as members, such as loans). The evaluation also sought to answer:

1. Why and how did the project impact household income?
2. Is there any evidence of impact on women’s empowerment?
3. Did the project have any impact on job creation at household level?
4. As Tuzamurane has grown, has the socio-economic profile of the cooperative members and suppliers changed? Who has been reached, and who has been left behind?
5. Did the project benefit men and women differently? Did the project benefit cooperative members and suppliers differently?
6. To what extent has Tuzamurane considered its social responsibility, and what policies have been put in place in this regard?

A quasi-experimental impact evaluation design was used, which aims to find the best estimate possible of ‘What would have happened to project participants in the absence of the project?’. This design helps us understand the impact that can be attributed to EDP’s support between 2016 and 2019. The evaluation carried out a quantitative survey with individuals and their households, as well as qualitative interviews with leaders of cooperatives and enterprises. Every member and supplier of Tuzamurane cooperative was invited to be part of the evaluation [the ‘intervention’ group], and a similar group of farmers who were producing either pineapples or other produce in 2015 were invited to participate in the evaluation as part of the ‘comparison’ group.

In total, 650 farmers took part in the survey: 251 in the intervention group and 399 in the comparison group. This allowed us to measure the impact of EDP support at household and individual levels. The evaluation was designed to make evident any differences in impact for women and men, as well as for suppliers and cooperative members. Leaders of another pineapple cooperative, the Koubumu cooperative, and a pineapple processing enterprise, Natural Fruits Drier Company LTD, took part in qualitative interviews to enable better understanding of differences at an enterprise level. Three qualitative interviews were conducted. Data gathering for this evaluation was carried out in September and October 2019.

Please see executive summary of the full evaluation for key findings.
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?**

   Overall, the country team agree with the review findings, conclusions and recommendations given in the report.

3. **How do you plan to use the evidence which is generated from this review?**

   Unfortunately, as the Oxfam country programme in Rwanda is closing, there is not so much room for future actions. However, some of the recommendations are workable within the remaining short period. The learning from this Effectiveness Review has shown that the impact for women was not that significant compared to the impact for men. In programme interventions, there is a clear need for more women’s empowerment methodologies. One of methodologies we can cite is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology, which needed to be integrated in other project implementation plans. Focus will be given to exploring strategies to counteract systemic barriers for women’s equitable engagement with the cooperative and women’s income generation, work with the cooperative to reflect on the farmers’ return on investment from organic agriculture and put effort towards advocating for a sector specific COVID-19 recovery plan.

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

   If the country programme was not phasing out, the major support would have been availing financial resources to make it possible to implement the actions on the recommendations. However, for now our team is using available resources in order to deal with workable actions within the remaining short period.

5. **Any additional reflections that have emerged from the review process.**

   The major surprise from the findings was the impact for women. Previously when assessing impact, we looked at women’s participation and the impact for them as women. But when compared to men, this review has shown that the impact for women was not that significant compared to the impact for men. This has shown that there are far more factors that need to be considered while lifting women out of poverty, taking into consideration that women face deeper challenges and that changes may not happen for both at the same pace. Hence, there are specific interventions that should accompany livelihoods projects as highlighted in the section 3 above.