

ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW IN GEORGIA

Promoting children and youth as agents of
change – My Rights My Voice

Effectiveness Review Series

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CONTENTS

Contents	2
1 Executive Summary.....	3
2 Introduction.....	5
3 Methodology	6
4 Short project summary.....	9
5 Situational summary.....	10
6 How accountable is Oxfam GB to partners in this project.....	11
6.1 Transparency.....	12
6.2 Feedback	12
6.3 Participation	13
7 How accountable are OGB and partners to communities in this project?	14
7.1 Transparency.....	15
7.2 Feedback	16
7.3 Participation	16
8 Transparency, feedback and participation	17
8.1 Strengths	17
8.2 Weaknesses.....	17
9 Evaluator’s view on validity of process, findings and results	18
10 Recommendations.....	19
Appendix 1: Matrix – accountability in our projects.....	20
Appendix 2: People interviewed	23
Appendix 3: Staff interview questions and summary	24
Appendix 4: Document review/evidence scoring sheet.....	27
Appendix 5: Oxfam’s Accountability Review	29
Appendix 6: Oxfam accountability to partners	31
Appendix 7: Accountability in your projects	32
Notes	33

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides the Accountability Review of the project 'My Rights My Voice' that has been implemented in Georgia since 2011 by three partner organisations: the Public Defender's Office (PDO) and Georgian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – Welfare Foundation and DEA, (the Association of Disabled Children and Mothers of Disabled Children) with the support of Oxfam. The purpose of the project is to promote child and youth health rights in two regions of Georgia – Samegrelo and Shida Kartli – and directly benefits young people between 14 and 18 years, family doctors and local civil society organisations (CSOs).

We were engaged to assess how Oxfam meets its accountability commitments to partners and communities. The aim of this report is to support Oxfam in improving its accountability to beneficiaries and partners. The standards, tools and guidance provided by Oxfam were used to conduct the analysis. The information and data analyses were used for the final recommendations on how Oxfam can improve its accountability. The evaluation was carried out in May 2014 by two external evaluators in two regions where Oxfam is active. Data were collected via different focus groups and individual interviews.

We were provided with full documentation concerning the project, including reports and documents generated during the implementation process. We made our conclusions according to personal observations based on the information and/or data provided.

The following provides definitions of the key terms and concepts:

'Accountability for Oxfam is the process through which an organisation balances the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making and activities, and delivers against this commitment. Oxfam's current definition of accountability is based on four dimensions: transparency, participation, learning and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms that allow the organisation to give account to, take account of, and be held to account by stakeholders.'

Oxfam defines these dimensions as follows:

- **Transparency:** when full project and financial information is made available in ways that are easily accessible for all stakeholders.
- **Feedback:** feedback and complaints systems are designed with stakeholders building on respected local ways of giving feedback. Projects demonstrably seek continuous improvement in the quality and use of complaints mechanisms.
- **Participation:** decisions are made jointly by project staff and stakeholders. Stakeholders contribute equally in making key decisions about the project throughout the entire cycle, including planning the budget.

In this review we focused mainly on three indicators: transparency, feedback and participation, and drew results from different sources, including Oxfam staff, partners, beneficiary communities and direct beneficiaries. For interviewing partners and Oxfam staff, a questionnaire was used.

The following tables assess the accountability between Oxfam and other participants.

How accountable is Oxfam to the partners in this project?

Oxfam's accountability to partners – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam score	(Average) Partner score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	3.5	3.5
Feedback	4	4	2.5
Participation	4	4	4
Average Total:	4	3.8	3.3
Partnership practices	3.5	3.3	3.5

This indicates that Oxfam's overall accountability to partners is satisfactory. However, there have been some shortcomings, such as inadequate involvement of all the partners in planning the project's main directions and misunderstanding by partners of the formal feedback mechanism included in the contracts. On the other hand, positive points are the active participation of partners in the implementation process and excellent partnership practices between Oxfam and its partners.

How accountable are OGB and partners to communities in this project?

Oxfam and partners' accountability to communities – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	3.5	3	3
Feedback	4	3	2
Participation	4	3.5	4
Average Total:	3.7	3.2	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	3.4	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3.2	3

The table above includes only selected findings. A full breakdown can be seen in the body text.

With regard to the accountability of Oxfam and partners to the beneficiaries, the main weaknesses are insufficient involvement of family doctors and the lack of a formal feedback mechanism. A positive side of the accountability process is that partners ensured and the active participation of the majority of the beneficiaries in decision-making processes concerning project activities.

2 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the accountability of the project 'My Rights My Voice' implemented in Georgia by various partners with the support of Oxfam.

At this point, we would like to express our gratitude to all the people we've met in the framework of the evaluation. We respect all the points of view we have heard and almost all the ideas and opinions can be read in the report without being identified.

We also express respect to all the participants of the projects; they have done a tremendous job for the benefit of the programme.

Before the start of evaluation process, we studied Oxfam's methodology for assessing the accountability of its projects. Almost all the projects are assessed similarly and the same matrix is used.

The overall recommendation that we have come to in this evaluation is that without enabling transparency, ensuring participation and implementing a feedback mechanism, Oxfam will not be able to achieve the required accountability standards. It is not only *what* is Oxfam doing, it is about *how* Oxfam is doing it.

3 METHODOLOGY

In terms of the methods used to examine Oxfam's accountability we used and/or adapted a number of the exercises provided by Oxfam in their Accountability Review package. Due to our understanding of accountability and the context we were examining, we chose not to adopt Oxfam's methodology in its entirety.¹

In order to get an overall picture of the project, we also studied all the provided documents, from the project proposal and Terms of Reference to the quarterly reviews, and almost all the documents elaborated in the framework of the project. We also reviewed several years' worth of annual reports of the Public Defender. After studying these documents, we were aware of the expectations of the donor and the rationales of the project. We met the Oxfam representative and all partner organisations. We have randomly selected representatives from all stakeholder groups who actively participated in the project: family doctors, NGOs, youth leaders and parents. We did not make a random selection of the larger body of people who Oxfam expected would also benefit from the project as there had been no attempt to be accountable to these people.

Based on the information and data gathered, we assessed the degree to which the activities carried out by the project met Oxfam's standards for accountability. The impact of the project and its activities were not the focus of our study and analysis.

The first meeting we had was with Mr Irakli Katsitadze, Oxfam Health Policy Programme Manager, who explained the project background, planning and implementation process. Mr Katsitadze provided information on the input of the partners: the DEA, Welfare Foundation and the PDO. Together, we made decisions about which communities, beneficiaries, end users, campaigners, advocacy targets and CBOs, etc. we should interview. We also took into account the geography of the area and the distribution of the population. Thus, we met representatives of all communities where the project team worked and where youth leaders implemented the different kinds of activities.

We did, however, depart from the Oxfam-advised methodology because while selecting the individuals and groups, we took into account local culture and traditions. It is not, for instance, traditional to talk with people in the streets or in public to discuss the pros and cons of any project. In such a situation, people usually avoid questions, try to please others with their responses and never say anything critical. Therefore, we asked almost all the groups to come to the partners' or different CSOs' offices. None of the hosts were present during interviews. We often chose CSOs' offices as we wanted everything to be as open as possible.

When deciding whom to meet, we first made a list of the individuals and communities, then tried to cover the whole regions and made a list of geographic locations. We asked the partners, the CSOs and the project manager to organise the meetings. As there were two of us acting as evaluators, we were able to divide the groups into two sections and talk with different individual and groups.

Again, we departed from the Oxfam-advised methodology by not randomly selecting the groups of people to meet. This was for pragmatic reasons – not everybody we wanted to talk to would necessarily have been available, so we selected those who were both available and willing to meet. Before the meetings we clearly explained to participants that no Oxfam or partner staff would listen in or be present or be able to identify what they said. We asked all participants for their consent to participate in the research and explained its aim.

We believe Oxfam respects the anonymity of the interviewees. We therefore never mention by name or otherwise identify participants. When quoting someone's ideas in the text, we do not attribute the source.

As we wanted to use the time of both the consultants and the participants efficiently, and meet maximum number of available people, we decided not to use the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise recommended by Oxfam (the ten seed technique). Instead we chose to talk with people, explain our purpose and listen to them. We, as individual consultants, took this decision in situ, based on our experience and competences. Even though we did not use the ten seed technique, people participated actively and we have had quite interesting and sometimes emotional discussions. All the results are given in the report.

It is important to note that people in one-to-one meetings were more open than when meeting in groups, so we used both methods of getting information.

We used some questions from the instructions provided (instructions for community visits):

- Who is the main person assigned to you for the project?
- How do you contact the NGO? Is there more than one way to do this?
- Who is the NGO is trying to help?
- What is the NGO's budget for its work here, and how are funds being spent?
- How easy is it for you to find out the information/answers to the questions we just asked?
- Have you ever asked for the spending information from different institutions?
- How much do Oxfam or the partner listen to your ideas and concerns?
- How much have you participated in decision-making and implementation of project activities?
- Who normally makes decisions about things that affect this community? Do you think they work well?
- How comfortable do you feel discussing your issues with the organisation's staff?
- How useful is the project to people?

Following the recommendations from Oxfam methodology papers, we randomly selected people to be interviewed from different beneficiary groups: family doctors, NGO representatives and youth leaders. The meeting environment for each interview was very friendly and comfortable in order to allow the beneficiaries to express openly their views and concerns and to give feedback. We met representatives of the partner organisations individually and youth leaders in groups. In order to ensure the maximum level of representation, while selecting people to meet, we took into account the geographical diversity of the beneficiaries. With the help of partner organisations operating in the regions concerned, we managed to meet family doctors and youth leaders from Zugdidi and Gori as well as from different villages. It has proven especially interesting to meet people from small villages (doctors and young people) in trying to understand how the project has influenced their everyday lives and work. We found that there is still a lack of systematic approach of State officials to health care issues, and everything is dependent on the personal relations and activities of individuals. Family doctors, who are an important and very valuable link in the chain, do not have information on the changes in State Health Care Programs. Whether or not individual doctors have information on what services are available to patients is dependent on how proactive those doctors are.

We also had a meeting with Mr Simon Gabrichidze, Executive Director of Welfare Foundation (WF), one of Oxfam's long-term and experienced partners. These two organisations have implemented a number of projects together and achieved important results. Welfare Foundation on its own has a good image and has formed close relationships, especially in these two regions. These aspects all helped the project implementation as a whole. Welfare Foundation currently implements other projects in the same regions and some beneficiaries are mutual. This makes WF activities attractive for young people and NGOs, as they benefit from different sources and get different kinds of experience and skills. Prevention of diabetes and tuberculosis and reduction in tobacco consumption are issues focused on by other WF projects. Thus, 'our' beneficiaries also involved in these initiatives enjoy an even greater benefit.

In Shida Kartli and Samegrelo regions, we met representatives from DEA, another partner organisation, as well as representatives of NGOs who had benefited from different project activities, youth club leaders and family doctors. This enabled us to study the degree of their participation and to gather their views, concerns and general feedback on different aspects of the implementation of the project.

At the beginning of each interview, we explained the purpose of our visit, emphasising the confidentiality factor and the fact that the evaluation report would contain recommendations and proposals that might be useful in their further activities.

In Shida Kartli region, we met five NGO representatives. Four were female and three were family doctors, two of which were female. We also met five young people, three of whom were girls.

In Zugdidi, we met four female NGO representatives, five female family doctors and seven young people, five of whom were girls.

The field phase took place between 16–25 May, 2014. We travelled to Shida Kartli and Samegrelo regions to hold group discussions with beneficiaries and to interview direct beneficiaries.

Interviews were semi-structured, following set templates as indicated in the Accountability Review (AR) Overview document.

A workshop with the participation of the Oxfam and partners' team was organised at the end of the assignment. The evaluators presented their findings and recommendations. During the discussion, the participants exchanged their views and approaches to the accountability issues and how the recommendations can be implemented.

We were positively surprised when meeting youth representatives (club leaders and club members). We know that young men are not enough engaged in similar community activities. Thus, the project was able to make the activities and topics interesting for both genders. We would like to keep an eye on that balance.

4 SHORT PROJECT SUMMARY

The project 'My Rights My Voice' is a global project implemented in Georgia and seven other countries and focuses on child and youth rights to receive education and health care. The goal of the project implemented in Georgia is, 'Improved health status of children and youth through sustainable changes in policies, practices and beliefs relating to child and youth health rights'.

The project purpose is 'Improving the fulfilment of health rights of up to 20,000 IDP children and youths in two post-conflict regions of Georgia (Samegrelo and Shida Kartli)'. To achieve these objectives, the project adopts strategies to capacity building, research and monitoring, awareness raising and campaigning, and policy and advocacy work on specific issues where Oxfam GB and partners can support /promote health rights, and therefore bring about improvements in health outcomes for children and youths.

The project is implemented in cooperation with Oxfam GB partner NGOs – Welfare Foundation, Association of disabled children and mothers of disabled children (DEA), the Georgia Public Defender's Office (including the Health Ombudsman), the civil society network 'Future Without Poverty', youth clubs (established and newly established) and family doctors. The project promotes children and youths as agents of change by fully involving them in campaigning and awareness raising, and by establishing youth clubs through which children and youths can organise events and consider the health rights' issues affecting them. Additionally, youth leaders are identified and developed, and given a platform in youth forums where duty bearers and policy makers can be addressed directly. This occurs within a context of greater awareness among the population about child and youth health rights as a result of media campaigns and other campaigning activities. The project addresses gender issues under the health rights work focusing on the reproductive health of young girls and boys, building its activities on gender analysis undertaken during the inception phase that identified the different concerns of female and male beneficiaries.

5 SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

Both regions involved in the project are situated at Georgian-Russian border and have therefore experienced several armed conflicts and displacements. Both of them, especially Shida Kartli, are considered to be among the poorest regions of the country. According to the World Bank, 14.8% of the Georgian population lives under the poverty line.² According to the same source, the annual income per capita is \$3,570. The principal source of income is money transfers from abroad followed by agriculture and small trade. Unemployment levels, health care and education issues are the most serious problems in these regions.

According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Zugdidi and Shida Kartli regions have offered a shelter for 111,000 IDPs (55% female, 45% male) with the percentage of youth and children up to 25% for both regions. IDP status allows them to receive a small social assistance payment from the central budget.

Given the situation, projects like this one are generally welcomed by the population, even though they prefer direct and immediate social or humanitarian assistance. The partners here had to work very hard to persuade community representatives, including parents and family doctors, of the importance of such a project for improving education and quality of life.

6 HOW ACCOUNTABLE IS OGB TO PARTNERS IN THIS PROJECT

We have collected data using the same questions across the three areas of analysis (Oxfam, partners and communities) and by having the rates.

Oxfam's accountability to the partners (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam score	Partner 1 score	Partner 2 score	(Average) Partner score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	3	4	3.5	3.5
Feedback	4	4	4	4	3
Participation	4	4	4	4	4
Average Total:	4	3.7	4	1.9	3.5
Partnership practices	3.5	2.0	4.0	3.3	3.5

Oxfam's accountability to the partners – summary table

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam score	(Average) Partner score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	3.5	3.5
Feedback	4	4	2.5
Participation	4	4	4
Average Total:	4	3.8	3.3
Partnership practices	3.5	3.3	3.5

6.1 TRANSPARENCY

Before starting the project, Oxfam discussed it in detail with some of the partners. Budgetary issues were reviewed thoroughly with their participation. However, some of them have claimed that project activities and finances allowed for their implementation had not been discussed with them before the project started. One of the partners has complained that the project was presented to them when the main direction had already been decided. 'We have not participated into the very beginning of the project. I am not saying that because something went wrong, but often people in Tbilisi, think, they know the situation in the regions better than we do here. It is not like that. We were given the budget and almost everything was almost decided,' said a representative of a partner organisation.

From our point of view, the partner itself has not been sufficiently active to propose its ideas and suggestions in a due moment and an appropriate form. Thus, Oxfam should have given the possibility to all the partners to fully participate in the planning process. That's why our score is less than Oxfam and Partners' evaluation. 'Yes, we are a long-term partner of Oxfam and maybe it is also written in the agreement. I mean what are our rights and what we can ask from Oxfam. But still, we are not involved in the budget planning process at the beginning stage. Probably I do not see the reason to be involved from the beginning; it is more the business of Oxfam and donor and not of us. We are more implementers.'

Oxfam's transparency to partners

Oxfam View	Community's score	Review Team
4	3.5	3.5

6.2 FEEDBACK

Oxfam and partners had regular contact during the implementation of the project, for instance before each activity, workshop, etc. New ideas, as well as shortcomings and risks, were discussed at monthly meetings. Therefore, all the existing concerns about the project seem to have been discussed. The formal feedback mechanism is included in the contract between Oxfam and each partner. Despite this, the partners seem not to have used it very often. According to Oxfam, just one partner has used the mechanism and on only one occasion. Generally, the partners prefer informal ways of communication in order to discuss their preoccupations and concerns about the project. The formal feedback mechanism seems to be barely fit for purpose and is not perceived as a healthy or constructive way to have a dialogue or report or resolve a problem. One could assign this shortcoming to Oxfam's staff, but in our opinion this seems to be more related to the Georgian way of thinking where informal channels of disagreement resolution are always preferred to any written procedures. This seems to be a cultural issue; people communicate easily informally, but they usually prefer not to write a complaint. 'I know there is a feedback mechanism in the contract. There has been a case when a partner has used it. I do not want to discuss this more. Personally, I prefer to discuss some questions informally than go and write a complaint.'

Oxfam View	Community's score	Review Team
4	4	3

6.3 PARTICIPATION

Our impression is that if there had been any lack of information at the beginning of the project from the point of view of some of the partners, Oxfam compensated for this at the implementation stage. The partners fully participated in the decision-making process, and presented their ideas and suggestions for project activities. During monthly meetings, the Project Governance Group, comprised of two Oxfam representatives and one representative from each of the partners, discussed overall project strategy, ways of improvement, and so forth. The partners have been able to present particular examples of their participation, for example, an NGO coalition for Welfare, which has actively participated in some of the project activities, or the youth network of DEA, which has served as model for youth clubs. ‘As I mentioned before, we did not participate at the planning stage; but we always had opportunity to participate and introduce some changes in the implementation phase. It was our right to choose a topic of training, also the sort of activity and discuss the methods of implementation. We used to fill up the questionnaire, we always were able to contact the people from Oxfam and they always take our desire into account,’ said a partner.

Oxfam View	Community’s score	Review Team
4	4	4

Partnership practices

Relationships between Oxfam and the partners are well developed and satisfactory from all points of view. All the partners have been treated as equals. Information has regularly been exchanged on each other’s experiences and aspirations. Oxfam representatives seem to fully understand local context and act in accordance. As to the partners, they seem to be aware of Oxfam projects and activities in general. According to them, during the project Oxfam representatives were always available for them during the project.

Oxfam View	Community’s score	Review Team
4	4	4

7 HOW ACCOUNTABLE ARE OGB AND PARTNERS TO COMMUNITIES IN THIS PROJECT?

Accountability of Oxfam and the partners to Shida Kartli community (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	FGDs score	KIIs score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	3	3	2	2.5	3
Feedback	4	4	3	2.5	2
Participation	4	4	3	3.5	4
Average Total:	3.7	3.7	2.7	2.8	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	3	3	3.2	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3	3	3	3

Accountability of Oxfam and the partners to Samegrelo community (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	FGDs score	KIIs score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	4	3	3.5	3
Feedback	4	4	3	3.5	2
Participation	4	4	4	3.5	4
Average Total:	4	4	3.3	3.5	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	4	3	3.7	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3	3	3.5	3

Oxfam and partner accountability to the communities (summary table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	3.5	3	3
Feedback	4	3	2
Participation	4	3.5	4
Average Total:	3.7	3.2	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	3.4	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3.2	3

7.1 TRANSPARENCY

The difference between the scores is due to the fact that even though Oxfam and the partners have tried to present project information to the beneficiaries, they could not reach all the groups. Financial information has not been shared or discussed at all with the beneficiaries. Therefore, the transparency required by Oxfam standards has not been achieved. 'We even did not know that we were able to participate in the planning process.' 'It is common. Usually, donors finance the projects and they have not asked for our opinion.' 'Do the individuals in Tbilisi or elsewhere know more about my need?'

For example, family doctors and local NGOs have a vague idea about the project purposes and seem not to differentiate various projects and activities they have participated in. Some of them have never heard of the project. Despite this, all the representatives of the communities seem to be familiar with the partners' work and have regular contact with them, the partners advising them in their everyday work. 'Thank you for everything you have done for us; it was helpful, but we also have much simpler and sometimes funny problems. We have not got upgraded information about the State programmes.' 'We lack information first of all.'

According to the children participating in the project activities, they were both implementing the project and benefiting from its outcomes at the same time. They are regularly consulted in order to determine their expectations and needs. They seem not to be involved in the budget planning process, but claim that all their ideas presented to the partners have been fully supported (e.g. theatre performances, flash mobs, etc.)

'We have chosen all the topics of activities, not anyone else. We have selected the participants. Thank you for giving the chance to tell the people openly about the problems in our society.'

Oxfam View	Community's score	Review Team
3.5	3	3

7.2 FEEDBACK

A formal mechanism of complaints for the stakeholders has not been established. However, at the end of each training session, a special form was distributed to obtain the point of view of the participants about that particular training and also to allow them to suggest topics for future trainings. Having said that, training evaluation forms cannot be considered as a satisfactory way to give feedback. Unlike the case for the partners, it would be more appropriate in the case of the beneficiaries to establish a mechanism that would permit them to be more proactive. 'Can I write a complaint? No, I did not know about it. I have just told these people what I did not like.'

With regard to the communities in general, in our opinion, establishing a formal feedback mechanism seems pointless. Given the lifestyle of IDPs and village inhabitants, they wouldn't use any formal mechanism of complaint. It would be better to think to an informal mechanism of interaction with the communities.

Oxfam View	Community's score	Review Team
4	3	2

7.3 PARTICIPATION

According to Oxfam, youth leaders have participated in the six-monthly reunions of the Project Governance Group and discussed strategic plans concerning the project with the representatives of Oxfam and the partners.

The partners have communicated actively with the communities – doctors and youth, asking for their views on different activities and their future development. During the interviews, both doctors and youth leaders were able to give examples of activities implemented following their suggestions. For example, youth leaders, with financial support of the project partners, have given street performances on health issues, and chosen and prepared topics for presentations, etc.

Oxfam View	Community's score	Review Team
4	3.5	4

Staff attitudes

Representatives of all groups participating in the project have expressed their gratitude to Oxfam and the partners for having been there to listen to their needs. The partners have been more available for the beneficiaries, which is normal given the fact that in the regions the partners have been almost fully responsible for the implementation of project activities.

'We met the young people from other region. We have never been there before. It was interesting to know their problems and understand their intentions.'

'It is pity, Facebook page is not so active we could benefit from it.'

8 TRANSPARENCY, FEEDBACK AND PARTICIPATION

8.1 STRENGTHS

- Oxfam has very good partnership relations with its partners, so they are quite well involved in the process. They also are informed about the feedback mechanism, but it seems they do not use it often. The informal mechanism works quite well.
- Good image of Oxfam in the regions helps the organisation to implement different activities and get involved the communities. The representatives of the community (like family doctors, parents, etc.) work and support the organisation and every project realised by Oxfam.
- Oxfam's partners are motivated and equipped with skills and competences to always listen and try to find the solution of the problem (from the community).
- Information about the project, its values and benefits, is well distributed among the beneficiaries.
- Gender participation/equality is well ensured at all stages of project implementation.

8.2 WEAKNESSES

- It seems that Oxfam does not involve either partners or the community in the project formulation stage; therefore some of them do not feel to be the partner, just the recipient. At the same time, their knowledge of local peculiarities would help the project and process.
- There is no involvement (or very little) of partners and community representatives in the budgeting process. If we want to make the project and its activities adequate for the expectations of local communities, we need to increase the involvement at the budgeting stage.
- A complaints mechanism is in place, but it is not often used by the partners and even less used by the community. It may also be because the community representatives do not really understand the result of complaints. There is a lack of publicly available information on how to write a complaint and what are the rules to discuss and/or to take the decision about.
- The voice of community representatives is not strongly heard. At the end of every training session, they have had opportunity to choose the topic of next session; nevertheless, it is not always a good way to hear their desires and take them into consideration.

9 EVALUATOR'S VIEW ON VALIDITY OF PROCESS, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

For the purpose of the project, it was of crucial importance to correctly select beneficiaries to be interviewed, and create a friendly and comfortable environment in order to get frank answers from the participants. It was critical to randomly select the people for interviews. We have taken decisions about how many persons should be interviewed, and to have representatives of all social groups and beneficiaries, based on geography, logistics and time available.

We believe that the participants/beneficiaries we met were open during the interviews. All the comments and criticisms can also be read from the evaluation report. As we wanted the participants to be as frank as possible and to listen to their open positions and opinions, we asked the partners not to inform them in advance about the aim of our visit. Some of the meetings were organised by the partners and with the support of Oxfam. We were not accompanied by representative of the partners or any other implementer agent. We were also alone in interviewing local people, so our conversations were not disturbed by others. The fact that we were two experts with different backgrounds in a team was a positive factor. We asked different kinds of questions with different nuances. Sometimes we organised mutual meetings and in some cases we split and had individual interviews. This made the processes quicker as well.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Oxfam staff shall become more active in spreading information about accountability, its mechanisms and positive sides, and will increase the involvement of different parties.
- Oxfam, with the support of its partners, shall organise periodic meetings about accountability with different segments of community.
- Oxfam can print visual aids and leaflets in order to spread information about the community's rights to be involved in the processes, transparency and feedback.
- (1) Ensure that a 'good' partnership conversation takes place and is documented; (2) ensure roles and responsibilities laid out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are agreed and understood by Oxfam staff and partner staff alike; (3) ensure accountability mechanisms between Oxfam and partners are discussed, agreed and understood; (4) likewise for accountability mechanisms between Oxfam/partner and communities. These discussions and agreements must take in to account what should happen if things go wrong.
- Oxfam must define all the indirect beneficiaries who can support the activities and who influences the different sectors in the regions. Good relations and partnerships with such beneficiaries or different sectors of community can be valuable for the final results of the project.
- Oxfam must involve the communities and their representatives to a greater extent at the stage of project design, budgeting and activity planning. The regular process of evaluations must be carried out together with the communities.
- A discussion needs to take place between Oxfam and partners as to how feedback and complaints from community members are best handled.
- The contact details of the appropriate person must be made available to stakeholders.
- Improve and formalise the informal, simplified feedback mechanism with key representatives of the communities, in order to allow everyone, including the most vulnerable members of society, to participate in the process. Oxfam and its partners shall always keep an eye on the gender equality issue and ensure the balance of women to men representation (in this case, we mean to keep more men engaged, as it is at this stage).

APPENDIX 1: MATRIX – ACCOUNTABILITY IN OUR PROJECTS

Oxfam GB Definition: ‘Accountability is the process through which an organisation balances the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making and activities, and delivers against this commitment. Accountability is based on four dimensions: transparency, participation, learning and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms that allow the organisation to give account to, take account of, and be held to account by stakeholders.’

Oxfam GB Principles: ‘We hold ourselves primarily accountable to people living in poverty, but we take our accountability to all stakeholders seriously, and continuously strive to balance their different needs. Increased accountability will be achieved and demonstrated through respectful and responsible attitudes, appropriate systems and strong leadership.’

	Levels			
Dimensions	1	2	3	4
Transparency	Limited project information is shared in an <i>ad hoc</i> manner with stakeholders. Most information is provided verbally and/or informally. It is generally provided at the beginning of the project and may not be updated.	Detailed project information is made publicly available: basic information about what Oxfam is, what it does, how it does it, who it works with, who funds it and basic information about project budget and activities. Methods for sharing information are chosen by project staff and/or partners.	Detailed information about Oxfam, the partner and the project, including budgetary information and M&E reports are made available in appropriate local languages using methods that are easy for stakeholders to access: this information is regularly updated. A public annual report of Oxfam’s work in a country is available in hard copies in all country offices.	Full project and financial information is made available in ways that are easily accessible for all stakeholders. Project staff negotiate how best to share project information about objectives, budget, progress and complaints-handling procedures with stakeholders: in ways that are relevant, accessible and appropriate to them. MEL findings are fed back and reviewed with stakeholders.
Feedback	No formal feedback or complaints mechanisms are in place.	Stakeholders are informed of their right to give feedback about projects, to make complaints and are offered at least one way to do both. Project staff ask for	Project has formal feedback and complaints mechanisms in place; actively encourages stakeholders to give feedback and make complaints; and records all	Feedback and complaints systems are designed with stakeholders, building on respected local ways of giving feedback. Systems encourage the

		information feedback from stakeholders.	feedback and complaints. Feedback and complaints always receive a response. Project demonstrably seeks continuous improvement in the quality and use of the complaints mechanisms.	most marginalised to respond and are comprehensive. Feedback and complaints always receive a response. Trends are monitored and learning is fed to the wider organisation. Project demonstrably seeks continuous improvement in the quality and use of complaints mechanism.
Participation	Stakeholders are informed about the project. Plans are discussed with key informants in the community, who are taken as representative of the full community. There is limited analysis of who holds authority in the local community and how.	Stakeholders are consulted about project plans. They provide information that project staff use to make key decisions about their work at all stages of the project cycle. Women and men are consulted separately, and main social groupings in the community are identified, including the most marginalised.	Decisions are made jointly by project staff, with stakeholders consulted about plans. Stakeholders regularly provide information that project staff use to make key decisions about their work, at all stages of the project cycle. Women and men are consulted separately, and teams ensure main social groupings in the community are identified and their voices heard.	Decisions are made jointly by project staff and stakeholders. Stakeholders contribute equally in making key decisions about the project, throughout the entire cycle, including planning the budget. Project staff make sure they work with individuals and organisations who truly represent the interests of different social groups. It is clear that Oxfam's projects are influenced by partners and communities where Oxfam works.
Relationships	Project staff understands that respect for stakeholders is important but are unsure how to strengthen these relationships.	Project staff are always polite and patient with stakeholders and try to understand local social expectations, and mostly speak local language(s). However staff	Programmes help stakeholders build up their self-confidence and self-respect. Project staff aim to help local people to analyse and tackle their own issues in their	Programme actively promotes dialogue and reflection between project staff and stakeholders on each other's experience. By working together new options for action are developed without

		do not have much time to devote to this challenge.	own ways. Formal mechanisms exist to support this aspiration.	ideas being unilaterally imposed. Formal mechanisms support this aspiration and are regularly reviewed and adapted jointly by project staff and stakeholders.
Standards	Project team is not aware of the international standards or codes that Oxfam is signed up to.	Relevant international standards or codes that Oxfam is signed up to, are clearly referenced in the project approach, and communicated to stakeholders.	Relevant international standards or codes that Oxfam is signed up to are clearly referenced in the project activities, and a clear process to measure performance against these standards is set out. Review and reflection on performance is done <i>ad hoc</i> .	Relevant international standards or codes that Oxfam is signed up to demonstrably inform project design and delivery. Clear processes for measuring and reflecting on performance against these standards exist, and are used to develop plans to improve future practice.

APPENDIX 2: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

The partners:

- Staff from Oxfam, PDO, Welfare Foundation, DEA

NGO representatives from Shida Kartli:

- Staff from Biliki, Women Consulting Centre ‘Saxli’– Gori branch, Nabiji Momavlisken, Family Violence Victims Shelter; National Network for Protection against Violence

NGO representatives from Zugdidi region:

- Staff from Union Nergebi, Rehabilitation and Development Center Tanaziani, Medical Psychological Center Mnatobi, DEA

Family doctors from Shida Kartli:

- From areas: Tkviavi, Dici, Tirdznisi

Family doctors from Zugdidi region:

- From areas: Oktomberi, Orulu, Rukhi, Rukhi, Akhali Abastumani

Youth leaders from Shida Kartli:

- 5 people aged 15 – 17 years old

Youth leaders from Samegrelo region:

- 7 people aged 14 – 18 years old

Representatives of general community:

Parents: We have met parents of young people who were somehow involved in and/or influenced by the project activities. We met 25 parents (10 fathers and 15 mothers) in Shida Kartli and 45 (15 fathers and 30 mothers) in Samegrelo region.

Young people: We met young people from the youth clubs (youth club leaders are mentioned separately), in the process of preparing the activities. In different regions they were engaged in the preparation of different activities, such as street performances for Children’s day (June 1). In Shida Kartli region, we met 25 children (of 14–16 years age) and in Samegrelo 55 (of the same age).

APPENDIX 3: STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SUMMARY

For the interviewing of the Oxfam staff we used the standard Staff Interview Form (document 010). We do not provide all the answers to the questions, thus we have used the answers to analyse the overall process and results of the project. Below are the questions asked.

General Questions

1. Are you aware of any guiding documentation for Oxfam's work on accountability to partners and communities?
2. What are the steps you are taking to improve/increase accountability with your staff and the partners and communities Oxfam works with?
3. Tell me about three things that you do as a manager to increase/improve accountability in the project in question.
4. Have you seen and do you use Oxfam's Code of Conduct? How do you use it? How much do the people you work with know about the Code of Conduct? About not having exploitative or abusive relationships? About respecting local culture? About their responsibility to report abuses?

Transparency

- How much of the following information is shared with staff, partners and / or the communities with whom we work?
 - ✓ Background information about Oxfam partner organisations
 - ✓ Contact information for Oxfam and partner organisations
 - ✓ Oxfam's Code of Conduct
 - ✓ How partners and communities can make complaints about Oxfam work or staff behaviour
 - ✓ Staff roles and responsibilities
 - ✓ Criteria for inclusion in projects
 - ✓ Duration of the project
 - ✓ Financial summary of activities – as relating to them
 - ✓ Evaluations and progress reports
 - ✓ How information from participation activities or ongoing feedback has contributed to decision-making and changes to the project
- Are Oxfam's Minimum Standards for transparency in our programmes being met?

Feedback

- Does Oxfam, here, have processes appropriate to the context so that partners and populations can provide feedback and influence on:
 - ✓ The design of the project?
 - ✓ How a project is being implemented?

- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation of the project?
- What was the last important piece of feedback you got about the project? How did this information get to you?
- How is feedback used to design or improve project aims or activities?

Participation

- Have you defined and documented the processes through which you:
 - ✓ Identify affected populations and their representatives, in reference to gender, age, diversity and special needs?
 - ✓ Enabled women, men, girls, boys and other stakeholders to participate in all stages of the project cycle?
- How does Oxfam ensure that partners and communities are involved in making judgments about the effectiveness of projects? How do you do this? What degree of confidence do you have in partners and communities REALLY telling us what they think and feel?

Partnership

- How accountable do you think we are to our partners in general? And to the partner(s) in this project in particular?
- How does Oxfam address the issue of partners' and Oxfam's joint accountability to communities? How is this ensured? How do partners feel about this? Has much training/support/ encouragement been necessary? What specifically has been done and how successful do you think it was?
- Does Oxfam have an agreement with its partners on how complaints against each other can be raised in a safe and accessible way?

Summary of the interview with the Project Coordinator from Oxfam

General information

According to the Oxfam Project Coordinator, he is familiar with Oxfam's guiding documentation on accountability to partners and communities and tries to use its principles in his relationship with partners and communities. In order to increase accountability, he regularly asks for their points of view on the project's activities, strong and weak points, problems and challenges. He tries to include this information in the quarterly reports of the project. The three things he uses to improve accountability are:

- Organising regular meetings with the partners and/or beneficiaries of the project in order to exchange ideas and impressions concerning the project, discussing further actions and initiatives.
- Identifying special needs of the partners and the beneficiaries in order to adjust the project to them.
- Making all information in his possession available to the partners and the beneficiaries.

Transparency

The Project Coordinator stated that detailed information on Oxfam's partner organisations is available online – they all have web sites or Facebook pages where their former or ongoing activities are listed, and reports and other relevant documents are published. Oxfam's Code of Conduct as well as the information concerning complaint mechanisms, and roles and responsibilities of each of the participants are included in the contracts between Oxfam and the partners. All the information on the project, e.g. duration and financial summaries of activities,

are available in the Project Proposal document elaborated with the participation of the partner organisations. Quarterly reports are prepared by the Oxfam Project Coordinator and made available for the partners as well as the beneficiaries. Changes to the project activities are made in accordance with the findings and information gathered at the regular meetings with partners and biannual meetings with the communities

Feedback

The Project Coordinator admitted that even though the complaint procedures are included in the contracts with the partners, they are not used by them. Thus the regular meetings with all those concerned with the project is an excellent opportunity to invite feedback and to ensure all the stakeholders participate in the implementation process. Thus, several training subjects have been chosen in accordance with the suggestions made by the partners or the beneficiaries. A special form filled in at the end of each training was another way to determine what is expected from the project.

Participation

According to the Oxfam Project Coordinator, the processes through which he has identified affected populations and their representatives in reference to gender, age, diversity and special needs were identified at the elaboration of the Project Proposal and at the first stage of the project. All possible effort has been made throughout the implementation process to ensure gender and age diversity of participants. The partners know local communities well and have contributed a considerable advantage from this point of view. They know exactly with whom to talk, and are experienced in working with all groups of local society, including IDPs, CSOs and youth. They are sensitive to gender issues and are already familiar with Oxfam standards.

Partnership

Oxfam accountability standards are very high and the Project Coordinator always tries to act in accordance to them. Together with the partners and with their help he has ensured that all the stakeholders receive complete information concerning the different aspects of the project, including possible ways of development. He has the impression that not all the stakeholders have used the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. He is of the opinion that the project Accountability Review is a good opportunity to evaluate the quality of the partnership between Oxfam and its partners and of the performance of all the participants.

APPENDIX 4: DOCUMENT REVIEW/EVIDENCE SCORING SHEET

Evidence of country level accountability activity and commitment	Supplied Y or N?		Quality 1–4	Total
An accountability plan for the programme	Y	1	3	3
Acct. plan uploaded into OPAL	Y	1	4	4
Records of consultation at country and programme level	Y	1	4	4
JCAS, programme logic model and MEAL plan are provided, logical and relevant	Y	1	4	4
Partnership Policy – provided, known of and in use	Y	1	4	4
Open Information Policy – provided, known of and in use	Y	1	4	4
Complaints Policy – provided, known of and in use	Y	1	3	3
Code of Conduct – provided, known of and in use	Y	1	4	4
Evidence provided of acct. being systematically addressed	Y	1	2	2
Country, programme and project details accessibly publicised	Y	1	3	3
Complaints recorded and reported to RC	Y	1	4	4

Total **39 / 44**

Oxfam's accountability to partners

Partner assessment	Y	1	3.5	3.5
Capacity building plan	Y	1	2	2
MoU/document with clearly outlined roles and responsibilities	Y	1	4	4
Exit strategy	N	0	1	0

Total **9.5 / 16**

Project Level – Transparency

Record of meetings held at Oxfam, partner, people affected by project	Y	1	4	4
Relevant contact details provided	Y	1	4	4
Project information made available to partners or people affected by project	Y	1	4	4

Transparency considerations of women and men considered and addressed	Y	1	4	4
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Total **16 / 16**

Project Level – Feedback

Feedback or complaints records	N	0	1	0
Record of changes made to project as a result of feedback	N	0	1	0
Written responses to complainants	N	0	1	0
Feedback considerations of women and men considered and addressed	N	0	1	0

Total **0 / 16**

Project Level – Participation

Consultation documents exist	Y	1	4	4
Consultation docs on OPAL	Y	1	4	4
Records of participatory monitoring	Y	1	3	3
Participation considerations of women and men considered and addressed	Y	1	3	3

Total **14 / 16**

APPENDIX 5 OXFAM'S ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW (AR)

Table 1: Oxfam's accountability to the partners (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam score	Partner 1 score	Partner 2 score	(Average) Partner score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	3	4	3.5	3.5
Feedback	4	4	4	4	3
Participation	4	4	4	4	4
Average Total:	4	3.7	4	1.9	3.5
Partnership practices	3.5	2.0	4.0	3.3	3.5

Table 2: Oxfam's accountability to the partners – summary table

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam score	(Average) Partner score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	3.5	3.5
Feedback	4	4	2.5
Participation	4	4	4
Average Total:	4	3.8	3.3
Partnership practices	3.5	3.3	3.5

Table 3: Accountability of Oxfam and the partners to Shida Kartli community (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	FGDs score	Kills score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	3	3	2	2.5	3
Feedback	4	4	3	2.5	2
Participation	4	4	3	3.5	4
Average Total:	3.7	3.7	2.7	2.8	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	3	3	3.2	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3	3	3	3

Table 4: Accountability of Oxfam and the partners to Samegrelo community (full table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	FGDs score	Klls score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	4	4	3	3.5	3
Feedback	4	4	3	3.5	2
Participation	4	4	4	3.5	4
Average Total:	4	4	3.3	3.5	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	4	3	3.7	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3	3	3.5	3

Table 5: Oxfam and partner accountability to the communities (summary table)

Accountability Indicator	(Average) Oxfam/Partner score	(Average) Community score	Review Team score
Transparency	3.5	3	3
Feedback	4	3	2
Participation	4	3.5	4
Average Total:	3.7	3.2	3
Staff attitudes	n/a	3.4	3
Satisfaction	n/a	3.2	3

APPENDIX 6: OXFAM ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARTNERS

For this exercise, the partners responded to the questionnaires giving their reasoning for each score. The identity of the respondents is kept confidential and we give only the scores given to each item.

The mean scores are as follows:

	Score	Reasoning
Transparency	3.5	In general, the partners consider that Oxfam is transparent enough in planning and implementing its projects and activities, although there have been some exceptions. Oxfam always discusses ways to improve things with the partners. Changes to the project are documented with indications on how decisions were taken. The partners have full access to all documentation related to the project.
Feedback	4	According to the partners, they have the opportunity to use the feedback mechanism described in the contract with Oxfam. The partners could not give a concrete example of how they ever used the feedback mechanism.
Participation	4	Men and women have equal opportunities to participate in all activities related to the project. There has never been any case of discrimination by gender.
Partnership	3	Oxfam has a Partnership Policy document which describes in detail a plan of cooperation between Oxfam and its partners. Oxfam supports institutional development and capacity building of its partners. It would, however, be preferable if this kind of activity was more frequent. Also, the partners often do not have a clear idea on the phase-out strategy.

APPENDIX 7: ACCOUNTABILITY IN YOUR PROJECTS

The purpose of this exercise was to examine the level of accountability that Oxfam and partner staff believe is being experienced by communities. We have used the matrix to find what the people affected by it feel about the project. The table shows briefly what the Oxfam and partner staff think about it. We have judged these issues during the meetings. The reasoning behind the scores is given in the text and analysis.

	Score	Reasoning
Transparency	3	Detailed information about Oxfam, the partners and the project, including budgetary information and M&E reports, is made available in appropriate local languages using methods that are easy for stakeholders to access: this information is regularly updated. A public annual report of Oxfam's work in the country is available in hard copy in all country offices.
Feedback	3	The project has formal feedback and complaints mechanisms in place; actively encourages stakeholders to give feedback and make complaints; and records all feedback and complaints. Feedback and complaints always receive a response. The project demonstrably seeks continuous improvement in the quality and use of the complaints mechanisms.
Participation	4	Decisions are made jointly by project staff and stakeholders. Stakeholders contribute equally in making key decisions about the project throughout the entire cycle, including planning the budget. Project staff make sure they work with individuals and organisations who truly represent the interests of different social groups. It is clear that Oxfam's projects are influenced by partners and communities where Oxfam works.
Relationship	4	The programme actively promotes dialogue and reflection between project staff and stakeholders on each other's experience. By working together new options for action are developed without ideas being unilaterally imposed. Formal mechanisms support this aspiration and are regularly reviewed and adapted jointly by project staff and stakeholders.
Standards	2	Relevant international standards or codes that Oxfam is signed up to are clearly referenced in the project approach, and communicated to stakeholders.

NOTES

1 As the precise methodology was not followed as prescribed by Oxfam it is unfortunate the results of the Georgia review are not directly comparable with the results of other similar reviews. Oxfam will put tighter checks and balances for its next set of reviews to ensure any departure from the prescribed methodology is understood and agreed to be completely necessary.

2<http://data.worldbank.org/country/georgia>

Oxfam Effectiveness Reviews

For more information, or to comment on this report, email ppat@oxfam.org.uk

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OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organisations 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:

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