

**OXFAM AMERICA**  
Evaluation Report

# **BRINGING INNOVATION TO SCALE**

A SYNTHESIS OF LEARNING FROM FOUR  
PROJECTS OF THE ECONOMIC INNOVATIONS  
INCENTIVES FUND

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**OXFAM**  
America



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*This is an evaluation of Oxfam America's Economic Innovations Incentives Fund Projects. The projects had been operating in 4 countries since 2008 and this evaluation covers the work undertaken between 2008 and 2011.*

*The major evaluation activities took place in 2013. The evaluation was carried out by Jonathan Padwe through a competitive process and reflects the findings as reported by him/her/them as validated with stakeholders. The evaluation was managed by Eloisa Devietti, Program Advisor and Gina Castillo, Climate Change Program Lead from Oxfam America, and commissioned by Gina Castillo in the Programs Department.*

*For additional information regarding the evaluation Terms of Reference, please refer to the report appendices.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes learning from four Oxfam America projects undertaken with support from the Economic Innovation Incentives Fund (EIIF). The EIIF projects seek to promote institutional learning and develop innovation in climate change adaptation. They are also designed specifically with a view towards scaling up impact: the question of which individual innovations developed with EIIF funding are worthy of scale up, and how that process can take place, was a central concern in producing this report. Building on research from four country reports, in Mali, Ethiopia, Peru and Cambodia, the report seeks to address two principal objectives, or sets of questions:

- What can we say about approaches and techniques in funding and learning from innovation projects in general? What was successful and should be replicated and what were some of the less successful areas and pitfalls?
- What were some of the lessons learned around Oxfam's support for climate change adaptation, given our values and mission as well as our operating model?

The EIIF serves as a model for creative and agile funding in support of innovation and learning. The major accomplishments of the EIIF are: (1) fostering creativity and innovation in the response to climate change within OA and among its partners; (2) establishing the expertise of Oxfam America in the field of climate change, and assisting OA to leverage that position; (3) supporting primary change agents to improve their organizational abilities, and to give voice to their demands for livelihood rights in the face of the climate challenge.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Several of the EIIF interventions showed great promise and should be considered for scaling up. The most promising and successful efforts included: (1) engaging with community-level organizations, including work with community assemblies and local government and work with local social institutions; (2) engaging with national leaders to influence national and international policy agendas; (3) awareness raising campaigns; and (4) civil society networks; where these networks are able to obtain the buy-in of major actors and occupy a central place within processes of information sharing, networking, and policymaking, the establishment of civil society networks can be successful.

Several of the EIIF interventions were unsuccessful or require significant further modification. These included: (1) early warning systems and agro-meteorological

forecasting; these are strategies that show promise but they faced significant bureaucratic and technological challenges when they were implemented in EIIF projects; (2) approaches that rely on technical fixes and transfer of technology; the standardization and replicability of these approaches, and their reliance on inputs and expertise that originate from outside of the receiving environment present significant hurdles that were not fully overcome; and (4) civil society networks; while they have the potential to be successful, the proliferation of these networks has introduced significant burdens to the civil society member organizations, diminishing their effectiveness. The EIIF projects encountered a number of obstacles that occurred in more than one setting, and limited the ability of the projects to achieve their goals. These included constraints on advocacy, partner financial mismanagement, and structural problems such as short project cycles and institutional turnover within Oxfam and among its partners.

This review has also identified a series of key insights and lessons that OA can learn from the EIIF experience. The first of these concerns the importance that the establishment of the EIIF gave to innovation, creativity, and learning in response to new challenges like climate change. By signaling that OA as an institution is serious about bringing innovation to scale, the establishment of the EIIF and the expectations it generated created a creative space within which OA staff and their colleagues could think creatively about ways to respond to an emerging challenge.

A second insight concerns the difficulty of defining climate change adaptation: because adaptation involves structural change and occurs over long time-frames and at multiple geographic scales, it presents significant challenges to Oxfam America as an organization. Oxfam America should consider how it can adjust institutional time frames – driven as they are by funding and reporting cycles, by institutional turnover within OA and within its partners, etc. – to influence processes like climate change that occur at longer temporal scales. “Adaptation” is also a concept that can be interpreted and defined in many different ways. In this regard, the concept of “adaptation” to climate change is similar to the idea of “resilience” – a keyword that figures prominently in the strategic plans of both Oxfam America and Oxfam.

A third insight concerns Oxfam America’s “Primary Change Agents.” While OA asserts the importance of engaging with primary change agents as equal partners, and suggests that OA projects seek to help primary change agents realize their own visions of development based on their own ideas of success and on their capabilities, in fact primary change agents did not appear to have played a significant role in helping to identify the nature of the problem that EIIF projects were designed to address. Primary change agents were not included early on in the process of defining the climate change problem and they were not included as innovators who have a role to play in devising responses to that

problem. This report argues for including primary change agents in the problem definition phase of intervention design and policymaking processes.

A final key insight this report takes from its assessment of the EIIF concerns the nature of technology transfer approaches. While the development of technological improvements is one of the key ways in which human societies respond to new challenges like climate change, some aspects of the EIIF projects were built on models of technology transfer that seem, in retrospect, unwieldy. Agro-forecasting and early warning systems relied on complex chains of custody of information, and placed undue faith in forecasting and modeling expertise located within regional and national government bureaucracies. The resulting systems were vulnerable and did not function according to plan. This report suggests that “tech fixes” are likely more successful when they involve building on the capabilities of the communities whom projects are intended to benefit. Doing so requires recognizing that innovation is a two-way street, and that primary change agents have a role to play in the development of adequate technological responses to climate change.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gained from research into the four EIIF projects under review, this report argues for the following main recommendations:

1. Innovation funding is useful and important. Innovation funding mechanisms like the EIIF represent a significant opportunity for Oxfam America. The very existence of a fund like the EIIF sends signals to regional offices and partners that OA values innovation and is willing to take risks in the interest of institutional learning. Providing a space where projects are evaluated on the basis of the learning they can afford is an important outcome of innovation funding efforts.
2. Involve primary change agents early on in defining the problem to be addressed. Problem definition is a key phase of policy response and intervention. Oxfam America and its partners should work together with primary change agents to define the problems that are most significant to primary change agents, and should work with them to identify solutions.
3. Recognize that innovation is a two-way street. Technology transferred from outside of the lives and environments where primary change agents live is likely to be mismatched. Furthermore, rural farmers and pastoralists have an expertise born of their lived experience. Oxfam America and its partners should search for ways to innovate *together* with men and women living in poverty.
4. Make assumptions explicit and thoroughly vet proposed interventions. While the EIIF projects were reviewed by internal experts, the process did not identify

unrealistic assumptions and other problems in the projects' concept notes. It is significant that concept notes and proposals upon which a significant amount of EIIF funding was based did not define the problem to be addressed adequately, and did not make explicit assumptions about the nature of the problem, or about the project's theory of change. OA's efforts would benefit from more thorough proposals in which problems are clearly defined and assumptions and hypotheses are clearly indicated. Peer review processes should be strengthened to thoroughly test ideas before they are put into action.

5. Improve protocols of benchmarks, monitoring, and evaluation. A significant shortcoming of the EIIF projects was the lack of baseline information, and the failure to identify variables that could remain constant over the life of the project. Benchmarks for achievement were not set, and monitoring efforts did not track the impact of project activities on the behavior of variables. As a result it is difficult to assess the success or failure of many of the innovations introduced by the EIIF projects. Greater attention to the basics of monitoring, evaluation and learning should be incorporated into innovation projects in the future, to increase the ability of Oxfam America to learn from them.

# INTRODUCTION

This report provides a synthesis of the lessons that have come out of studies of four projects undertaken with support of the Economic Innovation Incentives Fund (EIIF) . The report, which is based on field research, is part of an effort to identify those innovations that merit scaling up, to think about the processes through which scale-up of innovation is possible, and to draw lessons learned to inform future work by Oxfam America.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EIIF

The Economic Innovations Incentive Fund was established in 2007 with the financial support and leadership of then-chair of Oxfam America's board of directors, Janet McKinley. The fund was established to support Oxfam America's effort to innovate in the field of climate change adaptation. An internal OA document describes the Fund's objectives in the following way:

The Economic Innovations Incentive Fund will help build economic assets, gain security, and strengthen livelihoods of poor people and communities by encouraging innovative programs and methods for poverty alleviation, and programs that make a real and direct impact on the lives of poor people. Innovation can take many forms, but will always require funding that is flexible and provides resources that strengthen incomes, productive assets, skills, and material well-being of poor people. These programs should demonstrate how such innovations can be replicable, scalable, or leverage other resources.<sup>1</sup>

The Fund provides grants to OA regional offices to implement projects. The Fund provided its first two grants in 2007, and in 2008 all southern regional offices were invited to submit concept notes, resulting in a series of EIIF projects undertaken between 2007 and the present. The projects under review were located in Ethiopia, Mali, Peru and Cambodia; EIIF investments in these four countries totaled over \$1.6 million.

The EIIF is unique in its combined emphasis on promoting innovation, on achieving learning about innovations developed within OA climate change program work, and bringing innovation to scale. These emphases on innovation, learning, and scale are discussed in a guidance piece describing EIIF:

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam America, *Format for Review of EIIF Proposals* (Boston: Oxfam America, September 15, 2008), 1.

EIIF projects are learning projects for Oxfam. They offer us valuable opportunities to draw out key lessons that will help us to strategically place ourselves in climate change discussions and influence practices on multiple levels: internally, within OA, and externally, with Oxfam affiliates and other actors.

According to the same document, “the EIIF projects allow us to simultaneously pursue these goals and test a number of hypotheses about what ‘good adaptation’ looks like in different environments”.<sup>2</sup>

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

This report synthesizes learning from four case studies. The case studies reviewed projects undertaken with funding from the Economic Incentives Innovation Fund in Mali, Ethiopia, Peru and Cambodia. The EIIF projects were developed to encourage innovation in climate change adaptation, and to assess the potential for OA to bring these innovations to scale.

Each case study has been described in detail in a series of four country reports, which are referenced throughout this evaluation. The details of particular projects are all explained in greater depth in the country reports. This synthesis report seeks to identify the most important lessons that can be learned from Oxfam America’s experience with the EIIF in these four countries, in part through a comparative examination of the four cases.

According to the Terms of Reference guiding this evaluation, the individual country reports “assess if the EIIF projects have achieved their intended objectives and identify factors that have hindered or facilitated the success of the project.” In contrast, the synthesis report has as its goal to “synthesize the lesson learned from the different projects for Oxfam America.”

## KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Terms of Reference identify two primary questions guiding this evaluation:

- What can we say about approaches and techniques in funding and learning from innovation projects in general? What was successful and should be replicated and what were some of the less successful areas and pitfalls?

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<sup>2</sup> Oxfam America, *EIIF Projects: Guidance Piece*, OA internal document (Boston: Oxfam America, 2009), 1.

- What were some of the lessons learnt around Oxfam’s support for climate change adaptation, given our values and mission as well as our operating model?

These key questions were further elaborated in the conceptual framework that guided the research; see “Evaluation Methodology”, below.

## EVALUATION TEAM

The principal investigator and lead consultant for the project is Jonathan Padwe, an anthropologist at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, who developed the research framework and undertook field research in Ethiopia, Peru and Cambodia. Field research and the writing of the country report for Mali was carried out by Liene Vandamme, a graduate student in climate change and development studies at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The key questions identified for this evaluation were further refined in the conceptual framework elaborated for this review. The conceptual framework is described in a 25-page research proposal. To answer the key questions, the proposal identifies six domains of inquiry that were to be explored during field research:

- Questions of intention and conceptualization of the EIIF projects
- Questions of process, implementation and accomplishment
- Questions of partner performance
- Budget and financial aspects
- Public accountability and communication
- Innovation and learning

The approach to research was based on grounded theory approaches to data analysis and learning, the policy studies literature, and emerging approaches to questions of climate, power and change from within the social and environmental sciences. The conceptual framework also identified the approach to be adopted with respect to two key concepts, adaptation and scale-up. These concepts and the challenges they pose are discussed in greater detail in the body of the present report.

The research for this report consisted of over 100 interviews with Oxfam America staff in the United States and in each of the four countries, with partner organizations, with the staff of government departments, international agencies and multilateral institutions, with participants in research and advocacy networks, with in-country experts, and with the primary change agents who are involved in OA's work.

## EVALUATION LIMITATION

Taken together, the research effort dedicated to producing this synthesis report is substantial. However, in each country the amount of time that key participants were able to devote to providing information about the projects was limited, as was the time of the researchers. In some cases key individuals were unavailable to answer questions. Perhaps the main limitation on the evaluation was the very basic fact that most in-country interviews were arranged by Oxfam America staff. Their work facilitating the consultancy shaped the contours of what could be known about the EIIF. This factor notwithstanding, it should be noted that in all cases Oxfam America staff were forthcoming about opposing viewpoints, and in one or two cases helped the researchers identify and make contact with individuals who could be expected to offer some negative opinions of OA's work. The openness of Oxfam America as an institution to external critical analysis, both in the form of divergent opinions and in the effort to engage outside researchers to provide an external review of the EIIF, is notable.

# EVALUATION FINDINGS

This report synthesizes learning from four EIIF projects in order to provide Oxfam America with an external perspective on its work on climate change adaptation. In particular, the evaluation seeks to answer the following questions: What are we can we say about approaches and techniques in funding and learning from innovation projects in general? What was successful and should be replicated and what were some of the less successful areas and pitfalls? What were some of the lessons learned around Oxfam's support for climate change adaptation, given the organization's values and mission as well as its operating model?<sup>3</sup>

The findings below draw on four country reports prepared for Oxfam America to analyze EIIF projects in Mali, Ethiopia, Peru and Cambodia. These reports provide in-depth analysis of the particulars of the EIIF in action.<sup>4</sup> Assessing the achievements of the EIIF across four cases, some clear commonalities emerge. Program offices, partners, and primary change agents faced similar challenges, and in some cases proposed similar interventions. Taken together, the findings from individual projects provide insights into the way that Oxfam America has sought to foster innovation in the response to the challenge of climate change.

## 1. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Economic Innovation Incentives Fund is a creative and agile funding mechanism that has enabled Oxfam America to engage in learning and innovation around the issue of global climate change. The EIIF represents a significant element of OA's effort to confront the climate challenge. While the accomplishments of individual EIIF projects are discussed in detail in the individual country reports, it is important to mention here that the Fund has had a significant impact at the level of the institution, and within the global effort to develop approaches to address climate change. It should be noted, for instance, that the EIIF played an important role in allowing Oxfam America to become a global leader on the climate issue. The EIIF's major accomplishments may be thought of as constituting three distinct types of achievement.

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<sup>3</sup> These questions are drawn from the Terms of Reference guiding this evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> Readers seeking further clarification and support for the points made here will find ample discussion in the individual country reports.

## **1. Fostering creativity and innovation**

As is discussed in some detail later in this report, the EIIF fostered innovation and creative thinking by Oxfam America and its partners. The Fund established an institutional space within which it was possible for regional offices to feel they had license to innovate, outside of the “business as usual” model that governs much of the work they do. The existence of the fund and the message it sent throughout OA that innovation in the response to climate change was valued and supported appears to have had a significant impact on the way that individuals within the organization understand their role and the role of good ideas in supporting Oxfam’s mission.

In individual EIIF projects, innovation took many forms. In some cases, the projects broke conceptual barriers, demonstrating, or attempting to demonstrate, that technological or material inputs that had previously been reserved for medium-sized actors were appropriate to smallholder farmers and marginalized communities. The introduction of sprinkler irrigation to poor pastoralists in high Andean Peru was one such effort that sought to overturn the previously held common wisdom about what size venture was deserving of such a system. In some cases, such as in the case of the “climate proofing” efforts of the Mali project, planning efforts with individual producers’ groups helped them to identify their adaptation needs and to update their planning processes to reflect these needs. In all of these cases, the intentional effort to identify that which is innovative and assess its potential in a series of field-based exercises was characteristic of the accomplishments of the EIIF.

## **2. Establishing expertise and leveraging position**

A second major achievement of the Economic Innovation Incentives Fund was its contribution to Oxfam America’s emergence as a leader in the field of climate change adaptation, an outcome that was also possible because of work on a climate change campaign and policy work on climate change being undertaken elsewhere in the organization. Oxfam America established a leadership position globally, especially within the effort to obtain a fair deal on climate at COP15 of the UNFCCC. Oxfam America’s work helped to frame the issue of adaptation to climate change as a rights issue: the world’s largest economies had created the climate crisis through decades of unsustainable development, and, as a result, the countries of the Global South were unfairly subjected to the risks of climate change, even as they were being asked to assist in mitigation efforts.<sup>5</sup> Oxfam played an important leadership role in identifying climate change not just as an environmental issue, but indeed as a development issue and as a rights issue.

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<sup>5</sup> Julie-Anne Richards, Antonio Hill, and Richard King, *Hang Together or Separately? How Global Co-Operation Is Key to a Fair and Adequate Climate Deal at Copenhagen*, Oxfam Briefing Paper 128 (Oxfam International, 2009).

The EIIF helped to solidify Oxfam America's leadership position on climate change in several ways. In some cases, the fund supported the efforts of national delegations to take leadership on the question of adaptation at the UNFCCC and in other forums worldwide. This was the case in Ethiopia, where the EIIF-backed Climate Change Forum – Ethiopia played an important role supporting the national delegation; Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi would emerge as a key figure in the negotiations and in setting climate change policy globally, even as he participated in planning processes and symposia hosted by CCF-E and supported with EIIF funding.

In other cases, the EIIF supported national level awareness-raising campaigns, or supported national-level workshops to develop strategies for climate change adaptation. In all of these cases, Oxfam America and its partners built on the reputation that OA had established as a leader on the issue, and leveraged that position to advance approaches to climate change policy that conform to the organization's rights-based approach to securing livelihoods.

### **3. Organizational ability of primary change agents**

A key adaptation strategy for Oxfam America and its partners in the EIIF projects was that of providing information to and building the capacity of primary change agents and OA partners in civil society and government. The EIIF projects addressed this need through a range of approaches, including mass media campaigns, workshops, participatory planning processes and the like. These and other efforts allowed individuals and communities to build their knowledge and capacity, and thus to improve their ability to adapt to climate change.

Perhaps the most important way the EIIF provided for improved capacity was not in the form of information transmitted, but rather through providing individuals and communities with the experience they gained in organizing and making their voices heard. Several of the individuals interviewed during research on individual EIIF projects mentioned this as the most positive outcome for communities and individuals involved with Oxfam America's work. Numerous instances in which primary change agents' organizational ability was enabled by the EIIF are described throughout the present report, and are discussed in more detail in the individual country reports. Thus one of the key contributions of the EIIF, and a key learning for Oxfam, relates to the possibility that many of the most important gains made through communities' involvements with EIIF-funded projects were made when communities and individuals were helped in their efforts to organize and advocate for their own interests.

## 2. BRINGING INNOVATION TO SCALE

The question of what constitutes innovation, where it comes from, and how it is transmitted and taken to scale is the subject of a large literature in the social sciences and management.<sup>6</sup> The most important insight to be taken from this literature, for Oxfam America's purposes, is that the diffusion of innovation, or the "scale-up" of good ideas, depends only partially on how well a new invention meets the needs of its users. Numerous other factors – political, cultural, infrastructural, etc. – condition the possibilities of scale up.

Recent years have seen significant research attention to questions of scaling up the impact of intervention in development.<sup>7</sup> Hartmann and Linn suggest that "scaling up means taking successful projects, programs, or policies and expanding, adapting, and sustaining them in different ways over time for greater

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<sup>6</sup> Rogers and Shoemaker's classic discussion of innovation and diffusion provides a basic framework for understanding the nature of these processes and the means by which innovation is taken up and spread. Everett M. Rogers and F. Floyd Shoemaker, *Communication of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (New York: Free Press, 1971). For recent framings within the field of sustainable development, see also Adrian Smith, Jan-Peter Voß, and John Grin, "Innovation Studies and Sustainability Transitions: The Allure of the Multi-Level Perspective and Its Challenges," *Research Policy* 39, no. 4 (May 2010): 435–448; and Frans A Vollenbroek, "Sustainable Development and the Challenge of Innovation," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 10, no. 3 (June 2002): 215–223. As Grübler notes, processes of diffusion are not immediate, but tend to follow s-shaped curves over time: slow uptake followed by rapid adoption and then saturation. He highlights two different strategies for innovative change: the first essentially consists of modification of existing systems, what he calls "end of pipe" changes which tend to reinforce dominant trajectories in the marketplace; the second, more radical change, tends to have greater effect in the long run, but requires significantly higher initial investment. Arnulf Grübler, "Time for a Change: On the Patterns of Diffusion of Innovation," *Daedalus* 125, no. 3 (July 1, 1996): 19–42.

<sup>7</sup> Kelly Hauser, *From the Ground up: Strategies for Scaling up Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction*, Research Backgrounder (Boston: Oxfam America, 2010); Arntraud Hartmann and Johannes F. Linn, "Scaling Up: A Path to Effective Development," in *The Poorest and Hungry: Assessments, Analyses, and Actions: An IFPRI 2020 Book*, ed. Joachim Von Braun, Ruth Elaine Hill, and Rajul Pandya-Lorch (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2009); Hans Binswanger-Mkhize, Jacomina P. de Regt, and Stephen Spector, eds., *Scaling Up Local and Community Driven Development (LCDD): A Real World Guide to Its Theory and Practice* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2009); S Gillespie, *Scaling up Community-Driven Development: A Synthesis of Experience*, Food Consumption and Nutrition Division Discussion Paper 181 (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2004); Larry Cooley and Richard Kohl, *Scaling Up to Large-Scale Change* (Washington, D.C.: Management Systems International, 2005); Arntraud Hartmann and Johannes F. Linn, *Scaling up: A Framework and Lessons for Development Effectiveness from Literature and Practice*, Brookings Global Economy and Development (Washington, D.C.: Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution, 2008); for an overview see Peter Ryan, *Scaling Up - A Literature Review* (Delft, The Netherlands: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, 2004).

development impact”.<sup>8</sup> Edwards and Hulme suggest four non-mutually exclusive approaches for scaling up:

1. increasing impact via cooperation with government;
2. operational expansion of the existing NGO/intervention;
3. scaling up via advocacy, especially in donor countries; and
4. supporting community level initiative in the form of mobilization, networking and federation.

This range of approaches to scaling up may be categorized conceptually as involving three overlapping strategies:

1. additive strategies which seek scale through increases in organizational and/or program size;
2. multiplicative strategies which seek greater impact through some combination of advocacy, training, networking etc.; and
3. diffusive strategies: where greater impact is achieved through “informal and spontaneous” spread of ideas and information.<sup>9</sup>

Evidence of all these strategies and approaches to scaling up may be found in the work undertaken by Oxfam America and its partners to scale up the impact of EIIF projects across the four geographies under review.<sup>10</sup> The following subsections analyze the ways that the EIIF has sought to encourage innovation, and assess the dynamics of scale-up within the context of the EIIF projects.

## 1. Innovation

Perhaps the most innovative characteristic of Oxfam America’s efforts to promote climate change adaptation in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mali and Peru is the Economic Innovation Incentives Fund itself. The structure of this fund, its conceptualization, and indeed its very existence open a space within Oxfam globally, and within the regional offices specifically, to engage in self-consciously

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<sup>8</sup> “Scaling Up: A Path to Effective Development,” 549.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Edwards and David Hulme, *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*. (London and Washington: Earthscan, 1992); see also Michael Edwards and David Hulme, “Scaling up NGO Impact on Development: Learning from Experience,” *Development in Practice* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 1992): 77–91.

<sup>10</sup> Each of the four country reports, Ethiopia, Mali, Peru and Cambodia, provide an analysis of scale up within the context of the specific project and enabling environment. The present report seeks to synthesize a series of observations based on the work already undertaken in the research for those reports.

innovative and exploratory work. The fund, part of a larger institutional effort to grapple with a global problem that is both pressing and difficult to address, represents an important statement by Oxfam America as an institution that it is seriously committed to finding ways to address the challenge of climate change. The fund was structured in such a way as to remove the projects developed under its auspices from some of the pressures which might have produced more conventional “business-as-usual” approaches to the problem.

An insight into the fund’s approach to innovation is evident in the review criteria used to evaluate proposals for EIIIF funding. “Innovation” is one of the review categories: applicants seeking to make use of the fund are made to understand the central importance of innovation as a priority. However, a “from below” approach to the idea of innovation is evident in the open framing of innovation itself. “We do not have a working definition of innovation”, a document describing the review criteria states. Rather, innovation is conceived of “as a process that involves the application of existing ideas in new ways or to new fields, a process of bringing together a variety of stakeholders, and an approach based on ongoing searching, learning and exploring and using these for necessary adjustments in the project implementation cycle.”<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Demonstrating a commitment to innovation**

One of the most significant, and under-appreciated, aspects of the Economic Innovation Incentives Fund was the message that its establishment sent to staff and partners throughout Oxfam America’s network. While it would be difficult to quantify this aspect of the fund’s impact, conversations with Oxfam staff and with partners in government and civil society suggested that the existence of a well-funded program to foster innovation led to new attitudes towards the climate challenge within and outside of the organization. Several individuals interviewed suggested that the fund had encouraged them to think about the nature of innovation and ways to foster it within their institutions, and had provided an incentive to them individually, and to their organizations, to seek leadership roles on the issue of climate change. The fund provided a significant institutional incentive to individuals to pursue their ideas, and provided Oxfam offices and partners with the material backing to translate ideas into action. Furthermore, the fund provided a sort of moral authority for these efforts, sending a message to potential collaborators that innovation efforts had institutional backing. This allowed partners to feel confident in making commitments of time, energy, staff, and resources to pursue strategies that might otherwise not have appeared to offer the greatest return on those investments (i.e., because of the inherent risk involved in innovating -- see below).

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<sup>11</sup> Oxfam America, *Format for Review of EIIIF Proposals*, Internal document (Boston: Oxfam America, September 15, 2008).

### **3. Alternatives to success vs. failure**

Interviews with OA program staff across several different regional offices suggest that attitudes towards innovation were influenced by the perception that the normal rules regarding project success and project failure did not apply in the case of the EIIF. As a program emphasizing innovation and trying out new approaches, in some cases the EIIF allowed OA staff to conceive of success in terms of the amount of learning that they were able to accomplish, rather than solely as the amount of impact a particular project would have. In theory, assessing EIIF projects on the basis of the amount of learning that could be gained from them allows planners to have a greater impact, and more success, in the future, even if immediate outcomes of some efforts are not “successful” at promoting adaptive capacity.

Some interviewees explained that innovation necessarily involves a higher tolerance for risk: mainstream projects are expected to achieve a certain level of impact, and are thus prone to limit the amount of risk they are willing to accept. When a premium is put on experimentation and learning, rather than impact, the gains to be realized from taking on more risk can outweigh the costs. Encouraging innovation in this sense is about allowing change agents to think differently about the risk of failure: to the extent that “failed” projects allow Oxfam to learn, and eventually to develop successful strategies for adaptation, then the learning that they entail can help to offset the cost of not achieving desired results.

While the reframing of risk and reward, success and failure is one of the ways that the EIIF helped to spur innovation, such a reframing was not made explicit or was not immediately apparent to OA staff. In Cambodia, for instance, when agro meteorological forecasting - the main innovation that was being trialed in the EIIF project - was unsuccessful, the organization reprogrammed funds. The funds were used to add value to ongoing work on SRI (System of Rice Intensification). There was little guidance from OA’s headquarters as to what to do with the remaining funds, which contributed to the decision to direct them to what was essentially ongoing work. EARO Regional Director Brian Lund indicated that in retrospect, rather than directing those funds towards “something we already know how to do”, OA should have used them to try out other innovations. However, this realization was made in retrospect, after the reprogramming occurred.<sup>12</sup>

### **4. Incremental vs. radical change**

The EIIF projects under review demonstrated a range of tolerances for risk, with the greater amount of risk accompanying those interventions that were less well-

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<sup>12</sup> See the Cambodia Country Report for a discussion.

proven and perhaps more “innovative” or at least outside of the status quo. The distinction that Grübler makes between “end of pipe” modifications and more radical change is relevant here, but one insight suggested by the experience of the EIIF projects is that incremental change is itself difficult to achieve, while more radical approaches carry with them a higher risk.

Innovations introduced by Peru and Cambodia stand to illustrate this dynamic. The Peru EIIF project introduced a number of innovations that have the potential to change the lives of primary change agents in the high Andes. By introducing the idea that relatively technically advanced forms of sprinkler irrigation could provide useful results for pastoralists whose livelihood systems did not meet existing productivity thresholds for the use of such systems, the project dismantled the received wisdom about who should be given access to such technology. The Peru project was not a radical venture, however. Rather, the project planners were working with a number of interventions that had been the subject of two previous projects, and were, in general, introducing moderate changes to already existing ideas about how to best help pastoralists.

The Cambodia project was more experimental, and more radical, in its effort to introduce micro-forecasting techniques to rice farmers. The approach promised great rewards: such techniques have resulted in great advantages for large-scale “industrial” agricultural ventures, and they represent an important technological transformation of agriculture as it is practiced by well-financed corporate actors. To bring these techniques to farmers for whom climate variability makes decision-making less reliable today than in the past would represent a great accomplishment, one with widespread applicability. However, the Cambodia project would seem to be a case in which an innovation seemed bold in part because it did, in fact, surpass the limits imposed by inadequacy of technical expertise and the legacy of the tumultuous past century: without adequate data and without analysts able to provide forecasting analysis, the project was unsuccessful.

## **5. Scaling Up**

How to move from pilots to scalable projects has been a key concern for Oxfam America in its climate change programming.<sup>13</sup> Good ideas do not spread merely on the basis of their merit, but are brought forward and extended based on numerous political, economic and cultural factors. Oxfam America has been strategic in its effort to think about scale up from the beginning of the innovation process, incorporating the notion of scale-up into the expectations placed upon regional offices in submitting projects for EIIF funding. Initial documents relating to the EIIF emphasize the importance of incorporating ideas about scale up into

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<sup>13</sup> Oxfam America, *Third Annual Climate Change Program Team Meeting - Summary Report*, section 1.2.

project conceptualization and design. The EIIF “Guidance Piece”, for instance, makes reference to the importance of scaling up in the assessment of EIIF projects.<sup>14</sup> The EIIF projects have provided some lessons learned with regards to the nature of scaling up change and the kinds of approaches most suited to extending the reach of innovation.

## **6. Building scale-up into project design**

One insight regarding scale-up to be gained from an assessment of the four EIIF projects under review concerns the importance of building a strategy for scale-up into a project from the beginning of the planning process. Those elements which appear to have the greatest likelihood of being scaled up in actuality are found in projects where the designers and Oxfam America staff thought strategically about scale from the outset. The Peru project stands out as the one that addressed this issue with the most intentionality. By conceptualizing of their efforts as “hypothesis testing”, and by applying an evidence-based approach to the analysis of project outcomes, SAMRO and its partners were able to track innovations through the life of the project and to gain actionable experience regarding the ways in which their proposed solutions fit into the institutional and social environment of the high Andes. One example that demonstrates this approach stems directly from the effort to validate and document successful interventions. The Peru team sought to encourage scale up of the interventions they had trialed by encouraging local governments to incorporate these interventions into their development planning processes. Because uptake of the project’s innovations by government is only possible where the innovations can be “plugged in” to the institutional reality of municipal government, they created a descriptive document called an *expediente tecnico* that provided local administrations with the necessary information in a format that articulated easily with Peru’s bureaucratic system of public administration. Other elements of the project also took advantage of the SAMRO team’s extensive knowledge of the workings of the public sector.

## **7. Engaging a range of actors**

The Peru case also provides a useful example for a second insight into the nature of scale-up. Namely, engaging with a range of actors, at different levels within government, civil society, or the private sector, can be important in cases where Oxfam America seeks to extend the reach of its efforts. In Peru, for instance, the key to encouraging the adoption of innovations at scale involved work at the level of the individual community. This may seem counter-intuitive, since working with individual communities is time-consuming and requires providing support to dedicated extension staff to build relationships and trust.

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<sup>14</sup> Oxfam America, *EIIF Projects: Guidance Piece*, 2.

However, this work was critical to the spread of the project's innovations. Field staff helped organize workshops in 25 communities that led to the creation of communal development plans. Community leaders were then able to take these plans to the municipal governments as part of a recently initiated process of participatory budgeting. The priorities identified in the communal plans then worked their way into the priorities established by municipalities, providing municipalities with supporting evidence that allowed them to advocate to meet these stated needs in budget allocation processes. What is perhaps most interesting about this strategy for scaling up is that it fits well with Oxfam America's rights-based operating model. Unlike purely technocratic approaches, or those that rely solely on the actions of national-level leaders in urban offices in the capital, the Peru effort involved work on the ground with primary change agents, helping them to develop their own priorities and assisting them to have their voices heard by decision-makers and power holders.

The Peru experience conforms to the incremental approach identified in section 2.A.3, above. Almost by necessity, the process of introducing change "from below" aligns those processes of change with already existing opportunities and constraints. More radical change would seem to require accessing those power-holders who have the ability to support departures from the status quo that require backing and buy-in.

The Ethiopia project, which counted on the involvement of high-ranking officials and members of the Prime Minister's inner circle as advocates for change, conforms to the more radical approach. The project fostered change at the level of national and international policy. Like the Peru project, although somewhat less intentionally, the project had the question of scale built into its conceptualization. Whereas the Peru project modified some elements of the administrative system to make them more amenable to the innovations advanced by the project, the Ethiopia project contributed to a re-alignment of government agencies in order to consolidate the country's climate response. Although efforts by Ethiopia and its allies internationally to obtain a fair deal on climate at COP 15 were not, in the end, successful, the potential existed for this to have occurred. Had this been so, the project's investment would have reached not only the international scale, but would have been leveraged at the global level.

### 3. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The following sections outline a series of strategic considerations of the EIIF experience. They highlight findings and lessons learned in the EIIF projects that can inform Oxfam America's future actions and approach towards intervention and rights protection. The first section looks specifically at the strategies deployed across several EIIF projects. Subsequent sections discuss strategy-

relevant learning relating to climate change and to the way that OA works with its partners.

## **1. EIIF strategies in common: strengths and weaknesses**

While each EIIF project was distinct, a number of projects used similar approaches or held strategies in common. The following subsections assess the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies with a view towards informing OA's future efforts. Some strategies were more successful in some places and less successful in others, so the following analyses seek to identify relative strengths and weaknesses of each strategy.

### ***a. Awareness raising campaigns***

There were awareness raising aspects to all of the EIIF projects assessed here. In Cambodia, for instance, a national awareness-raising campaign was one of the most successful elements of the project. This work included conducting the first-ever study of Cambodians' knowledge and perception of the climate change issue, which was followed in turn by the design and dissemination of awareness-raising materials based on the findings of the study. Parallel activities included work to improve the understanding of the climate change issue within government, and awareness-raising efforts undertaken with farmers involved in other components of the project. The Mali project similarly incorporated awareness-raising into its approach, including a radio-broadcast strategy. In Ethiopia, OA's partner pursued a strategy of holding a series of events to promote awareness of climate change, including several mass climate hearings around the country and a series of subsequent Earth Day celebrations and other events that raised awareness among the general population as well as decision-makers. These events involved, for instance, the Prime Minister as well as nationally-recognized figures such as popular sports stars. Resulting media coverage reached large numbers of the population.

These efforts at awareness raising were relatively successful. They also fit well with Oxfam's rights-based operating model, which seeks to empower people to understand and claim their rights and to hold governments accountable. Within this framework, providing people with information, and raising awareness about key issues (or, in this case, helping to frame the complex issue of climate change as a rights and development issue) is a fundamental step towards promoting rights.

While the reach of awareness raising efforts was, in many cases, demonstrable, baseline studies and studies of the effect of messaging on climate were not undertaken methodically. Such studies could have assessed the extent to which awareness raising efforts resulted in changed attitudes.

## ***b. Civil society networks***

Oxfam has pursued a strategy of building and supporting networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) dedicated to generating and sharing information about climate change impacts and adaptation strategies in all four countries researched for this report. In two of the EIIF projects under review, Ethiopia and Cambodia, the establishment of CSO networks were central elements of the EIIF projects under review. In the other two countries, Peru and Mali, Oxfam America and its partners have either helped to create CSO networks or have participated in them. The Climate Change Forum – Ethiopia involves both non-governmental organizations *and* actors from within government, an unusual and innovative format which has allowed it to become an important policy platform. The Cambodian Climate Change Network serves as a site of encounter and exchange among Cambodia’s NGOs working on climate change, and currently includes 31 members and 5 observers. In Peru, Oxfam America supports the Citizens’ Movement against Climate Change, a civil society network that has held climate change hearings throughout the country, and has helped to increase awareness about climate change and increase public participation around the issue of climate change.<sup>15</sup> In Mali, while the creation of a civil society network does not appear to have been a major OA undertaking, the 2010 Climate Change Programming Report to the Board notes that as part of OA’s work to strengthen civil society and raise public awareness, “a climate change hearing was organized and a national climate change network was created.”<sup>16</sup>

In Ethiopia, in particular, the establishment of the CCF-E played a critical role in facilitating Ethiopia’s leadership role in international policymaking on climate change, even as it helped to motivate the national policy agenda. The CCF-E contributed, for instance, to the establishment of a new Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy adopted by the national government. The CCF-E is notable for the high level of buy-in it has obtained from decision-makers within government, a factor which has allowed it to make contributions to Ethiopia’s leadership role within international climate change policymaking processes. The Ethiopia case demonstrates the potential of establishing civil society networks.

While the establishment of civil society networks has been partially successful, the EIIF experience has illustrated that there are also drawbacks to this

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<sup>15</sup> iScale, *Oxfam America Mid- Term Climate Change Campaign Evaluation* (Seattle, Washington: iScale - Innovations for Scaling Impact, June 2010), 57–59.

<sup>16</sup> Oxfam America, *Report to the Board: Climate Change Programming - Regional Program Department*, February 11, 2010, 1. The importance of the climate change network to the work of OA and its partners in Mali is further indicated in an EIIF Narrative Report from Mali, which notes that “OXFAM is now a major player in the debate over climate change that is currently taking place in the climate network, with the National Direction of Meteorology, the Agriculture Department and the UNDP”. See Oxfam America, *WARO EIIF Progress Report - MAL 018/08*, Internal document (Bamako: Oxfam America, 2010), 8.

approach.<sup>17</sup> Two drawbacks in particular stand out. The first concerns the existence of competing networks. In Cambodia and to a lesser extent Ethiopia, civil society networks supported by Oxfam America were faced with the problem of competing networks, established independently with support from other donors and international organizations. In Cambodia, a competing network was established by the NGO Forum, a major convener of (mostly) environment-oriented non-governmental organizations. And in Ethiopia the Ethiopian Civil Society Network on Climate Change (ECSNCC) was established, and sought to distinguish itself by providing a voice to civil society on the basis of the participation of government in the OA-backed CCF-E.<sup>18</sup> The establishment of competing civil society networks introduces an element of complexity and perhaps confusion into the climate change policy environment, raising questions about which network best represents the interests of civil society, and poses the potential of dividing CSOs on an issue where concerted action may be more likely to produce results.

The second drawback, linked to the first, concerns network overload. The creation of CSO networks has become a significant strategy for international organizations and donors throughout much of the developing world. NGOs send staff to attend meetings of the networks in order to lend their voices to the collective search for a solution, to contribute their expertise, to demonstrate their own commitment to key issues, and to insure that they are up to date on policies, projects, and the like. With each new issue of concern on the global agenda, it seems that new civil society networks emerge to coordinate action. Thus, as the effectiveness of the strategy has increasingly been recognized, CSO networks have tended to proliferate, and also, increasingly, to specialize. In Cambodia it appears that there may be as many as 50 different CSO networks in operation currently.<sup>19</sup> The result of the steady increase in numbers of networks is that, in many cases, a single NGO will belong to *many* different networks. This places stress on the time commitments of NGO staff, who may find themselves called upon to participate in several networks at once. Their participation comes at the cost of dedicating time to pursuing the CSO's own agenda and work. NGOs are thus not highly incentivized to engage deeply with network-led activities, and may

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<sup>17</sup> The question of how OA should engage with CSO networks has been raised during meetings of the Climate Change Program Team, where members emphasized the need to have a clear strategy for them in future efforts; see Day 1, Takeaway #6 in Oxfam America, *Third Annual Climate Change Program Team Meeting - Summary Report*, Internal document (Boston: Oxfam America, July 13, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> The implication here being that the CCF-E was perhaps *too* close to government.

<sup>19</sup> This number is based on an informal study undertaken by an individual interviewed during research for this report.

withhold meaningful participation in various ways, for instance by assigning very junior staff to participate, or by attending meetings only irregularly, etc.<sup>20</sup>

### ***c. Early warning systems and forecasting***

Another strategy adopted by Oxfam America and its partners and supported through EIIF grants was that of agro-meteorological forecasting and the development of early warning systems for climate risks. Targeted forecasting offers great advantages to the often marginalized rural smallholder farmers and herders with whom OA and its partners work throughout the world. Indeed, well-capitalized agricultural ventures worldwide regularly use sophisticated forecasting and “precision agriculture” techniques. Several EIIF projects have sought to innovate by providing some of the advantages of actionable forecasting to smallholders. In Peru, a network of community weather monitors was established, and a system was created to transmit the meteorological data obtained from these monitors to the national meteorological service (SENAMHI) for analysis; the purpose was to establish an early warning system to provide accurate advance warning about imminent catastrophic cold spells to alpaca herders, allowing herders and their herds to move to safety in a timely way. In Cambodia, Oxfam America’s partner Mlup Baitong helped to establish community weather stations in a smallholder rice-growing region. Community weather monitors collected weather data and transmitted it to the national Department of Meteorology, which was tasked with data analysis and modeling which would then be incorporated into cropping calendars to allow rice farmers to plan for drought, flooding, the onset of wet and dry seasons, etc., and to modify their practices accordingly.

In the end, neither of these forecasting and early warning projects lived up to the high expectations that project designers had for them. In the case of Peru, while some progress was made on the establishment of the system, project managers now believe that even accurate, timely early warnings may not present as significant an opportunity for herders as originally envisioned.<sup>21</sup> In Cambodia, historical weather data at the necessary spatial scale and temporal depth did not exist, making it impossible to provide accurate forecasting of the sort initially envisioned by project planners.

It is significant that both projects faced very similar obstacles to the implementation of the forecasting strategy. In each case, the national

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<sup>20</sup> These dynamics are discussed in detail in the EIIF Cambodia Report, and to a lesser extent in the Ethiopia Report.

<sup>21</sup> SAMRO staff suggested that the transhumance effect – the extent to which herders will rotate herds based on weather conditions – may not have been as great as was hypothesized when creating the plan. This recognition, of course, represents learning on the part of OA and its partners.

meteorological agency was unable to provide the necessary analysis, and could not, or would not, perform the modeling role envisioned. In both cases, staff changes and lack of meaningful backing for the project within the national agency stymied the implementation. Furthermore, both agencies insisted that the meteorological data collected manually and transmitted by villagers was unreliable and not refined enough to serve as the basis of accurate forecasting. The agencies insisted that automated weather stations, or more advanced technology, were a prerequisite for their successful participation in the project. Finally, and most importantly, in both cases the system for information transmission was too complex: the flow of data from the field, and the transmission of analysis and interpretation back to end-users, had to pass from institution to institution and from individual to individual. These elongated chains of information transfer were vulnerable – when any one link was broken the entire system would cease to function.

## **2. Engaging primary change agents**

One dynamic observed across all of the work on the EIIF projects concerns the extent to which projects sought input from the men and women living in poverty who are Oxfam America's primary change agents. This subsection and the next deal with so-called "bottom up" and "top down" approaches to the climate change challenge.<sup>22</sup> Both of these approaches have produced successes within EIIF projects, and both have faced certain challenges. Those approaches that worked, and those that were less successful, are discussed here.

Some of the most successful EIIF-funded interventions studied for this report involved strategic and creative engagements with primary change agents at the local level. Oxfam America "considers the people living in poverty with whom we work as primary change agents", and not as "passive participants" or mere beneficiaries of interventions.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, all of the projects under review involved work with primary change agents, from interventions to improve agricultural productivity and protect livelihoods in Mali, Cambodia, and Peru to the effort to improve climate change awareness of men and women living in poverty that was central to many of the activities across all four countries. This experience has provided Oxfam America with an opportunity for "lessons learned" regarding the nature of local peoples' understandings of climate change and about the kinds of work on climate change that are most promising when working at the local level. In Mali, for instance, climate change vulnerability assessments and studies of

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<sup>22</sup> These terms are misnomers: the representation of government leaders or those with power as being "above" those who are less powerful or who are perceived of as "local" people perpetuates commonly held perceptions about elite and marginalized groups.

<sup>23</sup> Oxfam America, *ROPE II - Rights Oriented Programming for Effectiveness: Designing and Evaluating Long-Term Programs* (Boston: Oxfam America, 2008), 1.

autonomous adaptation options were carried out in six villages, and the results were incorporated into subsequent efforts to raise awareness of climate change impacts with important government and civil society stakeholders as well as in a mass media campaign. Efforts to incorporate findings from a “knowledge and perception” study in Cambodia into a media campaign similarly reflected an effort by OA and its partners to bring the voices and concerns of primary change agents to the attention of government while also providing awareness of the climate challenge to the public.

Oxfam America and its partners undertook a number of projects that sought to deal directly with community councils and local social institutions. The “climate proofing” tool developed within the Mali project and integrated into the planning processes of agricultural collectives is one example of this. The tool involved three steps: systematic analysis of climate risk, identification and prioritization of adaptation mechanisms, and integration of the results into policies and planning.

Some of OA’s EIIIF-funded work at the local level was particularly innovative in its conception and implementation. Community level work was one of the most important aspects of the Peru project, where OA efforts to validate and systematize a series of small-scale interventions showed great promise. The interventions in question included such things as the use of reservoirs, sprinkler irrigation, and improved pasture by alpaca herders in the high Andes, the development of vented passive-solar “Trombe” walls for heating houses, instruction in the use of government-built cattle sheds, and other small-scale modifications of the current pastoralist household production system.

From the perspective of institutional learning, the particular innovations themselves, while promising, were not as interesting as the process through which OA’s partners in Peru worked with local *assembleas* (village councils) and with local governments to advance the adoption of the strategies they had developed.<sup>24</sup> That process, or mode of work, might be considered the real innovation in the Peru case. This effort, undertaken by hard-working field extensionists, involved helping communities to prepare community development plans that could be used within the participatory budgeting processes then under way with municipal governments. This allowed communities to prioritize irrigation and water conservation and delivery systems in their development planning processes, and to align the priorities of local government with their own agenda for change. A second strategy pursued in the Peru project involved the elaboration of a cost-benefit study and the development of a technical dossier describing project components in detail. This technical dossier was formatted to work within local bureaucratic and administrative procedures, and thus allowed

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<sup>24</sup> Indeed, several of the interventions trialled in the EIIIF project were not yet “successful” although they showed promise.

for rapid uptake and extension of the project's interventions in new locations.<sup>25</sup> The main take-away here is that OA and its partners used their knowledge of local institutions to gain traction for a series of interventions designed to address the challenges posed by the emerging threat of climate change.

### 3. Engaging national leaders

While “from below” approaches met with success, they do not represent the only way forward. As climate change adaptation researcher Neil Adger and his colleagues note, climate change is a complex problem involving multiple processes at work at different scales; successful adaptation thus requires action at multiple scales. Efforts to work with governments at the national level may be understood as an element of an integrated multi-scalar approach (see also “Issues of Scale” in Section 2.A, below).<sup>26</sup> In fact, in its EIIF projects Oxfam America was also able to promote the adoption of vigorous, meaningful responses to climate change at the national scale by working at the highest levels of government. This was especially true in the case of Ethiopia, where Prime Minister Meles Zenawi took on a global leadership role on the climate change issue, leading the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), giving a keynote presentation at the Copenhagen COP, and co-chairing the Advisory Group on Climate Financing, a role in which he was able to guide the establishment of the Green Climate Fund. Backed with EIIF funding, OA's partner CCF-E provided critical support enabling Ethiopia to take on this international role. They also helped to leverage Ethiopia's international commitments in order to address climate change at the national level with the adoption of the recently approved Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy which seeks to put Ethiopia on a path towards carbon neutral development.

CCF-E was able to support national-level responses because of the high degree of buy-in of the Ethiopian government.<sup>27</sup> OA's regional director brought together key leaders from government to propose the creation of the CCF-E. With a direct line to the Prime Minister, these leaders then put together a board of directors drawn from varied sectors of the economy, from civil society organizations, universities, multilateral institutions and government. Oxfam America itself was particularly well-positioned to bring about this high-level engagement in part because of its excellent reputation and record of success in the country. Prior to its work on climate change, Oxfam America had undertaken a successful

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<sup>25</sup> The Peru country report explains this approach in detail.

<sup>26</sup> W. Neil Adger, Nigel W. Arnell, and Emma L. Tompkins, “Successful Adaptation to Climate Change across Scales,” *Global Environmental Change* 15, no. 2 (July 2005): 77–86.

<sup>27</sup> The way this came about is presented in greater detail in the Ethiopia country report.

campaign to urge Starbucks to sign a licensing agreement acknowledging the rights of Ethiopian coffee growers to highly prized varieties of coffee. This work had resulted in significant material benefits for Ethiopia's coffee growers, and had established Oxfam America as a respected institution in Ethiopia. Several high-level government officials interviewed as part of the research for this report remarked on the importance of Oxfam America's reputation in Ethiopia as a key factor in the establishment of the CCF-E.

The case of Ethiopia offers important lessons to OA in its efforts to engage with policy-making processes at the national level on climate change and on other emerging issues elsewhere in the world. First, it underscores the extent to which gains can be made by engaging in the policy process and by working at the national scale; the so-called "top down" approach can be successful. It is important to note that CCF-E coupled its national level engagement with some work at the grass-roots level, although this type of on-the-ground work was not the central focus of the project.<sup>28</sup> Second, it demonstrates the extent to which access to policy-making processes is itself dependent on a record of previous success.

The Ethiopia case also offers some cautionary lessons. In particular, it suggests that a very particular set of circumstances may need to be in place in order for Oxfam America and its partners to obtain meaningful impact within the policy-making arena. The specific set of prerequisites that enabled OA to take a leading role on climate change in Ethiopia may not be in place elsewhere in the world. This means that replicating or scaling up the approach used in Ethiopia is not in any way a straightforward affair.

#### **4. Difficulty of defining climate change adaptation**

The Economic Innovation Incentives Fund projects are "learning projects in which [Oxfam America is] testing a number of hypotheses on how to enhance and support community level adaptation".<sup>29</sup> But what *is* climate change adaptation? A significant literature exists that seeks to define the term and understand its dimensions.<sup>30</sup> The standard definition of adaptation to climate change is that

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<sup>28</sup> Regarding the extent to which men and women living in poverty had ownership of the Ethiopia project, see section 2.C, "*Primary*" change agents and accountability, below. See also the Ethiopia country report for a more in-depth analysis of these issues.

<sup>29</sup> Oxfam America, *EIF Climate Change Adaptation Learning Documentation Guide. Internal Document* (Boston: Oxfam America, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Adger, Arnell, and Tompkins, "Adaptation to Climate Change: Perspectives Across Scales"; W. Neil Adger, P. Mick Kelly, and Nguyen Huu Ninh, eds., *Living With Environmental Change: Social Vulnerability, Adaptation and Resilience in Vietnam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Eric Gordon and Lisa Dilling, *An Empirical Approach to Defining Success in Climate Adaptation*, Paper presented at ICARUS Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation: Theories and Cases Workshop (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: ICARUS - Initiative for

adopted by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in their Third Assessment Report in 2001:

Adaptation to *climate change* refers to adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic *stimuli* or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities. Various types of adaptation can be distinguished, including anticipatory and reactive adaptation, private and public adaptation, and autonomous and planned adaptation.<sup>31</sup>

The IPCC definition is quite generalized, leaving open the nature of the climatic change effects involved, the nature of the ecological processes affected, and, importantly, the scale at which impact and adaptation are perceived and engaged. Oxfam America adopted the IPCC definition as the basis for its approach to adaptation in the EIIF. OA's internal guidance document on the EIIF makes note of the IPCC definition and suggests that

at its core, adaptation is about the capacity to shift strategies and develop systems that are resilient and flexible (can absorb the impact of changes) that they enable vulnerable poor people to respond to change. Adaptation is not coping.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the question of how adaptation is defined is central to the question of whether and in what capacity Oxfam America has managed to create innovative approaches to the challenge of climate change. The literature on climate change adaptation makes note of the definitional problems inherent in the idea of climate change adaptation, problems that relate to the question of scale, for instance, to

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Climate Adaptation Research and Understanding through the Social Sciences, February 10, 2010); Benjamin S Orlove, "Human Adaptation to Climate Change: A Review of Three Historical Cases and Some General Perspectives," *Environmental Science & Policy* 8, no. 6 (2005): 589–600; Mark Pelling, *Adaptation to Climate Change: From Resilience to Transformation* (Taylor & Francis US, 2010); Barry Smit and Johanna Wandel, "Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity and Vulnerability," *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 3, Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity, and Vulnerability (August 2006): 282–292; Coleen Vogel et al., "Linking Vulnerability, Adaptation, and Resilience Science to Practice: Pathways, Players, and Partnerships," *Global Environmental Change* 17, no. 3 (2007): 349–364.

<sup>31</sup> IPCC 2001 cited in Benjamin S Orlove, "The Past, the Present and Some Possible Futures of Adaptation," in *Adapting to Climate Change: Thresholds, Values, Governance*, ed. W. Neil Adger, Irene Lorenzoni, and Karen L O'Brien (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 135; see also Adger, Arnell, and Tompkins, "Adaptation to Climate Change: Perspectives Across Scales," 78.

<sup>32</sup> Oxfam America, *EIIF Projects: Guidance Piece*, OA internal document (Boston: Oxfam America, 2009), 4.

the question of temporal and geographic scale.<sup>33</sup> Several key insights emerge from the literature on adaptation, its meaning, and the problems associated with defining successful adaptation:

1. Adaptation is difficult to define.
2. Adaptation occurs at multiple scales.
3. Simple cost-benefit analyses do not adequately capture the complexity of adaptation, making the selection of policy options and implementation strategies more difficult.
4. Finally, in contrast to “adjustment” or “preparedness” or “risk reduction”, the notion of adaptation appears to indicate long-term changes within a society – changes that are adequate to the long-term nature of the climate challenge.<sup>34</sup>

Problems of definition, scale, and complexity of adaptation, and the recognition that climate change adaptation is a process and not an outcome, all present a challenge for Oxfam America in its efforts to promote adaptive responses among primary change agents. One clear implication of these definitional problems is that in cases where Oxfam America works to promote adaptation, it should provide a clear definition of what adaptation means *within the specific context of the intervention*. Since “adaptation” has different meanings at different scales, Oxfam should clearly address what piece of the larger “adaptation” puzzle a specific intervention, project, or program is intended to address.

A second implication is that monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts should be clearly tailored to the specific definition of adaptation that is in use in a particular setting. For instance, if a program seeks to encourage a national-level adaptation through the promotion of policy or through awareness raising, then baseline studies should analyze the policy environment and the current state of awareness at the national level, and should set clear benchmarks for accomplishment on these fronts.

A third and somewhat contradictory implication is that where climate change adaptation comes in the form of structural change within a society, adaptation may consist of difficult-to-detect qualities like social capital, social networks and

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<sup>33</sup>Adger, Arnell, and Tompkins, “Adaptation to Climate Change: Perspectives Across Scales,”; see also Smit and Wandel, “Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity, and Vulnerability” for a discussion of the difficulties of defining adaptation.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion from within Oxfam America’s climate change program team about the definition of adaptation, and, in particular, what distinguishes climate change adaptation from disaster risk reduction, see Oxfam America, *Draft Note for Discussion at the Climate Change Program Team Workshop* (Boston: Oxfam America, October 22, 2008), 3–6; see also Oxfam Great Britain, *Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction: Frequently Asked Questions* (Oxford: Adaption Risk Reduction Team, Oxfam Great Britain, 2008).

the like. Difficult to measure changes, ones that are process-oriented rather than results-oriented, will resist the kinds of definitional and monitoring, evaluation, and learning approaches described above. As a WRI analysis of the relationship between adaptation and “development” observed, “the uniquely ‘adaptive’ elements of most efforts are those involved in defining problems, selecting strategies, and setting priorities—not in implementing solutions”.<sup>35</sup> The strength of the EIIF projects, and the greatest amount of learning that can be realized from an analysis of the EIIF, may thus come in the form of exactly these processes of defining, strategizing, and priority-setting by primary change agents.

## 5. Problem definition in climate change adaptation

Lack of detail in the elaboration of the problem statement was notable throughout the various concept notes, GAPS, and other documents where the climate change problem was defined and explained. To the extent that these documents serve as project proposals within OA’s internal process for awarding funds, it is here that one would expect to see detailed analysis of the relationship between climate change impact and livelihood outcomes. Yet the problem analyses in EIIF Concept Notes were generally no more than a paragraph or two, and often made reference to few, if any, external sources or research. Judging from the available project documentation alone, *it is striking that large grants (totaling over 1.5 million dollars across four projects) were awarded to projects on the basis of concept notes which included problem analyses of no greater than a few paragraphs.*<sup>36</sup>

A large literature suggests that defining climate change adaptation presents methodological difficulties. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the issue of *problem definition* represented one of the most significant challenges for the EIIF projects implemented by Oxfam America’s regional offices. In each of the EIIF projects reviewed for this report, the way that the climate change problem was defined was critically important to kinds of interventions proposed to address the problem, and to the eventual success or failure of these interventions.<sup>37</sup> In this

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<sup>35</sup> Heather McGray, Anne Hammill, and Rob Bradley, *Weathering the Storm: Options for Framing Adaptation and Development* (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 2007), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Because the EIIF was an internal grant-making program, it is clearly not the case that the Concept Note is the only or even primary basis upon which grants are awarded. Regional and country directors and program managers have established expertise based on their experience in the field, and Oxfam America develops projects based on meetings, conversations and other forms of idea-sharing that are not reflected in Concept Notes. However, it *is* the case that the Concept Note is one of the only places where planners are called upon to document and substantiate the assumptions and claims upon which grants are awarded.

<sup>37</sup> Each of the country reports (Ethiopia, Peru, Cambodia and Mali) analyzes the problem of problem definition in some detail.

sense, the process of identifying and defining the climate change problem was, in each instance, at the heart of the project's theory of change.

There are some similarities, and some differences, in the ways that Oxfam America identified the climate change problem that needed to be addressed in each of the EIIF projects. In the case of Ethiopia, project documentation suggested that climate change was experienced in the form of droughts and flooding, which had negative impacts on primary change agents. Furthermore, project documents suggest that a general "lack of capacity" in government and a "lack of understanding" by the general public were problems that the project should address.<sup>38</sup>

In Cambodia, the framing of the problem was similar: attention was paid to the impacts of climate change on the agricultural productivity of smallholder rice growers, and on food security. As in the Ethiopia project, a lack of capacity in the government, and a lack of awareness in the public, were further dimensions of the problem that needed to be addressed. In the Cambodia case, climate *variability* was asserted as the major cause of increased vulnerability of farmers.<sup>39</sup>

This reading of climate change as climate variability was also found in Peru, where the climate change threat in the high Andes was parsed as long-term water scarcity (with short-term relative abundance in glacial melt areas) coupled with periodic extreme cold spells that threatened the livelihoods of alpaca herders.<sup>40</sup> In Mali, the major problem to be addressed concerned the capacity of farmers: they were understood to continue in their traditional practices, whereas the climate change threat required that they change their practices to adapt to climate change.<sup>41</sup>

In all four projects, the importance of addressing the gendered-dimensions of climate change were mentioned in program documents, but only in one or two cases were specific suggestions made about what kinds of gendered implications were involved. The Peru project was the most explicit about the gender hypothesis they were putting to the test in their project; the Ethiopia project and affiliated research appears to have engaged in the discussion about gender quite fully, too.

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<sup>38</sup> Ethiopia Country Report, pp. 4-7, 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> Cambodia Country Report, pp. 6-9.

<sup>40</sup> Peru Country Report, pp. 4-7.

<sup>41</sup> Mali Country Report, pp. 5-6.

The assumptions upon which problem definitions were founded are not made explicit in program documentation. As was noted in the Cambodia country report, with regard to the framing of the climate change problem:

A World Food Program study and a presentation given at the DANIDA office are the only references provided in support of the broad claims regarding climate change-related erratic weather patterns, yield reduction, crop failure, drought and flooding. The assertion [made in the Concept Note] that “given low awareness of the scientific foundations of climate change, farmers cope with weather related shocks by participating in religious ceremonies” is attributed to personal communication with the government’s climate change office.<sup>42</sup>

Those familiar with government attitudes towards the rural poor in Cambodia would not be surprised to see the national climate change office representing Cambodian farmers as ignorant and superstitious. What is surprising is that project planners accepted the office as a reliable source of information on the belief systems of Cambodian rice farmers and did not examine the question of farmer beliefs in greater detail.

In contrast, the Peru project was much more methodical, and went into greater depth with regards to the nature of the climate change problem as it is experienced in the high Andean region. However, even in this more in-depth problem definition, the proposed intervention is based on the understanding that climate change is causing an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme cold spells. There is no place in the project’s framing documents where scientific evidence is provided to support this claim. The claim may well be true, but, as is discussed in depth in the Peru Country Report, the claim is also the subject of some debate. The important point here is not that the initial assumptions were wrong, simply that they are unsubstantiated and that they should be better researched and documented.

Incorporating faulty assumptions into the initial framing of the problem has serious repercussions for project outcomes. In the Cambodia project, for instance, the notion that providing agro-meteorological forecasting to farmers would result in more climate-resilient agriculture was based on the assumption that data could be collected and analyzed by experts who could generate useful forecasts. In fact, this was technically impossible, since historical weather data at the appropriate temporal and geographic scale does not exist. Internal review procedures for concept notes and proposals, and other measures to insure that initial assumptions are made explicit (and perhaps tested, provisionally) would have helped to prevent a number of false starts in several EIIF projects.

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<sup>42</sup> Cambodia Country Report, p. 7.

## 6. Problems of technology transfer'

Several of the approaches to innovation sought to incorporate technological improvements to local resource management practices into adaptation strategies. A large literature on technology transfer in development suggests that such approaches face numerous hurdles. One clear implication of this literature for Oxfam's work on climate change is that extension efforts involving new technologies are likely to be more successful where they are tailored quite specifically to the needs of local people. Such an outcome is far more likely when local people are involved in every stage of the process, including problem identification, research, innovation and development of new livelihood strategies. Another implication is that there is a tension between the desire to tailor solutions to localities, on the one hand, and the desire to "bring innovations to scale" – to increase the impact by extending the reach of innovations.

EIIF-backed innovation strategies based on technological improvements and the diffusion of new technology include:

- efforts to promote the use of improved varieties of fodder and forage in Peru
- the introduction of tilled, irrigated pasture systems in Peru
- field-testing and extension efforts surrounding passive solar Trombe walls and cattle sheds in Peru
- the introduction of NERICA and R-1 variety rice seed in Mali
- the promotion of improved cotton varieties in Mali
- the use of weather monitoring, modeling, and forecasting in Peru and Cambodia

All these approaches hold promise. Yet encouraging the adoption of new technology involves inherent tradeoffs and raises questions that are not unfamiliar to those working at the intersection of development, rights, and social change. These are complex issues. On the one hand, much cultural and environmental change throughout history has involved elements of technological innovation. Intensification - investing in improvements, often through the use of technology, to raise productivity per unit area of land - has long stood as one of the principal ways in which humans have adapted to population pressure, resource scarcity, and other processes of social and environmental change.<sup>43</sup> By

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<sup>43</sup> This is, of course, the basic argument of Ester Boserup, whose insights generated an enormous body of research on the subject of intensification; see Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965). See also, for instance, Harold C. Brookfield, "Intensification, and Alternative Approaches to Agricultural Change," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 42, no. 2-3 (2001): 181-192.

contributing to people's efforts to adapt to their environment and to the climate challenge, OA and its partners build on and support long-standing processes of adaptation and social change. On the other hand, the literature on international development is replete with stories of technological fixes gone awry for exactly those marginalized rural producers whom Oxfam America considers its primary change agents. The technologies and policies of the so-called Green Revolution, for instance, boosted yields per unit area of land worldwide, but produced significant negative effects for smallholders.<sup>44</sup> Many critics note that the underlying explanation for why "certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed" has to do with precisely the kinds of standardization and replicability that allow for technological solutions to be brought to scale.<sup>45</sup> Robert Chambers, a leading advocate for democratizing development, notes that while there are limited circumstances within which technology transfer paradigms can work, for the most part "receiving environments differ from those in which technologies have been developed, being more complex, more diverse, less controllable and more risk-prone. The technologies then cannot on any scale fit local conditions or human needs".<sup>46</sup>

Several examples from the EIIF projects demonstrate these dynamics at work. For instance, the sprinkler irrigation and improved pasture scheme introduced by SAMRO to assist alpaca herders to intensify their production systems relied on technology transferred by extensionists to local users. The project's inputs – including sprinkler irrigation systems and improved varieties of forage and fodder – were developed outside the project and trialed in 25 communities in three districts of the high Andes. Many users reported satisfaction with these systems. Yet it was striking that the system was poorly suited to provide for the needs of those living in the highest altitude communities within the project area. These are communities located in areas where soils were notably poorer, and water scarcer, than elsewhere. The intervention, while effective at protecting livelihoods of those living in the high altitude region (above 3900m), nonetheless distributed its benefits unequally *within* that region, where only those living at the lowest

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<sup>44</sup> See the Peru country report for further discussion; see also Robert E. Evenson and Douglas Gollin, "Assessing the Impact of the Green Revolution, 1960 to 2000," *Science* 300, no. 5620 (2003): 758–762; L. Yapa, "What Are Improved Seeds? An Epistemology of the Green Revolution," *Economic Geography* (1993): 254–273.

<sup>45</sup> James C Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Scott's earlier book, *Weapons of the Weak*, is an in-depth ethnographic account of the coming of Green Revolution double-cropping to a village in Kedah, Malaysia. In it he demonstrates that while local power-holders maintained or increased their dominant position in the rural social structures, the poor and powerless in the village faced increased adversity and further marginalization as a result of "improvements" in agricultural production; see James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

elevations were able to take full advantage of the interventions. There was thus a potential for the project to increase inequality *within* the project area, even as it contributed to the overall improvement of living standards there.

In part, this situation was produced because the technological modules advanced by the project were of the sort that Chambers refers to as “Model T” development options: replicable packages developed by outside experts and disseminated by extensionists. In fact, the need for replicability was built in to the project’s mission, which was to demonstrate, validate, and document a set of interventions so that these could be brought to scale, thus increasing the reach of OA’s intervention. Scaling up, then, required some degree of standardization, and as Chambers suggests, standardization may mean that specific technical fixes may not be equally adequate for all intended beneficiaries.<sup>47</sup>

## 4. ISSUES OF RIGHTS

### 1. “Primary” change agents

Oxfam America’s work on climate change takes place within the larger context of the organization’s stated commitment to identify and address the root causes of poverty and inequality, and to increase the involvement of marginalized people as agents of change within advocacy and intervention. The adoption of Rights-Oriented Programming for Effectiveness (ROPE) is perhaps best exemplified by the use of the term “primary change agent” to describe the men and women living in poverty with whom Oxfam America works. A statement of ROPE principles makes this commitment clear:

We listen to, and engage as equals with, people living in poverty... We build programs on their existing ideas, aspirations and capabilities. We uncover people’s own ideas of success and build strategies to achieve them and

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<sup>47</sup> This assessment should be understood to pertain only to the technical elements of the project such as the improved varieties and introduced technologies. Where the Peru project *diverged* from Chambers’s mold was in the actual work undertaken by the committed personnel of the project, especially where they worked closely with community leadership on such seemingly mundane tasks as preparing communal development plans for use in participatory budgeting processes. This work, unlike the technology transfer model, involves assisting local people as they determine their *own* development agenda. If there is a lesson to be taken from that experience, it is that involving communities in the assessment of the problem, and the design of solutions, is one way to overcome the deficiencies of the tech-fix approach, and to tailor interventions quite specifically to individual communities and households while remaining true to the rights-based principals that guide Oxfam America’s work.

measure them. We consider people living in poverty with whom we work as primary change agents, and not as passive participants in our programs.<sup>48</sup>

This is a strong statement, and one is characteristic of the dedication to rights that sets Oxfam America apart from other organizations working on similar issues world-wide. By abandoning the notion that men and women living in poverty are “recipients” of aid, or “beneficiaries” of projects, Oxfam America and its partners have attempted to change the terms of the relationship between international organizations and the people they work with.

In some cases, EIIF projects did not seem particularly well grounded in the effort to build programs on the existing ideas, aspirations and capabilities of primary change agents that is envisioned in the ROPE approach. To provide just one example, the Ethiopia project was incredibly successful in placing the problem of climate change into a national and international spotlight. With the assistance of the EIIF, Ethiopia’s CCF-E was able to accomplish a great deal, and in that respect stands out as a commendable and highly effective project. However, in part because the project was focused on the highest levels of government and on the international climate change negotiations, the ideas of primary change agents do not appear to be well represented in the project’s approach. As the Ethiopia country report notes, the EIIF project there

seeks to promote action from those at the highest level of government, as well as from the international community. The ‘payoff’ for poor and marginalized groups would thus come when these ‘top down’ strategies eventually succeed in creating appropriate policy directed towards the needs of marginalized people. While this approach may well result in benefits for men and women living in poverty in the long term, project design and implementation did not incorporate processes that would hold the project directly accountable to those men and women – the people, that is, who are nominally its primary change agents.<sup>49</sup>

One way to insure that primary change agents really do occupy a primary role in innovating, and to insure that OA projects truly are designed to address the needs of primary change agents, is to involve primary change agents in the process of defining problems and designing solutions. In many cases EIIF

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<sup>48</sup> Oxfam America, *ROPE II - Rights Oriented Programming for Effectiveness*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Ethiopia Country Report, p. 24. The CCF-E designed a series of climate change hearings where the opinions of rural people on climate change could be heard and where local people could provide their input to government officials and policy makers. These large events represent a step in the right direction; in fact, such opportunities are few and far between for most Ethiopians, where the political system does not allow for much interaction of this sort. However, these large events, and the media surrounding them, also have the appearance of a sort of “roll out” of an agenda on climate change that had already been well established within the offices of government officials before it was taken to the people.

projects were designed to help people understand the importance of climate change, as a step towards empowering them to take action to address it. For these reasons it may seem that there was little opportunity to involve primary change agents in the process of problem definition. Furthermore, the structure of grant-making and the nature of the project cycle leave little room for primary change agents to contribute meaningfully to the identification of the policy problem and the options available for addressing it: grant proposals are written before funds are in place, and as such do not allow for dialogue with primary change agents about their perceptions and priorities.

To the extent that Oxfam America and its partners fail to incorporate primary change agents in the identification of problems and solutions, however, we may say that those “primary” change agents are not really primary at all. If they are excluded from the early stages of project development, then men and women living in poverty are, in essence, relegated again to the position of mere beneficiaries of projects designed by others without their significant input. Oxfam America and its partners have strong connections with the communities they work with, and they are familiar with the livelihoods challenges these communities face. Even so, assessing what people’s needs are in relation to the problem of climate change based on close experience with them is not the same as asking them for their input directly. Giving primary change agents a seat at the table, from the beginning of the process, is an important step towards fostering inclusive problem solving.

## **2. Gender**

The importance of gender to the climate change question should not be underestimated. Because women are responsible for many productive activities in subsistence and small-scale rural production systems, and because many of the jobs they do are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, attending to gender within the response to the climate challenge has been identified as a key goal for livelihoods protection, both within and outside of Oxfam. The effort to address gender aligns with the objectives of the Oxfam and Oxfam America strategic plans. Goal 2 of the Oxfam Strategic Plan, “advancing gender justice”, corresponds to the emphasis on gender in the Oxfam America strategic plan, which insists on the importance of “integrating and highlighting gender in all our work”.<sup>50</sup> All of the projects under review involved some effort to address the gendered dimensions of climate change. Statements to this effect were part of nearly all project documentation. And yet these statements were seldom accompanied by the establishment of specific objectives with regard to gender; baseline data on gender dynamics was not collected, or not systematically

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<sup>50</sup> Oxfam International, *Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019. The Power of People against Poverty* (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2012), 14.

collected; and assessments of project accomplishments with regard to gender were generally not performed. This problem is discussed in detail in the country reports.

There is a relationship between stated objectives not realized by the project and the project's generalized and relatively open-ended objectives. In the case of gender, for instance, in many cases specific hypotheses regarding gender were not made explicit, nor were benchmarks set for addressing issues related to the needs of women living in poverty. Placing an objective like this into strategic plans, and developing discrete action items around these objectives, is likely more effective than simply asserting that the project will "pay special attention to" those issues.<sup>51</sup>

As has been discussed in the EIIF country reports, Oxfam America could have been more successful in meeting gender objectives if those objectives had been clearly stated and incorporated as specific action items within project planning. While the question of gender was incorporated into planning (there are gender-specific prompts as part of the GAPs used in EIIF projects) and into reporting (questions relating to gender are found in the various reporting templates for EIIF projects), in fact it was difficult to find evidence of a methodological approach to meeting gender objectives in the EIIF projects. The inability to address gender issues directly may demonstrate a "tyranny of the cross-cutting theme": put simply, when an important issue is expected to be incorporated as a cross-cutting theme into every activity undertaken by an institution, projects and partners may not make gender the focus of specific activities relating to intervention, data collection and analysis. So, while the new OA strategic plan calls for integrating and highlighting gender, it should also be an explicit component of planning, design and implementation.

## 5. OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Baselines, benchmarks and monitoring

The EIIF projects are learning projects, in which OA and its partners seek to innovate in their response to an emerging issue by trying out approaches that might not be possible in a "development as usual" model. This unique set of conditions places a premium on the collection and analysis of information about the effectiveness of the innovations being introduced. In its inception, the EIIF explicitly recognized the importance of hypothesis testing and of establishing and tracking indicators in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of introduced

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<sup>51</sup> Ethiopia Country Report, p. 37.

innovations. This is made clear in Oxfam America's "Guidance Piece" for the EIIIF, which states that

The EIIIF project partners need to develop and track indicators. These indicators should be designed to measure the success of the project in achieving:

- Coverage – the extent to which projects engage with stakeholders
- Impact – the extent to which projects deliver the intended results, or bring about changes in behavior that support the project objectives.
- Sustainability – the ability of stakeholders to continue adaption work beyond project lifetimes.
- Replicability – Facility to reproduce successes in other communities and areas
- Scaling up – the extent to which experiences, results and lessons are captured and disseminated for broader benefits.<sup>52</sup>

The Guidance Piece thus lays out specific parameters for the establishment of indicators and their use in projects. It is therefore striking that in almost all of the EIIIF projects, processes of monitoring, evaluation and learning were absent, or were incomplete and unsystematic. Several of the country reports discuss this issue in detail.

In the awareness raising and media campaigns undertaken in Ethiopia, Mali and Cambodia, for instance, while initial research was sometimes conducted to measure people's knowledge of the issue (the knowledge and perception study in Cambodia, for instance), systematic baseline data was usually not collected, and was never compared to data collected at the end of the project to assess the project's effectiveness. The Peru project stands out for its approach to monitoring, and for its efforts to conduct a methodical baseline study against which project outcomes could be compared.<sup>53</sup> OA's efforts in Peru were guided by an effort to validate and systematize a series of interventions for the purposes of scaling up their use in the high Andes. However, even in the case of the Peru EIIIF project, the intention to monitor project impacts did not yield robust results. The baseline study itself did identify and attempt to measure a series of variables that could be assessed at a later date to measure the nature of problem outcomes. However, the indicators that were developed in the baseline study

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<sup>52</sup> Oxfam America, *EIIIF Projects: Guidance Piece*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Carlos de la Torre Postigo, *Documento de Línea de Base* (Lima, Peru: Asociación Proyección + Soluciones Prácticas, September 2009).

were not used throughout the life of the project, and the usefulness of the exercise was limited.<sup>54</sup>

Comparing outcomes to baseline data is only one part of the monitoring challenge. Perhaps more important is the effort to identify specific benchmarks for measuring the success or failure of project components. One place where one would expect to see a statement of the specific goals to be achieved by a project would be in a project proposal; thus in the case of the EIIF projects, one would look for overall objectives in the concept note, and specific objectives in each of the GAPs. Those objectives would remain constant throughout the life of the project, unless understanding of the nature of the problem changed during the course of the project.<sup>55</sup>

In several of the EIIF projects, however, overall and specific objectives found in different documents did not line up with each other, and specific objectives were not clearly spelled out. In the Ethiopia project, for instance, the project's concept note, narrative report, and grant application proposal lay out three distinct sets of general and specific objectives.<sup>56</sup> The project's objectives did not remain constant from one document to the next, making it difficult to assess whether the project accomplished its goals, or, put another way, whether the innovation introduced by the project was successful according to the project's own definition of success.<sup>57</sup> The existence of multiple statements of project objectives was notable in the Mali project as well. The Mali country report identifies a "lack of baseline data and lack of impact assessments" as the most significant shortcoming of the Mali project, and notes that "even though there is an

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<sup>54</sup> The reason the project did not use the baseline study for evaluation may relate to problems in the conceptualization and realization of the study itself, as well as to problems with OA's main implementing partner, which was dissolved in the middle of the project.

<sup>55</sup> In his work on developmental evaluation, Patton argues for incorporating flexible, iterative processes of setting goals and analyzing outcomes throughout the life of a project. His approach is less rigid with regard to benchmarks. Adequately incorporating Patton's ideas into a project would require that the processes he recommends be adopted from the inception of the project. See Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (New York and London: Guilford Press, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> See the Ethiopia country report, pages 9-11. See also Oxfam America, *Climate Change Initiative in the Horn of Africa. HARO Concept Note* (Addis Ababa: Oxfam America, 2008); Oxfam America, *McKinley EIIF Narrative Report. National Climate Change Forum Ethiopia Project. May 2009-October 2010* (Boston: Oxfam America, February 2010); Oxfam America, *Grant Application Proposal ETH 015 / 10. 6/1/2010 - 10/31/2012* (Addis Ababa: Oxfam America, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> As was noted in the Ethiopia country report, the lack of specific objectives may, in fact, have allowed for greater flexibility and for more responsive, iterative action by the CCF-E. See the discussion of "institutional agility" on page 35 of the country report.

abundance of documentation ... on this project, it is difficult to identify all the activities that were undertaken, by whom, for whom, and for what reason".<sup>58</sup>

## **2. Partner financial management**

The EIIF projects under review were affected in various ways by issues related to misuse or misappropriation of funds by key Oxfam partners. In Peru, the non-governmental organization Acción Proyección (AP) was found to have misappropriated project funds. The result was the cancellation of AP's involvement in the Q'emikuspa project; the organization subsequently folded. SAMRO responded well to the problem, but the situation nonetheless had a negative impact on the ability of the project to meet its objectives: project activities were suspended for numerous months, leaving local authorities and community members wondering what had happened, and weakening trust and momentum.

In Cambodia, Oxfam America found it necessary to sever relations with a major non-governmental partner, the Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien, or CEDAC. CEDAC was OA's principal partner on the System of Rice Intensification, and also on the Saving for Change project, both of which were part of OA's Livelihood and Income Security Program. OA terminated its working arrangement with CEDAC owing to financial management issues at the NGO. Because CEDAC had been slated to serve as the principal partner for a key component of the EIIF project, OA found itself scrambling to find another partner, causing delays in the rollout of the EIIF project. Mlup Baitong, the partner that was eventually selected to replace CEDAC, was not well prepared to handle the technical and on-the-ground implementation role that it was assigned. Eventually, these deficiencies, coupled with financial management issues at Mlup Baitong, contributed to the decision to end the project and reprogram remaining funds.

## **3. Short project cycles and turnover within OA**

Like the issue of misappropriation of funds and partner failure, this problem is not specific to EIIF-backed projects, but is rather endemic in development settings. This problem hampers institutions' ability to engage in the kind of planning that is necessary to address a systemic, long-term problem such as climate change. In the projects under review, there were two distinct ways in which this issue arose. The first concerns Oxfam America's *own* project cycles and planning processes. The Mali country report, for instance, suggested that one of the most significant shortcomings of the EIIF project related to the short time frame for the project, a structural problem that resulted in a series of phases of the project (vulnerability

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<sup>58</sup> Mali Country Report, p. 2.

assessment, training participants, developing and implementing pilot projects) being carried out simultaneously when they should have been conducted consecutively.<sup>59</sup> In Ethiopia, the ability of HARO to conduct long-term planning was constrained by projects' short funding cycles. This situation in turn can lead to rapid staff turnover, as staff leave the institution in search of new opportunities when projects come to a close. While many of the key individuals who founded and operate the CCF-E have remained constant, there was significant staff turnover within the HARO office itself, an outcome that diminishes institutional memory, and limits the planning horizon.

## 6. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Constraints on advocacy

In most of the countries where the EIIF operated, the space for action by civil society organizations is contracting. In both Ethiopia and Cambodia, new laws have been promulgated that restrict the ability of non-governmental organizations to engage in advocacy. In Ethiopia, the new law applies to resident charities, i.e. organizations that receive the majority of their funding from outside Ethiopia. These organizations are now allowed to spend no more than 30% of their total budget on non-implementation tasks and administration. Because advocacy falls within this category, the effect is to severely restrict the amount of advocacy work that can be done. The law has had a profound effect on civil society groups, many of which dedicate all of their time to such activities. In Cambodia, the new NGO law has not yet gone into effect. Even so, non-governmental organizations have little room to maneuver in a country where demands for rights are met with state-backed violence and repression.

Constraints on advocacy mean that while Oxfam America and its partners operate from a rights-based approach for effecting social change, in many cases the basic conditions through which rights might be guaranteed are not in place: rule of law is absent, those who hold power act with impunity, etc. Oxfam America has established a reputation for supporting people and helping to have their voices heard in just such situations. In Cambodia, OA support for advocacy and activism surrounding the issue of hydropower development has been effective in changing perceptions of the problem, and is well-known in the region. The efforts of governments to prevent civil society organizations from speaking out pose a significant challenge to Oxfam America's operating model. The effects of new strategies on the part of governments to contain social action and

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<sup>59</sup> See Mali country report, pages 3 and 17.

advocacy suggest a need for renewed thinking on the part of OA and its partners as to how to confront these challenges.

## **2. Short project cycles and turnover within government**

Just as short project cycles and turnover within Oxfam and its partner organizations affected the effectiveness of the EIF, the problem also affected the institutional settings where OA works. In particular, government agencies were subject to this rapid turnover. Here, a good case study can be found in Peru, where turnover in local and regional governments resulted in significant interruptions and setbacks to the project. In the municipality of Espinar, for instance, where a new local government took office midway through the implementation of the EIF project, one newly-appointed member of the new administration noted that the previous government had wiped the hard drives on their computers and taken with them most of the documentation of ongoing efforts, requiring the new government to essentially “start from zero” upon arriving in office. Such dynamics call into question the sustainability of the Q'emikuspa project; indeed, members of the municipal council indicated that they had little or no knowledge of the project or its accomplishment.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### **The EIIIF offers a useful model of innovation funding**

By setting expectations and sending a message about the importance of innovating in response to emerging issues, the EIIIF has helped Oxfam America and its partners think creatively and innovate. Future efforts to encourage innovation should make clear that, within the framework of the specific fund or venture, project success or failure will be evaluated not only in terms of the immediate returns to primary change agents, but institutional learning and the development of innovation achieved through the project will also be considered when evaluating performance and benefits gained from the intervention. In the case where regional offices and partners experiment with approaches that do not work: (1) the nature of the hypotheses tested, and the suspected reasons for failure should be carefully documented; and (2) the office, organization, unit, etc. that has developed the program should be encouraged to try a different approach, rather than blamed for failure. Oxfam America should look for ways to make innovation funding more agile (see Operational Recommendations, below).

### **Define climate change adaptation at a scale appropriate to intervention**

Defining climate change, and climate change adaptation, in a way that is amenable to intervention represents a challenge for Oxfam in its effort to promote climate change adaptation. Issues of temporal and geographic scale, as well as the scale of response (from local government to international cooperation, for instance), make it difficult to define what successful adaptation would look like, and thus make it difficult to measure the impact and effectiveness of projects such as those the EIIIF has supported. An implication of these definitional issues is that care should be devoted to defining the climate challenge within the context of – and at a scale appropriate to -- the specific set of issues that Oxfam America seeks to address. In those cases where adaptation requires structural change within a society, it may consist largely of intangible outcomes that resist measurement. This recommendation applies equally to other large scale issues such as “resilience” – a difficult to measure, and difficult to define, keyword that is central to Oxfam and Oxfam America’s strategic plans.

## **Involve primary change agents in problem definition**

If the term “primary change agent” is meant to indicate that men and women living in poverty are active partners in Oxfam America’s projects and programs, and not simply passive recipients, then primary change agents should participate meaningfully in the problem definition phase of project design. The move to view men and women living in poverty not as beneficiaries or as passive recipients of aid is one of the features that distinguishes Oxfam America from other international organizations, and reveals the deep commitment to marginalized and poor people that is a hallmark of the organization. Living up to these aspirations means taking the notion of rural people as primary change agents seriously. This implies not only greater inclusivity in problem definition, project design, and implementation, but also requires an embrace of work in communities.

## **Innovation is a two-way street**

Technology transfer models, which seek to import innovation from “outside” into the lives of primary change agents, often fail when the options promoted are unsuited to local environments and social systems. Given the emphasis of the EIIF on supporting innovation in the response to climate change, one way in which a commitment to primary change agents can benefit OA and its partners is in the recognition that innovation is a two-way street. The directionality of innovation should not only involve bringing innovation to primary change agents. It should also take seriously the idea that primary change agents are themselves capable of innovation. For this reason, the adaptive practices of farmers, herders and other rural producers should feature prominently in the approach Oxfam America takes towards questions of innovation and adaptation.

## **Build scale-up strategies into project design**

Diffusion of innovation and other models of scaling-up social change suggest that the spread of innovation depends only partly on the utility of new ideas and inventions. Political, cultural, infrastructural and other factors condition the possibility of scale-up. In the EIIF, Oxfam America has taken a series of important steps to foster innovation and the spread of good ideas. Not least among these is the way the very creation of the EIIF itself signaled a commitment to innovation within OA as an institution. Successful approaches to the question of scale-up in EIIF projects included building scale-up into project design and engaging a range of actors, from local communities to the highest levels of government, in the development and promotion of innovation.

# OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Creating a more agile process for encouraging social change

A key problem faced by the EIIF projects was the lack of adequate information *prior to the project's inception*. The specific local manifestation of the climate change problem was not fully understood in some cases, and in other cases in-country technical capabilities were not properly assessed prior to beginning the project. Thus, for instance, in the case of Cambodia, the project design was based on the idea that agro-meteorological forecasting was a legitimate policy option, even though, in fact, historical climate data was unavailable, and the forecasting capabilities of the Department of Meteorology were limited. Initial assumptions upon which the project was based were flawed. Changes to the way innovation funding is awarded could help to avoid the creation of large-scale interventions founded on unrealistic assumptions. To achieve this, OA should consider the following options:

### ***a. Preliminary research grants***

For those regional offices interested to submit a larger proposal for innovation funding, establishing preliminary research grants would enable project staff to devote time and effort to research on the nature of the challenge and the forms of response available to them. Preliminary funding could be awarded as part of a “project development grant”. Such initial grants should be relatively easily available to regional offices and would allow them to make decisions about their capability to innovate without requiring them to commit to larger projects.

### ***b. Preliminary trial of concept funding.***

In the same vein, and perhaps also as part of a project development grant, support for initial trials of innovative concepts would help demonstrate to regional offices and their partners the feasibility of proposed innovations before larger projects were put in place.

### ***c. Internal and external peer review processes.***

The specific theories of change in use by particular projects would be strengthened by greater attention and specificity in problem definition and by strategic thinking about the form of intervention to be adopted. Future innovation projects will benefit from better elaborated proposals. Attention should be devoted to improving the internal and external peer review processes used to vet proposals. This would force project developers to justify the ways they understand problems and to make explicit their assumptions about how problems can be addressed, and would greatly enhance the design of interventions.

## **2. Make gender objectives explicit**

There are important gendered dimensions to the impact of climate change on rural livelihoods. Addressing these aspects of the climate problem is central to Oxfam and Oxfam America's strategic plans. There is clear evidence that OA is aware of the importance of gender in the protection of rights and livelihoods, and has taken steps to incorporate attention to gender into the standard procedures and working model of the organization. GAPs, Concept Notes, guidance pieces, etc., all included language on gender and required regional offices and partners to identify how interventions would address the gendered dimensions of the climate challenge. However, in the final analysis it is difficult to tell whether EIIF projects adequately addressed gender. Women were the focus of some workshops and received training, they were incorporated as stakeholders in various trials of interventions. However, to adequately address gender in future projects, gender should be incorporated as a specific component of project activities rather than as a "cross-cutting theme" incorporated in unspecific ways to the activities in the project. The generation of gender hypotheses and the incorporation of gender dynamics into projects' theories of change should be accompanied by specific mechanisms for influencing these dynamics, and specific monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices designed to assess gender outcomes and the ways that project activities were implicated in these outcomes.

## **3. Baselines, benchmarks, and MEL**

Especially within the context of projects designed to identify promising, innovative strategies for confronting issues such as climate change, evaluation of a project's impact and effectiveness represents a critical component of learning. EIIF projects did not adequately identify the nature of the problem to be addressed, nor did they identify the set of conditions that existed at the beginning of the intervention so as to demonstrate changes to those conditions over time. As a result, it is difficult to assess the extent to which interventions were successful. OA and its partners should devote more attention to establishing baseline data regarding a set of variables that will stay constant over the course of a project's life, allowing for comparison and evaluation of the success or failure of a given intervention. Using a proposal format that is far more explicit than the "concept note" used for the EIIF projects would help in making assumptions and objectives more explicit. Setting benchmarks for objectives to be accomplished, and holding those benchmarks constant over the life of the intervention would also help provide Oxfam America with more useful information about the utility of various approaches and about the extent to which OA's investments have resulted in changed conditions for primary change agents.

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