



Memo

Management response to EIIF Review on Climate Change Projects in Peru, Mali, Cambodia and Ethiopia.

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Introduction

An evaluation of the implementation of the EIIF climate change projects was undertaken in 2013-2104. Four country reports were produced as well as a synthesis report that summarized key lessons across the individual reports. (The reports can be found on [Padare](#))

The synthesis report highlights the major accomplishments of the EIIF:

- (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.

The most promising and successful efforts included: (1) engaging with community-level organizations, including community assemblies, local government and 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 were able to obtain the buy-in of major actors and occupy a central place within processes of information sharing, networking, and policymaking.

According to the evaluation, 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 external expertise present significant hurdles that were not fully overcome;
- (3) 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.

Furthermore, due to the wider contexts in which the EIIF projects operated, many experienced constraints on advocacy, partner financial mismanagement, and staff turnover within Oxfam and its partners.

Based on the insights gained from research of the four EIIF projects under review, the synthesis makes the following recommendations:

- Innovation funding is useful and important. 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.
- 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.
- 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. Oxfam America and its partners should search for ways to innovate together with men and women participating in the project.
- Make assumptions explicit and thoroughly vet proposed interventions. 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.

- 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 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.

Oxfam response: strengths and considerations:

The evaluation synthesis report highlights relevant issues for Oxfam. For example it stresses that our projects and programs should have an explicit theory of change, that our assumptions should be well documented, and that the time-period of the intervention, and our partnerships should be well-defined. In fact, our new Oxfam America SP recognizes that when designing programs and projects we have a sophisticated analyses of gender, culture, politics, and markets in the countries where we work. It also highlights the importance of gender, cross-functional teams, and better budget management for better financial accountability

The evaluation points to the limits of Oxfam and partners' roles in technical approaches (tech fixes). Indeed, we recognize that Oxfam's added value in discussions on climate change is not around disseminating technical approaches, but is rather on rights and power. Again, our strategic plan explicit commits us to move away from direct service delivery and invest in well researched national level policy work that seeks to influence quantity and quality of investment in agriculture, and developing strategies to hold governments and donors more accountable for their investments.

We are also in agreement with the evaluation on the importance of developing appropriate monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to track progress. Since the EIIF climate change projects were started in 2009, Oxfam America has made significant investments in measurement and improvement of our projects and programs and regular public reporting of our findings.

However, we would like to note that these EIIF projects were conceived as "hubs of innovation". Thus some issues the evaluation highlights, while important in long term programs, don't quite fit the conception of the EIIF projects.

First, our approach was to reduce the formal requirements that characterize regular program design processes (e.g. theory of change, full participation of our primary agents of change). We assumed that reducing the demands for this would spark creative thinking and processes.

Countries that were awarded the grants had a lot of flexibility in the use of funds in line with plans with the potential for sustainability and achieving scale were prioritized.

Second, the evaluation points to insufficient involvement of our primary change agents. Although in retrospect it does appear that we were conceiving of innovation as coming primarily from our partners, we believe that innovation can come from everyone and everywhere and we should be open to disseminating “innovative” approaches conceived by other actors. Thus, in the future, we should be reviewing project proposals on their networks and relations and the diversity within them. We should be encouraging people from diverse backgrounds (economists, IT experts, engineers, sociologists, etc.) to come together and combine different perspectives, knowledge and expertise. In this way, we can challenge commonly held assumptions and come up with new and innovate ways forward.

Finally, recognizing that programs baselines can be too time consuming for innovation projects, in the future we should be testing or developing simple tools that allows us to track progress and foster on-going learning. This could entail collecting small amounts of data, testing ideas, and iterations of this. Incentives need to be focused not on what the projects do or whether it succeeds or fails, but the quality of their processes.

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