

**OXFAM**  
External Evaluation Report

# **MID-TERM REVIEW FINAL REPORT**

**GLOBAL LEADERS EMPOWERED TO  
ALLEVIATE POVERTY FUNDING PROGRAMME  
II**

Context, international cooperation  
May 2017



**OXFAM**

*This is an evaluation of Oxfam America's Global Leaders to Alleviate Poverty (LEAP) programs. The programs have been operating in 15 countries since April 2015 and this evaluation covers the work undertaken between April 2015 and December 2016. This program is the second phase of the Global LEAP Program, operating since June 2011.*

*The evaluation was commissioned by Rebecca Perlmutter and Lisa Hilt, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisors, with funding from Oxfam America. The major evaluation activities took place between January and April 2017. The evaluation was carried out by Fons van der Velden and Pol De Greve, Context, international cooperation, through a competitive bidding and reflects the findings as reported by them. The evaluation process was managed by Rebecca Perlmutter and Lisa Hilt, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisors, from Oxfam America.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2015 Oxfam launched the second phase of Global Leaders Empowered to Alleviate Poverty (LEAP), a complex international multi-sectoral initiative aimed at defending and improving aid of traditional aid donors, influencing the development cooperation strategies of certain emerging economies, and increasing the availability of agricultural development budgets that benefit women and men smallholder farmers in Africa.

**LEAP is a funding platform** with three distinct, yet overlapping components that were brought together in a single grant framework. While these three Strands are somehow connected, and have some overlapping elements, each Strand has its own specific objective, Theory of Change and implementation approach. While the three Strands work in different contexts, in all three Strands LEAP developed **pathways of change** affecting the following “*spheres of influence*”:

- awareness among key audiences of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and related issues and developments,
- capacity of citizens to engage in policy processes,
- policy dialogue with decision makers,
- decision makers bring key issues onto the policy agenda,
- decision makers are committed on key issues and policy changes, and
- implementation of pro-poor, pro-equity development policies and practices.

The **scope of interventions** (*sphere of control*) that Oxfam is using<sup>1</sup> is diverse and varies between the three Strands but roughly speaking interventions can be categorised as: research, policy formulation, direct advocacy with policy makers, engagement with influentials and allies, capacity strengthening of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and citizens, communication through traditional and social media and *reverse policy*<sup>2</sup> dialogue.

The **purpose of the Mid-Term Review** was two-fold:

- a. to identify lessons on which strategies and tactics have been effective in achieving the objectives in various contexts;
- b. to demonstrate the level and type of influence Oxfam (with allies) has had (if any) on key development effectiveness policies and practices.

The MTR was organised in an inductive, evidence-based manner. In order to guide reflections about LEAP performance, five in-depth case studies were taken as the entry point and input for a more general (meta) analysis at Strand level. The findings and insights which emerged from this process were complemented with review of documents and bilateral interviews with resource persons (validation). Group discussions at Strand level were organised to re-visit the Theory of Change and to discuss preliminary findings and draw lessons learned. The research methodologies that were used are qualitative in nature. In the case studies and the meta-analysis of Strands, saturation, triangulation and redundancy were taken as guiding principles for determining sufficiency of the information, i.e. one may

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<sup>1</sup> According to the overarching Theory of Change (Grant Proposal Narrative).

<sup>2</sup> Reverse policy dialogue is used when recipients are consulted and influence the formulation of policies by which they will be affected.

decide that sufficient evidence is collected to draw conclusions when the research reaches a stage where respondents and/or sources provide the same evidence (including perceptions) and alternative sources do not lead to new evidence.<sup>3</sup>

### **Key achievements**

**In all three Strands** Oxfam contributed to a wider awareness and better understanding among citizens and decision makers of policy issues and other aspects related to the aid and development agenda. In the EU countries covered by LEAP, at EU level and in the US the policy agendas on Official Development Assistance (ODA) (and in some countries Financial Transaction Tax - FTT) were influenced through high level advocacy with governments. There is evidence that thanks to engagement by Oxfam and allies, ODA (and FTT) remained firmly on the agenda in the development policy and budget debates in donor countries. In the cases studies on Civil-20 (C20), New Alliance and Ghana budget advocacy, contribution analysis showed that Oxfam's role was important and in some cases also necessary for civil society to bring about the reported changes and outcomes such as the European Parliament's positioning on the New Alliance or the adoption of policy recommendations by G20 in Turkey.

**In Strand I on aid and development**, the strongest focus on quantity and quality of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and 'new' mechanisms to secure additional finance for development. In EU countries covered by Strand I, Oxfam was particularly active in NGO alliances and coalitions whereby it accomplished good results in guiding agenda setting and aligning strategies for influencing key decision makers. Civil society pressure contributed to increase ODA financing for development in some countries. Moderate to good increases in ODA were observed in Italy, France, Germany and at the European Commission. Stagnation of ODA was first reported in the Netherlands but in a later stage the Dutch Parliament agreed to reallocate underspent budget for in-donor refugee costs in 2016 back to the overall ODA budget for 2017 and 2018. Oxfam was also actively engaged and able to influence developments and debates at Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) on issues such as transparency & accountability as well as on (working towards) democratic ownership of development strategies and processes. The case study about Aid & Private sector and especially Blended Finance revealed that in a number of countries and international fora, Oxfam - through LEAP - prepared the ground for influencing influencers and decision makers in an informed manner about the implications of leveraging private sector finance for development. Oxfam's concerns were mostly directed towards Blended Finance and the OECD-DAC PSI<sup>4</sup> reform, with a focus on stronger safeguards and monitoring of ODA and ensuring development principles are followed.

**In Strand II with the BRICSAMIT<sup>5</sup> group**, Oxfam has contributed to a better mapping and understanding of humanitarian and development policies and the identification of gaps and challenges in public policies to address poverty and inequality, specifically in the context of South-South-Cooperation with BRICSAMIT

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<sup>3</sup> Ref. Michael Q. Patton, Advocacy Impact Evaluation, *Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation*, Volume 5, number 9 (March 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Private Sector Instruments.

<sup>5</sup> BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, South-Africa) plus Mexico, Indonesia and Turkey.

countries. Oxfam contributed to the functioning of an international platform on South-South Corporation (SSC) in Africa (Network of Southern Think Tanks - NeST<sup>6</sup>) as part of a wider, global initiative to generate and share knowledge on the nature of SSC and its contribution to international development co-operation. Oxfam contributed to broad multi-stakeholder consultations, to research and especially to coalition building within and across a number of BRICSAMIT countries. The policy influencing work that was conducted was important as it contributed to establishment of the Civil BRICS whereby Civil Society (CS) actually took the lead in directing the agenda towards transparency and accountability.<sup>7</sup> Some of Oxfam's BRICSAMIT country offices were able to influence key actors and processes around these themes at national and trans-national events (including C20 - G20 - such as Turkey 2015). Despite delays in some of the envisaged research projects regarding the NDB, work conducted and evidence gathered by Oxfam nevertheless strengthened the capacity of the organisation and the relevance of its advocacy and influencing on key aspects of the Bank's practices including its socio-environmental frameworks, lending for social infrastructure, and the use of country systems.

**In Strand III on agricultural programmes and budgets for Africa**, the focus was on agricultural development policy and public budgets work for agriculture in five African target countries as well as with four donor countries and at the EU. Campaigning, notably through the Female Food Heroes initiative, contributed to a wider awareness and mobilisation on the position, role and rights of women smallholders in a number of countries. Budget related advocacy and budget analysis became stronger thanks to evidence-based research in different countries and capacity strengthening of Oxfam and allies in Africa. Citizens' dialogues resulted in public manifestos or similar statements which in a number of cases has had a noticeable impact on agricultural policies and programmes such as in Burkina Faso. In donor countries like Italy and the Netherlands, positive outcomes were reported in terms of increased or sustained development budget allocation to food security and agriculture development in Africa while political assurances were obtained to maintain a strong focus on the interests and rights of women and smallholder farmers.

### **Factors that contributed to success**

Influencing global leaders is the core objective of LEAP but this that can only be achieved if the necessary conditions (enabling institutional environment, policy intelligence, agenda, alternatives, capacities, etc.) are in place. Oxfam's contributions to creating such enabling environments (in numerous policy influencing settings and domains) were tangible and widely appreciated by allies and partners. Emphasis in LEAP was mostly on policy influencing and evidence-based advising of influential actors and policy makers e.g. through policy briefings. Less attention was paid to campaigning and public mobilisation. This was a strategic choice borne out of the (implicit and tacit) assessment that in view of the specific content area (aid and development) and intended audience (policy makers and political leaders), the most effective approach was to seek dialogue with decision-makers, and not to seek change through pressure and/or confrontation. Policy makers that were interviewed (such as Brussels based 'eurocrats') indicated

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<sup>6</sup> NeST - Network of Southern Think-Tanks.

<sup>7</sup> In the 2015 (Russia) and 2016 (India) Civil BRICS were more government-led processes.

that they particularly value Oxfam's non-confrontational and well-informed advocacy approach and are more willing to listen to and consider civil society demands if forwarded in this manner and not as harsh activist demands. The appreciation of research and intelligence gathering stems from a widely-shared understanding that for policy influencing to be effective it needs to be based on robust evidence. Hence the importance that Oxfam attributed within the different Strands to research, policy analysis and formulation of alternatives, which constitute building blocks of an evidence-based approach to influencing.

## A SUCCINCT OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS OF THE CASE STUDIES

### **Case 1 – Strand I - Blended Finance**

The case study focused on the question whether the activities of Oxfam with regard to Blended Finance contributed to the international agenda of aid. In terms of results respondents acknowledged that:

- Oxfam and partners made an extremely high number of visible and invisible contributions to the work on Blended Finance in a relatively short period of time;
- Oxfam has inputted to key institutions (EC, OECD, and GPEDC) who shape global policies on blending.

The added value of Oxfam lays mostly in research, capacity development support, advocacy and fostering the emergence of coalitions. A key challenge for Oxfam might be socialising the work on private sector across LEAP and within the wider Confederation. A key recommendation is to connect the topic of Blended Finance more to the day-to-day realities in recipient countries and to enhance relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the work in this area of Oxfam by connecting to and working with southern networks and partners on these issues.

### **Case 2 – Strand II – C20**

This case study relates to the main learning question of what good practices to achieve impact, can be identified from Oxfam's engagement with the C20 and G20 in Turkey. The major outcome of this case study is that internal and external respondents almost unanimously report that together with other (national and international) organisations and the Turkish government, the Oxfam country office in Turkey facilitated a process of co-creation, which took the best out of each contributing organisation and contributed to delivering effective, precise and inclusive policy development and influencing of the G20 on major policy issues.

Other major outcomes are:

1. An inclusive and transparent policy development process was delivered which had representation from more than 90 countries; it was a valuable experience for the national Turkish organisations who hitherto had not so much experience of working with G20.
2. For the first time, all engagement groups were able to arrive at a Joint Declaration on the Syrian Crisis and refugees. The G20 communiqué appropriately reflected civil society concerns on this issue. C20

recommendations on anti-corruption and inclusive growth received good traction with the G20 recommendations.

3. The emergence of a long term informal international civil society network was fostered, and many of the participant organisations are still focussing on G20 and global policy issues of their concern.

Some key recommendations relate to creating a permanent international advisory committee to support C20 and bringing in more southern and grassroots organisations.

### **Case 3 – Strand II – Network of Southern Think Tanks**

This case study focused on the contribution by Oxfam and partners to share information and develop knowledge regarding South-South Cooperation (SSC) and its monitoring and accountability framework. The rationale for the strategic focus of NeST and Oxfam on M&E of SSC is related to the observation that accounting and reporting on SSC flows is weak and inconsistent, in large part due to the lack of a common definition and conceptual framework for southern partnerships.

The main outputs that were realised by NeST Africa (with support of Oxfam in South Africa) include:

1. An analytical framework about the nature of SSC;
2. a paper presenting a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for SSC;
3. a number of case studies on the basis of the M&E framework that was developed;
4. influencing of decision makers and advocacy about SSC and the M&E framework at various (global, regional and national) events and institutions.

With Oxfam's support, NeST Africa achieved commendable results in terms of science & evidence-based 'advising' and evidence-based 'advocacy'. Furthermore, Oxfam supported the convening of NeST technical working group meetings. With respect to the support by Oxfam to the SSC work of NeST basically two schools of thought emerged: (a) a first group appreciates the work of NeST in general (i.e. the overall approach, services and support that are provided by Oxfam and the outputs that have been achieved so far) but also raised a few critical issues mostly related to operational matters which may need to be addressed in the second stage of the work; (b) a second group (consisting of a cross section of representatives of all the categories of respondents) fundamentally questions the assumptions and strategic design of the support of Oxfam to the work of NeST on SSC. This group suggested that in the next stage a different strategy be followed whereby focus should be on enhancing accountability and transparency of SSC as well as North-South Cooperation This strategy ought to go beyond the OECD-DAC framework and involve like-minded institutions, organisations and individuals from across the globe who pursue transparency and accountability in the area of international development cooperation and pro-poor policies in general.

### **Case 4 – Strand III – Agricultural Budget Advocacy in Ghana**

The core question of the research was whether and how Oxfam's work on agricultural budget analysis, monitoring and advocacy has contributed to improved policies and investments that benefit smallholder farmers in Ghana. Key results were:

- More awareness and understanding among smallholder farmers and other civil society actors of the importance of agricultural policy issues and dynamics at the national and local level.
- More and wider spaces for civic actors at different levels and stages in the budget cycle for interaction with and influencing of decision makers.
- More openness and willingness of the public-sector ministries, departments and agencies to take into account the voice of civil society in budget issues and policies.

A key recommendation was that Oxfam and other civil actors could combine expertise and work together more systematically to strengthen negotiating power, align policy influencing agendas and improve effectiveness of the influencing interventions. Bridging the knowledge gap in gender sensitive budgeting and gender disaggregated financial and social accountability mechanisms remains a key challenge, not just for Oxfam but for the development sector at large.

### **Case 5 – Strand III – Policy influencing at EU. The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition**

The case study focused on the question whether and how advocacy efforts of Oxfam influenced the position of the European Parliament and Commission vis-à-vis the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa. In terms of results, internal and external respondents acknowledged that Oxfam

- played an important role in shaping and eventually the approval of a critical resolution on the New Alliance by the European Parliament,
- encouraged a positive attitude on accountability within the EU administration notably DG Devco,
- imparted credibility to the critical voice of civil society on the New Alliance, and
- provided intelligence and insights to other actors in and around the EU commission and Parliament.

A key challenge is the critical lack of evidence based intelligence on the strengths, weaknesses, and especially impact of New Alliance (and similarly blended) investments on smallholder famers and women. Moreover, internal respondents as well as respondents from civil society allies and some government and EU officials advised Oxfam to widen its policy influencing agenda vis-à-vis the role of private sector in agricultural development beyond the New Alliance to more general perspectives such as of blended finance, Public-Private Partnerships and Donor-Public-Partnerships.

## **SELECTED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

	<b>Selected findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>1</b>	The potential contribution of a ToC as an approach to help navigate the complexity of LEAP is not fully exploited. A more comprehensive ToC can be an important tool for management and action learning within LEAP.	It is important that more comprehensive ToCs are developed and proactively used for strategic decision making. As part of ToC exercises, attention needs to be paid to what issues are under the spheres of ‘control’, ‘influence’ or ‘interest’ in LEAP. This will help to identify priority

		interventions, to find a strategically appropriate balance between different types of interventions, to assess the expected influence that the specific mix of interventions may have and to be clear on what the aspirations can be in terms of nature as well as level of change that Oxfam may want to contribute to.
<b>2</b>	There is scope for improvement in participation of southern teams, staff and allies in designing, planning and decision making. These organisational functions are often still largely governed by northern units.	The way forward in having a stronger southern lead and participation in agenda setting, planning and implementation is to actively promote co-creation in planning, sharing of responsibilities, and – within the limitations of the grant – ensure that allocation of resources is primarily guided by strategic priorities. A more pronounced role for regional offices (like the Pan-African office) in enhancing co-creation may be worth considering.
<b>3</b>	Staff of Oxfam and partners observe that linkages between Global LEAP and other Oxfam campaigns, especially GROW and Even it up, are often limited.	Oxfam themes such as on women smallholders, land or climate adaptation can be more systematically linked to or aligned with LEAP's advocacy goals and demands. Cross-campaign themes may thus emerge and get connected in a coherent and integrated programme approach.
<b>4</b>	Alliances and coalitions are the key to building the necessary critical mass and power for influencing global leaders and institutions which, after all, constitute the core target audience of LEAP.	It is therefore recommended to at least maintain, but where possible intensify, efforts to seek and establish collaborative action and actively support coalition building within civil society across the globe and across the various sectors addressed in LEAP. Links with grass root level organisations and social movements may be established more systematically and consciously.
<b>5</b>	Direct policy influencing is a crucial component of the LEAP approach but one that can only be effective if the necessary conditions (such as enabling environment, agenda, capacities) are in place.	LEAP will continue to focus on the public-sector policies but possibly more considerations can be given to the (often considerable) role of major donor agencies and private sector agents in (context-specific) policy making at country level in the south and on how civil society can

		(indirectly via public policies) influence these processes and actors (working with 'champions', working groups, engagement of national spaces, et cetera).
<b>6</b>	Research constitutes the basis for agenda-setting and development of alternatives in policy work. At the same time, Oxfam is obviously limited in what it realistically speaking can afford to support in terms of research.	The research planning and agenda should be part and parcel of regular strategic revision at Strand level. It is suggested to engage more in collaborative action research. Involvement of various stakeholders enriches the outcomes of research processes and enhances the ownership and uptake of findings.
<b>7</b>	In all Strands, formal and informal Capacity Development Support has been provided throughout the implementation of LEAP. Often the focus was on strengthening of capabilities of actors in the Global South and it was not always sufficiently realised that mutuality and reciprocity is required in CDS.	Mutual Capacity Development Support would contribute to improved performance of staff and teams. It is suggested to carry out a systematic assessment of what competencies, collective capabilities (teams) and capacities (organisations) are required in LEAP. Subsequently capacity strengthening programmes can be organised which are practice-based and in which staff participate as equal partners and 'teach' and 'learn' from each other.
<b>8</b>	Given the nature of LEAP (being a funding arrangement), seeking synergy is not a strategic objective but opportunities may exist to increase effectiveness and relevance of the work through linkages between the Strands.	It is suggested not to develop a programmatically and institutionally embedded collaborative strategy that links different Strands, but rather to identify and exploit opportunities of value-adding domain- or subject-specific collaboration between (sub-) teams. Strand leads through their (more) regular exchanges can foster the necessary inspiration and motivation for such initiatives.
<b>9</b>	It is strategically challenging to striking a proper balance between different tactical interventions (coalitions and alliances, research, policy influencing, advocacy, campaign, etc.) and consequently taking forward the implications in terms of operational planning and allocation of human and capital resources.	Strategic decision making about the desired relative weight and priority of different interventions in specific settings should be based on a ToC-like consideration and analysis of desired change and possible areas of control and influence. Subsequently, the operational planning can be designed and allocation of resources can be decided upon.

<b>10</b>	Monitoring places emphasis on upward accountability and systems compliance. Due attention is paid to learning. Embedded knowledge (in the confederation) that may well be relevant for LEAP is not always known to or capitalised by the LEAP teams.	It is recommended to strengthen downward and horizontal accountability and to continue seeking more diverse spaces for learning from practice. Attention should be paid to identifying tacit issues (beyond the assumed intervention logic) and to double-loop learning. It is suggested to take stock of embedded knowledge and best practices in selected areas related to LEAP. This initiative could be initiated by the central MEL unit but be organised and implemented first within each Strand.
<b>11</b>	A comprehensive and well-articulated vision and strategy vis-à-vis private sector engagement in development seems to be missing.	It is recommended to strategically reflect on what constitute good and appropriate (public) policies on the roles and modalities for private sector engagement in development. Ongoing work on Donor-Private Partnerships (DPP) is very relevant and for LEAP, this needs to be brought to a level where it informs and facilitates agenda setting for public policy influencing.
<b>12</b>	In Strand III women's rights and livelihoods feature prominently strategy and targeting but in practice, gender-specific policy development approaches and gender-sensitive policy frameworks for development are still largely missing.	Especially for Strand III, it is recommended that a working group of staff from different LEAP teams is formed to (1) assess needs and gaps in gender focused policy influencing, (2) take stock and asses internally embedded knowledge and expertise, (3) identify best practices and valuable expertise among external allies, and (4) draw up a plan to address the gaps and challenges.
<b>13</b>	Strand I is based largely on the notion of ODA as the key approach to alleviate poverty and support development. However, empirical data indicate that ODA makes up a decreasing component of recipient countries' development budgets.	Oxfam should focus more on other financial flows such as remittances, DPP, Blended Finance, Domestic Resource Mobilisation et cetera. The occasional narrow focus on OECD-DAC may lead only to relatively small incremental change within the present scope of debate on aid. Alternative strategies, approaches, methods and tools need to be developed that surpass the philosophy, boundaries and operational orientation of the (OECD-DAC) framework.

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