

Oxfam Partnership Programme Agreement (PPA) Annual Review 2004

Summary

- Overall DFID felt that this was a very strong, well-produced, clear and coherent report.
- It was particularly good to see that it contained useful information on the impact of the work.
- Some good progress on the 'right to sustainable livelihoods', well illustrated with case studies
- Oxfam's recognition that changing European trade policies requires political shifts in member states is very important
- The information on the progress on the "right to life and security" was refreshingly honest with shortcomings clearly identified.
- The progress on the "right to be heard" objective was impressive.
- It would be useful for more information on Oxfam's role as an international civil society organisation.
- A separate report on the management of risk was submitted to DFID.

1. Background

1.1 A PPA was agreed with Oxfam in April 2001. The goal of the PPA with Oxfam is the reduction of poverty. While DFID endorses the broad thrust of Oxfam GB's strategic plan, there are 3 strategic areas where Oxfam provides demonstrable added value. In these areas there is particularly close synergy and potential for joint and complementary influencing at all levels.

- **The Right to a Sustainable Livelihood:** People living in poverty will achieve food and income security.
- **The Right to Life and Security:** Fewer people will die, fall sick or suffer deprivation as a result of armed conflict or natural disasters
- **The Right to be Heard:** Poor and marginalised people will have an effective voice in influencing decisions affecting their lives, will achieve their civil and political rights and will enjoy equal status with others.

1.2 Oxfam submitted their Annual Report in February 2004. This has been circulated widely through DFID and the feedback collated.

2. The Right to a Sustainable Livelihood

Objectives in the PPA

Supporting poor producers to gain access, power and fair prices in markets

Outcome indicators:

- Improving access to markets for small producers in programme areas.
- Increasing the influence of civil society, especially poor women and men, on local institutions, national trade policies and regional/global trade agreements affecting their livelihoods.
- Greater accountability of trading corporations and institutions governing trade rules and policies affecting trade.
- Growth in pro-fair trade consumer movement and increased offer of fair trade products in Britain.

Progress

Role of civil society

2.1 Increasing the influence of civil society is a key component of this strategic area.

Developing Oxfam's market access programme

2.2 Oxfam's contribution to strengthening civil society action referred to in the case study on Teekamragh (pg 7) has been significant. DFID India have had the opportunity of visiting the field programme and were impressed with the quality of the work, especially around land rights, sustainable livelihoods and addressing the issues of gender discrimination.

Promoting ethical trading

2.3 Oxfam is an active member of Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) which DFID funds. No direct comment on the specific project on homeworkers, however the ETI overall is judged to be an effective and successful project.

Make Trade Fair Campaign

2.4 We were interested in noting that "Oxfam recognises that changing European trade policies requires political shifts in key member states and not just in the UK". We are encouraged that Oxfam has prioritised addressing this issue and are interested in the activities Oxfam is carrying out in this area. The current ministerial team are particularly interested in the way that NGOs work to influence other member states and key decision makers on European policy.

2.5 It would be interesting to explain in more detail the conflicts between the different organisations referred to on page 11.

2.6 It was good to see information on the impact of the work in the section on "progress on main issues".

2.7 As the collapse of the WTO talks at Cancun has been of such importance, it would be useful to cover this in more detail. The paragraph appears rather ambiguous.

Fair trade

2.8 It was interesting to note that Oxfam is “phasing out from a trading relationship with partners”. It is obviously important for Oxfam to identify the appropriate role it should play and with a broader market access approach, this change in its role makes a lot of sense.

2.9 The comments on the complementarity or conflict in promoting fair trade products and promoting ethical trade are interesting. It would be interesting to understand whether there are similar issues in promoting fair trade products to the general public and encouraging people to campaign for fair trade.

Cutting the cost of medicines/Intellectual Property Rights

2.10 Oxfam have done some good work on the issue of Intellectual Property, particularly in relation to public health, broadly supportive of DFID objectives. Ruth Mayne, Mogha Smith and some of their colleagues have been very effective. Oxfam in general, however, is a much less significant and influential player in this field than MSF or CPTech.

2.11 Oxfam state that “CIPR report reflects much of Oxfam’s analysis”. This is true, so long as it is not intended as a causative link. Oxfam also criticised the report.

Meeting between Oxfam and International Trade Department

2.12 A meeting was held between DFID’s International Trade Department and key staff in Oxfam in areas of livelihoods, trade and campaigning. The meeting was not structured entirely on the PPA review document, but reviewed recent work and considered future collaboration.

2.13 ITD commented that Oxfam is ‘second to none’ on influencing and advocacy in the area of trade and related livelihoods issues. The quality of analysis, use of media and strength of campaigning are all excellent.

2.14 ITD talked about some of Oxfam’s successes in the past year. Shifting “new issues” policy was particularly important. The joint agency report (6 Arguments Paper) was of good quality and was used by DFID in Cross-Whitehall discussions. Recent sugar campaign was effective – most visible in the UK, but with good coverage in many European countries at the same time. Oxfam commented that relationships with other Oxfams are getting stronger, and they are beginning to see increasing benefits of partnerships with others. However, as more funding is put into European offices, the capacity in the UK office will reduce as more people are funded in Europe.

2.15 ITD touched on a couple of areas where Oxfam could still improve. In particular, engaging with officials - there is a need to be involved at an early

stage to develop policy. For example. DFID trade strategy development – Oxfam need to be in on this. ITD also highlighted the need for Oxfam to be engaged with country offices, many of which have livelihoods advisors, business analysts etc – in particular, need to engage with Caribbean and Southern Africa. There is also scope for deeper dialogue across Whitehall.

2.16 A number of action points were agreed from both sides, and these will be taken forward by the relevant teams.

2.17 Both Oxfam and DFID commented on the strength of dialogue on trade and livelihoods issues under the PPA.

3. The right to life and security

Objectives in the PPA

Supporting action that assures the quality of humanitarian assistance and protection for people affected by conflict and natural disasters.

Outcome indicators:

- Affected populations adequately protected and needs met in Oxfam emergency programme areas.
- Sphere standards for quality of response met in Oxfam managed programmes – dissemination and practice.
- International community better co-ordinated and more accountable to affected populations in situations of conflict and natural disaster.

Progress

3.1 The report is refreshingly honest with Oxfam's shortcomings clearly identified. It is always impressive when an organisation is willing to identify and explain its weaknesses.

3.2 Most of DFID's humanitarian engagement with Oxfam has been conducted at the level of geographical desks or country office. In the UK, dialogue with Oxfam tends to be on advocacy and lesson learning. However DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Department (CHAD) provided direct support for programmes in Pakistan (flood response) and Mauritania (food distribution) in 2003. Therefore CHAD and Africa Division have provided the comments on this section of the report.

Programme expenditure

3.3 It was felt that it would be interesting to hear more as to why Oxfam thinks the scale of response in 2002/03 fell short of expectations. DFID do not consider the total value of responses in a particular year as an indication of success or failure. The issue is whether Oxfam is addressing critical

humanitarian needs and is best placed to meet them. This was discussed at the meeting between CHAD and Oxfam to review the Annual PPA Report.

Focus of programme response

3.4 There were some concerns raised about the emphasis on the development of malaria guidelines and its inclusion as part of future programming strategy. It was felt that it might be better to consider this as a health development issue. Oxfam explained their thinking behind this and CHAD agreed to discuss this in more detail separately.

Preparedness and co-ordination

3.5 CHAD has had some dialogue with Oxfam about disaster preparedness. There are a number of examples cited of Oxfam's support to preparedness activities in a number of countries. They were unable to comment directly on the effectiveness of these programmes, but they do cover a wide range of activity that imply Oxfam are engaged in valuable disaster risk reduction work at the country level.

Linking direct response on the ground with advocacy

3.6 DFID acknowledges Oxfam's role in advocacy on humanitarian issues. The work on small arms and Oxfam's representation in New York was singled out for comment. Of course, Oxfam are not alone amongst the NGO and humanitarian community in promoting humanitarian principles and drawing attention to situations that they perceive need greater public attention. Oxfam's stance on Iraq, including the decision at the outset of the conflict not to apply for DFID funds was respected and did not affect their positive involvement at the regular NGO meetings held by DFID.

3.7 There is a reference to advocacy on food crises in countries not in the media spotlight. Highlighting the needs of so-called "forgotten emergencies" is important and NGOs play a useful role in this respect. However, DFID felt it would be helpful to draw attention to situations in countries where they do not have a presence. Otherwise, it could be perceived that the point made is to generate resources for the organisation's programmes rather than to address the needs of the vulnerable. Oxfam explained that this would not be possible. Oxfam only feel able to advocate on situations where they do have a presence. Their legitimacy comes from their presence in the country.

Standards and accountability

3.8 Oxfam's proactive involvement in a number of lesson learning, standard setting and policy development initiatives is good, and DFID believes Oxfam plays an important role in this respect. Applying this in the field is proving to be a problem, as acknowledged in the report by mixed results in meeting Sphere standards. DFID's Africa Conflict Humanitarian Department commented that technically Oxfam are behind the standard setters in specific areas. This was discussed at the meeting with CHAD. CHAD felt that Oxfam were standard setters in certain areas, particularly in water, sanitation and related public health work. CHAD commented that negative comments from the Africa Division may have been influenced by one or two specific incidents in-country. Africa Division comments have not been supported by feedback

from other parts of DFID. It was agreed that Oxfam needs to discuss the issues raised by the Africa Conflict Humanitarian Department with them directly.

3.9 DFID welcomes Oxfam's efforts to improve the management of safety and security of staff. This has always been a concern and has heightened in recent years and brought more starkly to notice in 2003 with the bombing of the UN and ICRC Offices in Baghdad.

Public health responses in conflict

3.10 Middle East and North Africa Department have commented specifically on work in the Palestinian Territories. The use of household technologies such as cisterns is appropriate in these rural communities, particularly when accompanied by education and training activities. Many of the communities have suffered from harassment and physical attacks, so the work to support them is very important. Once community organisations have been strengthened, their ability to go on to undertake other initiatives has been demonstrated in similar settings in the Palestinian Territories.

3.11 The activities of Oxfam to support the provision of water to rural communities are welcomed as an appropriate response in the very difficult circumstances that prevail in the rural areas of the Palestinian Territories.

3.12 The activities to train communities in water management, sanitation and public health are a valuable complementary activity to the provision of hard infrastructure.

3.13 The strengthening of community organisations through this work is also important with potential wide reaching benefits.

Lessons, issues and risks

3.14 The report comments on the difficulty of achieving high standards and principles without compromising speed and scale of responses. Africa Conflict Humanitarian Department felt that Oxfam needed to improve planning, particularly budgeting.. It is fair to say that DFID has sometimes been slow on getting back to Oxfam on occasions, but this could be partly because of a reluctance to rely on Oxfam for first line humanitarian response – therefore some of the urgency goes out of DFID's response. This was discussed at the meeting. CHAD felt that Oxfam was a first line response agency and views Oxfam as a key ally and reliable partner. It was agreed that Oxfam need to discuss the issues raised by the Africa Conflict Humanitarian Department with them directly. This also illustrates the need for better communication between DFID and Oxfam. This is covered in 6.5.

- 3.15 From CHAD's perspective, Oxfam's involvement in the Pakistan floods was appropriate and timely. There were issues raised about the response in Mauritania. This was felt to be less effective. At the meeting this was discussed in more detail. It was felt that the concerns raised again shows the need for better communication between DFID and

Oxfam although in general CHAD think communication flows between their team and Oxfam are good.

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3.16 The issue of improved communication is a recurrent theme. There is a need for better communication between DFID and civil society on these issues. This is covered in 6.5.

4. The right to be heard

Objectives in the PPA

Supporting poor people to have the skills, resources and access required to influence government and institutional policies and practices affecting their lives.

Influencing governments, multi-laterals, and non-governmental organisations to employ practices that allow poor people to participate effectively in the design, implementation and evaluation of the programmes and policies affecting their lives.

Outcome indicators:

- Greater aid and budget accountability to poor people in programme areas.
- Governments actively seek to involve poor people in the development of national poverty reduction strategies and decentralisation plans.
- Poor people and civil society groups have the skills and resources to influence government policies in the interests of poor people.

Progress

4.1 The reporting on this strategic objective was impressive. The focus on strengthening civil society for improved voice and participation was widely welcomed.

4.2 Commenting on the whole section, DFID's Public and Financial Management and Accountability team provided the following response. This is a lengthy, detailed review with some very good examples of what Oxfam is doing. Oxfam is doing a lot of relevance to the PFMA agenda, including some things on which there probably should be wider collaboration and coordination. Oxfam's work on participatory and gender budgeting is of particular relevance. Their work with civil society groups seems to be of high value. The paper 'From Donorship to Ownership', referred to on page 32, must be of relevance more widely across Policy Division.

The role of Oxfam

4.3 There is much debate about the appropriate role for international civil society organisations. It would be interesting for more information on Oxfam's thinking on this. For instance:

- On page 36, there is reference to Oxfam and partners monitoring the public expenditure in Azerbaijan. Would this not be more appropriately done by an Azerbaijani organisation? Oxfam felt that this could have been phrased differently and in reality Oxfam built the capacity of Azerbaijani organisations to monitor the public expenditure and agreed

that it would be inappropriate for an international civil society to get involved directly with the monitoring of a public expenditure.

- On page 38 there is a reference to Oxfam broadcasting the views of pastoralists on government policy. Again is this appropriate for a non-Tanzanian organisation? Oxfam explained that they felt the appropriate role for an international civil society organisation was to build the capacity of local civil society to provide a voice to local communities. However in certain cases Oxfam does speak out on communities' behalf.

Capacity building of civil society

4.4 It was interesting to note on page 33 that Oxfam is developing a strategic partnership with INTRAC to strengthen the capacity building of civil society organisations. It would be useful to explain the thinking behind this in more detail and why you have chosen INTRAC.

Strengthening institutional accountability and poor people's engagement in the PRSP process

4.5 Case study 14 - DFID Uganda have asked if the final sentence in para 2 could be changed to read "The completion of the second UPPAP report coincided with Oxfam GB phasing out its involvement and handing the management of participatory poverty assessment over to the Ugandan Government"

4.6 Middle East and North Africa Department have provided the following feedback on case study 18 – 'Promoting a consideration of gender in the Yemen PRSP process'.

4.7 Oxfam provided technical support to the government of Yemen to incorporate a gender perspective in the PRSP. Despite this intervention, gender was not addressed in the final version of the PRSP. Oxfam maintained a dialogue with the government on the importance of a gendered approach to poverty reduction, which has had a positive influence on the attitude of some key persons in the government. Oxfam also successfully argued for placing a gender specialist in the Follow up and Monitoring Unit, a position which has become integral to the Unit's structure.

4.8 Promoting Pro-poor and Gendered PRSP Implementation and Monitoring programme started in October 2003, and it is therefore too early to provide much feedback on the DFID/OXFAM partnership. However, the programme is now delivering against the DFID funded Year One Work Plan as well as complementary activities funded by Oxfam

4.9 Oxfam is co-chair of the Civil Society Organisation PRS Technical Committee. There has been a very constructive dialogue with Oxfam over a range of gender issues and civil society monitoring of the PRS that has fed into the development of our overall programme of support for Yemen.

Review meeting between DFID and Oxfam on ‘the right to be heard’

4.10 A meeting was recently held between representatives of OXFAM (Heather Grady, Max Lawson and Andrew Goodwin) and DFID (Alison Scott, Nick Amin, Richard Martini and Andrew Masters) to review this area of work.

4.11 DFID’s particular interest under the Right to be Heard programme is local civil society engagement with national governments as opposed to direct engagement with the IFIs. There was some concern that 2002/2003 work had focused on IFI engagement. OXFAM explained they had targeted part of its advocacy work at the IEO/EOD PRGG/PRSP reviews happening this year and this had led to increased attention on IFIs, although the bulk of the work remained focused on national government process

4.12 It was commented that key areas of activity during the year were not explicitly linked to the stated outcome indicators for the programme. In addition to the indicators provided, it was felt it would be useful to measure Oxfam’s impact on civil society’s engagement in the budget process. It may also be useful for the report to detail the percentage of resources devoted to in-country support versus more generic advocacy work. At the meeting Oxfam explained that the majority of work under the programme was carried out at the country level to strengthen civil society participation.

4.13 There was a discussion on Oxfam interest in establishing ‘benchmarks’ for civil society participation in PRSPs, potentially with donor support. It was suggested that DFID is interested in building upon existing on-going engagement but is cautious of applying cross-country minimum standards as this may be seen as an externally driven process.

4.14 DFID has particular interest in knowing what more it can do to support in-country civil society engagement in government policy-making. At the end of the meeting it was agreed that an event to discuss DFID/NGO collaboration at country level would be useful. This event would share information on regional DFID/NGO partnerships to strengthen civil society engagement.

5. Risk

Oxfam has shared a paper on risk management which has been produced for the Oxfam council.

6. DFID and Oxfam GB Partnership

6.1 There is a lot of information in this section of who and how often Oxfam meets with various government and DFID departments. However there is relatively little information on whether this engagement is effective and what is the result of these linkages. Does Oxfam have any views on these linkages and how they could be improved? This is particularly true in respect to the management of the PPA and interaction with the new policy teams.

On EU Policy

- 6.2 This is an important area, of particular interest to the current DFID ministerial team. Decisions will be taken over the next 12-18 months that are likely to determine the future of EU aid for the next 10 years. Of particular importance are negotiations over the next Financial Perspective (FP) and a new Constitutional Treaty. The accession of 10 new member states, debates over the structure of the next Commission and the European Parliament elections are further important events, together with the start of 6 like-minded Presidencies, including the UK's in 2005. It is important for Oxfam to remain engaged on these issues, through BOND and through European networks.
- 6.3 There will an opportunity to explore how DFID and NGOs can complement each others work in a ministerial meeting in late April 2004.

On humanitarian and conflict issues

- 6.4 Oxfam refer to progress on stronger collaboration in the area of disaster preparedness as being slow and put this down as partly due to CHAD's own review of its policy and work. CHAD's emphasis on disaster preparedness is at the policy and international level. Oxfam are interested in further discussion of the policy dimension as well as engagement at the country level.
- 6.5 The issue of improved communication is a recurrent theme. There is a need for better communication between DFID and civil society on these issues. The dialogue needs to start earlier and to be more regular. CHAD has hired Intrac to look at how it interacts with civil society. The relationship with Oxfam specifically was felt to be strong and because of the PPA there were discussions on many of these issues. However it was recognised that some of the issues raised by DFID on Oxfam's report could have been avoided by better communication.

Country engagement

- 6.6 The relationship with DFID Kenya and the management of the country level PPA has been good.
- 6.7 India office commented that the three strategic areas of right to be heard, right to life and right to sustainable livelihoods are very relevant in the context of the development challenges in India (especially on issues of social exclusion and discrimination) as well as DFID's engagement in country. DFID India has had opportunities to engage in various consultative processes with Oxfam. DFID India has also engaged significantly with Oxfam through a natural resources management programme (Oxfam Bundelkhand programme) that operates in some of the most backward and poorest districts of north India, characterised by a strong feudal system, deeply entrenched patriarchal values, poor governance and extremely poor human development indicators.

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Mike Battcock