

OXFAM GB
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME AGREEMENT (PPA)
2001 – 2005 FINAL REPORT
DFID RESPONSE

SUMMARY

- The report is concise, clear and coherent.
- It provides good illustrative examples of impacts in the different countries and the strategic nature of Oxfam's work.
- DFID was impressed with the vast amount of exciting and impressive work on the right to be heard. Oxfam has a strong track record in this field. DFID does not have significant issues with the work of Oxfam in this area.
- There is always a difficult balance between producing a concise report and providing sufficient evidence of delivery to confirm what is stated in this report. DFID and Oxfam will work on this to see if there is way to address this issue before the production of the next report.
- Oxfam have an excellent reputation on humanitarian assistance with a strong track record and good relationship with DFID. There are however concerns that have recently emerged across DFID about their apparent prioritising of advocacy over humanitarian delivery, and a sense of compromised focus and performance in some of their operations. . Oxfam accepts that 2004 was difficult with the emergency in Darfur and 2005 with the Tsunami and the earthquake. Oxfam feel that these issues are being addressed by their Humanitarian Investment Plan.
- Overall, Oxfam's pro-poor focus of trade work is strong. DFID fully endorse what Oxfam see as their strengths in working on trade policy/influencing: the quality of their research and analysis; alliance building and the magnifier effect of Oxfam International; getting coverage in the media. Their work on the CAP (replicated in Spain and France) was particularly effective in making the case for more radical reform to benefit developing country producers. We appreciate that Oxfam is playing a valuable role in helping to give Southern NGOs more of a voice.
- The relationship with Oxfam as a whole is very strong.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DFID agreed a PPA with Oxfam in April 2001

1.2 The goal of the partnership is to eradicate poverty and work towards achieving the International Development Targets.

1.3 The following 3 areas form the basis of the objectives of the PPA:

- The right to be heard
- The right to life and security
- The right to a sustainable livelihood

1.4 To assess achieving the above objectives Oxfam have three goals to work against:

- Strengthening the voice of poor people in decision-making
- Improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance
- Making international trade benefit poor people

2. THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD

Strategic Outcome of the PPA

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.

Priority Strategies

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

Influencing governments, multilaterals 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 and practices in the interests of poor people.

2.1 DFID was impressed with the vast amount of exciting and impressive work on the right to be heard. Oxfam has a strong track record in this field. The role of international civil society organisations in national level decision making is controversial. Over the years specific issues have been raised and discussed with Oxfam on their role in national level policy formulation. Overall DFID does not have significant issues with the work of Oxfam in this area. The case study examples were particularly useful.

2.2 There is always a difficult balance between producing a concise report and providing sufficient evidence of delivery to confirm what is stated in this report. DFID and Oxfam will work on this to see if there is way to address this issue before the production of the next report. This could involve the use of annexes or links to detailed evidence of impact. Oxfam has been reviewing its monitoring and evaluation procedures and improving the quality of their work is a corporate priority.

2.3 It is interesting that Oxfam is working on the political dimensions of policy engagement. DFID would be interested in information on this in future reports.

2.4 The section on “Democratising development practice” was refreshingly honest. This sounds very interesting and useful and we look forward to reading about the progress of this next year.

2.5 DFID in Latin America hope to continue strengthening activities with Oxfam around their Right to be Heard work particularly on supporting civil society organizations to engage with the international finance institutions, as well as in poverty reduction related policies.

3. THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY

Strategic Outcome of the PPA

Fewer people will die, fall sick or suffer deprivation as a result of armed conflict or natural disasters.

Priority Strategies

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

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.
- International community better coordinated and more accountable to affected populations in situations of conflict and natural disaster.

Humanitarian assistance

3.1 Oxfam have an excellent reputation on humanitarian assistance with a strong track record and good relationship with DFID. For the four years covered by the report, Oxfam spent more than £180 million on humanitarian assistance. DFID still sees Oxfam as one of their strongest humanitarian NGO partners, but has identified a number of areas where improvements could be made to the betterment of their humanitarian impact. These include the need to refocus and rebuild confidence in areas of core competence (particularly wat-san and public health), building up humanitarian expertise across its staff, and prioritising impact-monitoring.

3.2 DFID recognises that there is a clear need to work on both long term activities such as advocacy, rights and empowerment and the immediate effective emergency outputs. This is always a difficult balance to manage. DFID recognises the important role Oxfam plays in advocacy and rights in respect to humanitarian issues. However there are some concerns across DFID about the impact that this has on immediate humanitarian delivery.

3.3 There has been specific criticism of Oxfam's management, budgeting and implementation of its humanitarian work. As with other international humanitarian organizations Oxfam has had problems attracting and retaining experience middle management staff. To address this, Oxfam is increasing its Humanitarian Support Pool by 50% and providing more assistance and training to Country Directors when required.

3.4 There are also concerns about Oxfam's fundraising presenting overly simplistic messages.

3.5 Oxfam accepts that 2004 was difficult with the emergency in Darfur and 2005 with the Tsunami and the earthquake. Oxfam feel that these issues are being addressed by their Humanitarian Investment Plan.

3.6 There are a variety of specific issues:

- **Water and sanitation:** The quality of their work on water and sanitation is still good, but concerns have been raised about a dilution of focus and an increase in costs. Oxfam feel this is due to a change in the proportion of work on sanitation in comparison to the provision of water. Work on sanitation is considerably more costly than the provision of water.
- **Niger:** DFID felt that some of the work in Niger in 2005 was conceptually flawed, only reasonably implemented, and arrived too late. Oxfam accept that the work in Niger last year was not successful. They will use this experience to build a stronger programme in the future.
- **Liberia:** Whilst the partnership has been generally productive, DFID did have some concerns about the work in Liberia. The water and sanitation work was comparatively more expensive than others, and there were issues of lack of engagement with local communities and insufficient impact monitoring.
- **Darfur:** In Darfur the quality of the work is good. However, they face difficult management problems. It was felt that the analysis for the advocacy work needs to be improved. As with other agencies there are problems finding experienced staff. Some feel, Oxfam should focus more on improving the cost-effectiveness of their own programmes, and less on macro messages and profile.

- **West Africa:** DFID has not been overly impressed with their financial and programme management, with a few too many unspotted under-spends and knee-jerk amendments.
- **Red Sea State:** From its programme in Red Sea State, experience would suggest that Oxfam has a problem attracting and retaining experienced middle management staff, the performance is inconsistent and good performance in one place is not replicated in others.
- **Kenya/Wajir:** The Oxfam office there was under-resourced and appeared demoralised. Oxfam feel that this has now been addressed.
- **Kenya/North Kivu:** DFID is not convinced that there is a need to charge for water in this work.
- **Eritrea:** DFID has concerns on the work in Eritrea. DFID recognises the problems faced by organisations working in Eritrea. However there is a need for more reflection and analysis of the issues for the in country meetings with DFID and more impact assessment.
- **DRC:** The water and sanitation project in the DRC is improving.
- **Conflict:** It seems that most of their work related to conflict is actually only responding to the humanitarian needs caused by conflict, as opposed to actually addressing conflict. Although DFID was very impressed with the work in Isiola.

4 THE RIGHT TO A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

Strategic Outcome of the PPA

People living in poverty will achieve food and income security.

Priority Strategies

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

Outcome Indicators

- Improved access to markets for selected products by producer groups in programme areas.
- Greater influence by poor people on national trade policies and regional/global trade agreements affecting their livelihoods.
- Growth in pro-fair trade consumer movement and increased offer of fair trade products in Britain.
- Effective civil society engagement on world trade rules and accountability of institutions governing trade rules.

Trade

4.1 Overall, Oxfam's pro-poor focus of trade work is strong. In particular we agree with their analysis which recognises the barriers faced by poor people in accessing the basic assets and services needed to participate in

markets. It is useful that Oxfam have identified some of the steps needed to overcome these barriers. It would be interesting to have more detail on what Oxfam's trade programmes are actually doing to implement these steps and ensure that they involve the poorest in the next report.

4.2 DFID fully endorses what Oxfam see as their strengths in working on trade policy/influencing: the quality of their research and analysis; alliance building and the magnifier effect of Oxfam International; getting coverage in the media

4.3 Their work on the CAP (replicated in Spain and France) was particularly effective in making the case for more radical reform to benefit developing country producers, but also EU consumers and tax payers.

4.4 Oxfam's analysis of the gender aspects of trade is also strong and they do claim some positive gender outcomes from their 'power in markets' programmes. They do not, however, specify what strategies they use to address gender issues within their trade related programmes, or how the positive gender outcomes were brought about. Again there is a difficult balance between producing a concise report and providing sufficient evidence of delivery to confirm what is stated in this report. DFID and Oxfam will work on this to see if there is way to address this issue before the production of the next report.

4.5 It is good to see they have had some campaigns specifically on trade issues affecting women.

4.6 We appreciate that Oxfam is playing a valuable role in helping to give Southern NGOs more of a voice. To be effective in improving the livelihoods of the poorest, staying connected with the grassroots is key. At the same time, however DFID question as to what extent are Oxfam regional offices are engaging with developing country governments to better understand their objectives in trade negotiations. By definition, groups close to the grassroots are highly unlikely to know about the detail of what's at stake and what's under negotiation and some capital-based NGOs take ideological stances (e.g. anti-globalisation/liberalisation). There is relatively little mention of how southern civil society was actually involved in either the design or implementation of these. National governments complain that UK NGOs (not specifically Oxfam) take strong positions on issues that bear no relation to the views of the people.

4.7 An example of where staying close to development countries' concerns might yield better results is sugar transitional assistance for ACP losers from the EU Sugar Regime reform. The UK has found itself isolated in the EU in arguing for much more transitional assistance than that currently on offer. This is a current issue - but illustrative of where Oxfam through European Oxfams might help leverage better outcomes through complementary action alongside DFID/HMG.

4.8 On the fair-trade elements of the report – in the beginning Oxfam says that they switched from a fair-trade programme to a Market Access programme, which involved ending direct support to individual small-scale producers (although support was still provided indirectly). It would be useful to have more information on the outcome of this change for these producers and how the changeover has been managed in the next report.

4.9 In the next PPA reporting cycle DFID feels that it would be helpful if OXFAM included more information on how their activities have contributed to specific outcomes.

4.10 DFID acknowledge that Oxfam have had a tough time balancing commitment to coalition building on the one hand with maintaining a nuanced and credible position on trade issues and a constructive approach.

4.11 In the future DFID feel that Oxfam needs to take great care in maintaining their high public credibility as advocates for change by ensuring the depth, quality and balance in their research, analysis and importantly how these get crunched down into headline popular messages.

4.12 DFID in Latin America is keen to link up with PPA partners more particularly on trade issues. This is clearly a high profile issue in the region and back in the UK, and should continue to be a strong area of Oxfam's work.

5 DFID/OXFAM RELATIONS

5.1 This section was useful to include. It illustrates well the very strong and comprehensive range of connections and relationships between DFID and Oxfam.

5.2 This relationship with Oxfam as a whole is very strong. There have been no issues of any significance within the PPA. However we feel that Oxfam could use the PPA more. It would be useful in future reports for Oxfam to identify how the existing strong connections could be built on and suggestions on how this could be achieved through the PPA. DFID will meet with Oxfam to discuss potential ideas and suggestions.

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