



TOWARDS A WORLDWIDE INFLUENCING NETWORK:

CITIZENS' ATTITUDES, NORMS AND VOICE IN VIETNAM:  
IMPACT EVALUATION OF *FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT*

RESULTS OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF OXFAM  
NOVIB AND SOMO WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS IN THE NETHERLANDS

SEPTEMBER 2020



**OXFAM**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on the information provided by hundreds of people interviewed in Vietnam during December 2016 and January 2017 (baseline survey), and November 2019 (endline survey). First and foremost, we want to express our gratitude to all of them for participating in the evaluation. Their willingness to give their time and discuss their knowledge and opinions with the interviewers made this evaluation possible. All in all, this resulted in valuable information for the programme implementation and will serve as endline data for evaluating the impact of this programme.

This evaluation was achieved through the extensive contributions and expertise of the entire Finance for Development team, including the Budget Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Alliance (BTAP), Oxfam staff in Vietnam, the Impact Measurement and Knowledge team and of course the interviewers.

The interviewers were trained by Oxfam in Vietnam staff and a national consultant, supported by the Impact Measurement and Knowledge team of Oxfam Novib. The fieldwork was carried out by Hoa Binh Farmers' Union and People's Council, Vietnam Fatherland Front and Quang Tri Women's Union and People's Council, in coordination with Oxfam in Vietnam. In addition, BTAP and Oxfam in Vietnam staff contributed to the interpretation of the data in a reflection workshop in Hanoi in May 2020.

The current endline survey is part of the overall Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning strategy of the broader Strategic Partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxfam Novib and the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the impact evaluation for the Finance for Development (F4D) project in Vietnam for the outcome areas of increased citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes. The F4D project in Vietnam works on the themes pro-poor fiscal policies, enhanced civic space and civil society strengthening. The project was implemented as part of the Strategic Partnership – 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' – of Oxfam Novib, the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This evaluation report compares the results of the baseline survey of December 2016 and January 2017, and the endline survey of November 2019 to assess the contribution of the F4D project to increasing the citizens' voice and shifting norms and attitudes.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The objective of this evaluation was to determine the progress made by the F4D project in realizing the expected project outcomes for increasing the citizens' voice and shifting norms and attitudes.

This objective was formulated in four evaluation questions:

- To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to changes in the **citizens' voice, and shifted norms and attitudes** concerning the revenue, public spending and investment of local and state budgets?
- To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to citizens' **knowledge and awareness** of and participation in local and state budgeting processes?
- To what extent have **citizens' opinions of access, equality of access, and the cost and quality of public services and local public investments** changed after the project implementation?
- To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam influenced the **determinants of an increased citizens' voice, and shifted norms and attitudes**?

## FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM AND ITS ACTIVITIES

The overall objective of the F4D project in Vietnam is to reduce inequality and improve the quality of life of women and marginalized groups in Vietnam through equitable and accountable fiscal policies and practices. Oxfam's program on Financing for Development addresses these complex challenges through a multi-pronged strategy of coalition building, strengthening civil society organizations, engagement with government and the private sector, and amplifying the citizens' voice. Partners include Vietnamese NGOs, elected bodies, research institutes, mass organizations and universities.

By strengthening civil society organizations (CSO), Oxfam aims to mobilize and support active citizens, especially women, in taking collective actions to demand a fairer, more inclusive and transparent fiscal system, which contributes to the lives of vulnerable people more effectively. The activities of the F4D project in Vietnam that are concerned with the outcome area of an increased citizens' voice include awareness-raising and the engagement of citizens in the budget monitoring process.

Budget Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Alliance (BTAP) works with farmers, women's unions and community groups, often from ethnic minorities and with equal proportions of men and women. BTAP works in two provinces: Quang Tri and Hoa Binh. In 2019, the project reported that a total of 2,739 people (45% women) raised their voice on budget transparency and gender-responsive budgeting in 27 events, including dialogues, consultations and campaigns organized by BTAP in both provinces. Also, 120 people (89% women) from the Ethnic Minority Network raised their voice on budget transparency in seven events, including dialogues and consultations. Furthermore, 328 people (52 % women) participated in or benefited from local budget monitoring by the Gender-Responsive Budgeting

of the Ethnic Minority Network. Finally, 1,486,506 people (50 % women) benefited from local budget monitoring in Hoa Binh and Quang Tri provinces.

## METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The contribution of the programme was assessed by investigating the change over time for a group of project participants who were representative of the project population, by comparing data from the start of the project (baseline) and the end of the project (endline). This allowed us to see to what extent the project's activities contributed to the changes in outcomes.

The evaluation was based on a sample size of 630 respondents for the baseline, and 544 respondents for the endline – a total of 1,174 interviews. The analyses only included respondents who recognized one or more of the project activities; the other respondents were removed from the data set. The remaining respondents were living in areas directly influenced by the project or in neighbouring areas.

## FINDINGS

### CITIZENS' VOICE, NORMS AND ATTITUDES

This section aims to answer the first research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to changes in the citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes concerning the revenue, public spending and investment of local and state budgets?*

We found that the project contributed to an increased citizens' voice. This was reflected in an increased proportion of citizens who had talked to defend or support social organisations, had taken action to defend or support social organisations or had talked about budgetary issues. The proportion of citizens who had taken action on budgetary issues only increased among women in Quang Tri. The targeting strategy could have influenced this positive result, as the project targeted more women in this province (60% of participants in the project in Quang Tri were women).

However, it is important to bear in mind that budget monitoring is a sensitive issue in Vietnam, and not many people participate in it. Project staff expected to identify only a few pioneers or activists who would mobilise other community members to take action on budgetary issues. According to the experience of project staff, it was very positive that 11% of citizens had taken action at the time the endline survey was conducted.

A high proportion of citizens (above 95%) stated that the provincial government takes their voices into account. Project staff mentioned that this only reflects one government level, whereas the project focused its activities more at the local government at district and commune levels. Unfortunately, we do not have data about perceptions on local governments at district and commune levels.

For attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes, we did not see a significant change between the baseline and the endline. Nonetheless, the project contributed to an increase in the citizens' voice over time. Also, we found that these type of attitudes and social norms were not correlated with citizens' actions. This suggested that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not explain the increase in the citizens' voice among project participants.

We did not find a strong majority supporting one of the statements of attitudes towards public accountability. Only 49% of respondents at the baseline and 44% at the endline thought that citizens should play an active role in deciding how the government spends its budgets raised through taxes. On the other hand, 51% of the respondents at the baseline and 56% at the endline agreed that the government understands the needs of the country best and should decide how to spend tax money. The changes between the baseline and the endline for both opinions were not statistically significant.

Also, citizens perceived participation in budget processes at the local level as difficult to engage in. Project participants concluded that only some members of the community participated in budget processes. This contrasted with the reality, as we observed that only a small proportion of citizens had taken action on budgetary issues. Moreover, project staff stressed that participation in local budget processes was not common behaviour in the context in which the project works. Despite challenges to participating in these processes, respondents believed that others would have a positive opinion about them if they would participate.

Lastly, the project contributed to raising awareness about the role of the private sector (private projects or companies) in financing initiatives that may negatively impact citizens' lives. However, there was no one popular opinion about which actor would be the most responsible. Some citizens thought that the local authorities would be the most responsible, some pointed towards the national government and others towards the private sector.

## KNOWLEDGE OF BUDGETING PROCESSES AND PLANNING

This section focuses on the research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to citizens' knowledge and awareness of and participation in local and state budgeting processes?*

We found that citizens' still did not feel very confident about how to influence local budgets. Their level of knowledge of how to influence local budget processes showed a slight reduction. Despite this average decrease among all project participants, the confidence to influence local budget processes increased among citizens who participated in a broader cluster of project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training).

Women felt less confident about their level of knowledge of how to influence local budget processes between the baseline and the endline. In contrast, there was no significant change over time among men. This suggested that after participation in project activities, women were more aware of how difficult it is to influence local budgets. This was consistent with results showing that respondents perceived difficulties in participating in local budget processes. Project staff mentioned that the cultural context in Vietnam also plays a role in these results.

Citizens were positive about the information local people had about planning and budgeting for local projects. They were equally positive across the policy areas studied: healthcare, infrastructure-building, education and the electricity system.

These findings suggested that citizens have information about local projects, but they do not feel confident about using this information to influence how authorities spend public budgets.

## ACCESS, EQUALITY, COST AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND INVESTMENTS

In this section, we tried to answer the third research question: *To what extent have citizens' opinions of access, equality of access, and the cost and quality of public services and local public investments changed after the project implementation?*

We found that the quality of health services still faces challenges. Citizens' opinions about the quality of health services were, on average, still not good. Nonetheless, citizens rated access to health services highly, with almost equal access for everybody and at a low cost. In cases when people thought that there was no equal access to health services, the most common reason given was related to the costs of services.

Citizens were almost evenly divided between support for pro-poor policies and support for policies predominantly aimed at increasing economic growth. However, despite this division, the majority

supported progressive taxation. The proportion of people supporting progressive taxation showed an upward trend, with 8 out of 10 respondents supporting progressive tax policies at the endline.

## **DETERMINANTS OF AN INCREASED CITIZENS' VOICE**

This section focuses on the research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam influenced the determinants of an increased citizens' voice, and shifted norms and attitudes?*

We found that political interest remained at the same level between the baseline and the endline. Citizens discuss political matters 'occasionally', and we did not find any gender differences. Citizens' perceptions of their influence in improving things in their communities (internal political efficacy,) and external political efficacy, changed between the baseline and the endline. On the one hand, citizens felt less able to improve things in their communities. On the other hand, external political efficacy increased. For both types of political efficacy, significant average changes were mainly related to changes in political efficacy among women, although, these changes were small.

Normative expectations towards CSOs were very positive and similar for men and women. Attitudes towards women's empowerment became more positive among both men and women, and the project contributed to this change. Nonetheless, citizens' attitudes could still be improved. Citizens thought there was less rights inequality at the endline than at the baseline. Project staff expected positive changes in gender-equal attitudes and rights equality, as the project worked on these areas.

## **EXPOSURE TO A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND BETTER RESULTS**

Exposure to more than one of the project's activities brought better results. Participation in more types of activities led to positive changes in more outcome indicators and of a larger magnitude. Citizens' actions to support social organisations increased more as people participated in additional project activities. Thus, the increase was larger among people who participated in communication, advocacy, monitoring and training, than among citizens that participated in less activities. Citizens' actions on budgetary issues showed a significant increase only among respondents who attended all the types of activities: communication, advocacy, monitoring and training. Also, citizens who participated in more of the project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training) felt more confident about their knowledge of how to influence local budgeting. Nonetheless, attitudes towards public accountability did not change, regardless of project participation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The project contributed to an increased citizens' voice defending or supporting social organisations. Citizens' actions on budgetary issues increased among women but only in Quang Tri. Also, citizens thought it was difficult to engage in these processes. Overall, their confidence about how to influence local budgets was modest. Citizens thought that they had information about local budgets, yet they did not feel very confident about how they could use this information to influence how authorities spend public budgets. However, citizens who participated in more project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training) felt more confident about how to influence local budgets. Interestingly, these findings suggested that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not explain the increase in the citizens' voice. As budget monitoring is still a sensitive issue in Vietnam, project staff had already identified pioneers and activists who could mobilise other community members to take action on budgetary issues.



## LIMITATIONS

The findings of this evaluation were only based on a quantitative survey. This limited the possibility of investigating more deeply the reasons for the key findings and how the changes happened. Therefore, this evaluation could not capture qualitative changes. The findings need to be read together with findings from qualitative research, such as outcome harvesting and stories of change. The evaluation only looked at the contribution of the project among the participants or respondents who self-reported participation in project activities. This approach limited the possibility of assessing the influence of external factors on the outcomes. The evaluation only looked at the outcome of raising the citizens' voice. Hence, the study did not show the impact of the full project in all the outcome areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

A gendered targeting strategy seemed to be effective. Future programmes should consider a gendered targeting strategy to achieve better results among women. Also, future projects with similar characteristics should include interventions at all the appropriate government levels. Authorities make some decisions on local budget spending at district and provincial levels. The project interventions were adjusted to also focus on district and provincial authority levels rather than just the commune level. In the future, this could be done from the start of the project.

For future budget monitoring efforts, it would be useful to target citizens who have already been active in voicing concerns on other matters. Citizens who engaged in a combination of communication, advocacy, training and monitoring activities took more action and felt more confident about how to influence local budgets.

Project staff mentioned that integrating the supervision of community groups with the local community supervision board and Fatherland Front at the local level helped people to participate in monitoring activities. However, community groups alone might not be enough to promote citizen participation in budget monitoring because some citizens still consider this to be a sensitive topic.

Additionally, project staff thought it would be interesting to explore public hearings models. This would require advocacy activities to promote the establishment of official mechanisms where citizens could contribute ideas and opinions directly to the process of budget planning. Project staff thought this could help the community groups to optimize the results of capacity building activities for the state budget.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the impact evaluation for the Finance for Development project in Vietnam<sup>1</sup> in the outcome areas of increasing citizens' voice and shifting norms and attitudes. This project works on the themes pro-poor fiscal policies, enhanced civic space and civil society strengthening. This project was implemented as part of the Strategic Partnership – 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' – of Oxfam Novib, the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This evaluation report compares the results of the baseline survey of December 2016 and January 2017, and the endline survey of November 2019 to assess the contribution of the F4D project to increasing the citizens' voice and shifting norms and attitudes.

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the progress made by the F4D project in realizing the expected project outcomes for increased citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes (described in section 1.2).

## 1.1 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Oxfam Novib and SOMO have a strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs called 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network'. This programme runs from 2016 until the end of 2020 and covers three thematic areas: Right to Food (R2F), Greater Responsibility in Finance for Development (F4D), and Conflict and Fragility (C&F). The thematic programmes are operationalized through 23 projects in 16 countries and three global projects.

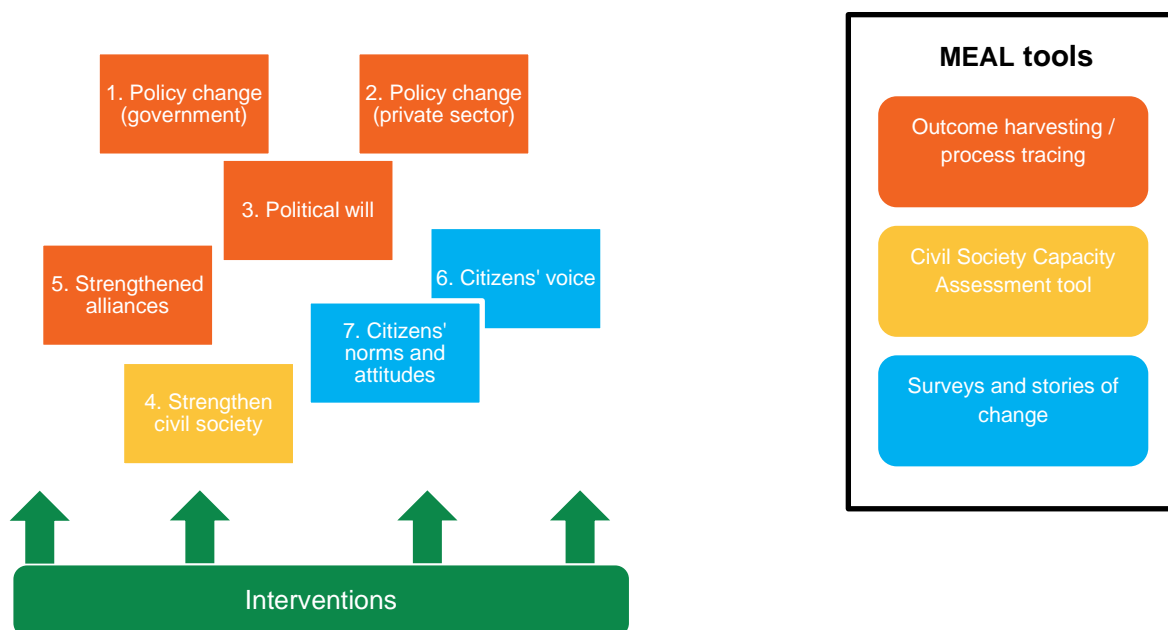
All thematic programmes work towards several or all of the following seven outcomes: improved policies of governments and public actors, improved policies of private sector actors, increased political will, strengthened CSOs, stronger and wider alliances, increased citizens' voice, and shifted norms and attitudes.

This impact evaluation is part of the larger Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework of the Strategic Partnership (SP) project. The MEAL framework ensures that relevant, high quality and comparable data is collected for all seven outcome areas. We use one or more methodologies to track the progress of each outcome area. The different components of the MEAL framework, as well as the position of the impact evaluation (baseline and endline surveys) in this framework, are shown in Figure 1.

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<sup>1</sup> From this point onwards, the Finance for Development project is referred to only by the abbreviation F4D project.

Figure 1. MEAL methodology used for each outcome area of the Finance for Development project



## 1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW OF F4D IN VIETNAM

The overall objective of the F4D project in Vietnam is to reduce inequality and improve the quality of life for women and marginalized groups in Vietnam, as a result of equitable and accountable fiscal policies and practices.

In Vietnam, most citizens have limited awareness of tax justice and budget transparency, and there is a prevalent perception that tax revenue and public budgets are issues of importance only to the government. People feel they do not have the right to demand information or question tax and budget decisions, or the capacity to understand them. Poor people, especially ethnic minorities, have very limited access to tax and budget information, including their entitlements from public services, and tend to be unaware of their rights to access tax and budget information, as stipulated in the Constitution and the Law on State Budget. In many communities, the lack of connections with local authorities also prevents them from participating in socio-economic planning and budgeting for the commune.

Oxfam's program on Financing for Development addresses these complex challenges through a multi-pronged strategy of coalition-building, strengthening CSOs, engagement with government and the private sector, and amplifying citizens' voices. Partners include Vietnamese NGOs, elected bodies, research institutes, mass organizations<sup>2</sup> and universities.

The project contributes to three outcome areas: i) improved policies, ii) strengthened CSOs and iii) increased citizens' voice. However, in practice, the project also worked in and contributed to the

<sup>2</sup> Mass organizations, also known as socio-political organizations, were founded by the Communist Party of Vietnam. The Vietnam Fatherland Front and other mass organizations are organized as an extended arm of the Party in order to reach and mobilize the masses to participate in and support the Party's policies. These organisations maintain large memberships: 1. Women's Union, 2. Farmers' Association, 3. Youth Organization, 4. War Veterans Association and 5. Worker's Organization.

outcome areas of iv) increased political will, v) shifted norms and attitudes, and vi) stronger and wider alliances, to address the challenges described in the context above.

### 1.2.1 GROUPS OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Through strengthening CSOs, Oxfam aims to mobilize and support active citizens, especially women, to take collective actions demanding fair, more inclusive and transparent fiscal systems that contribute to improving the lives of vulnerable people. Civil society organizations and communities are cooperating with each other through building multi-stakeholder coalitions, actively engaging in policy debates to demand fairer taxation and equitable health financing. With Oxfam's support, they work collaboratively with experts, research institutes and universities to collect evidence and demonstrate injustice arising from harmful Corporate Income Tax (CIT) incentives, and tax evasion and avoidance. They document and gather evidence of inequitable health financing lacking in transparency, and especially the impact of injustice on women and marginalized groups. Oxfam also supports the development of good models and practices for public service financing. The evidence generated is used for rights awareness-raising, public campaigns and policy advocacy.

BTAP works with an equal proportion of men and women of farmers, women's unions and community groups, often from ethnic minorities. BTAP works in two provinces Quang Tri and Hoa Binh. In 2019, the project reported that a total of 2,739 people (approximately 45% women) raised their voice on budget transparency and gender-responsive budgeting in 27 events, including dialogues, consultations and campaigns organized by BTAP in both provinces. Also, the project reported 120 people (89% women) from the Ethnic Minority Network raised their voice on budget transparency in seven events, including dialogues and consultations. Furthermore, 328 people (52 % women) participated or benefited from local budget monitoring and the Gender-Responsive Budgeting of the Ethnic Minority Network. Finally, 1,486,506 people (approximately 50% women) benefited from local budget monitoring in Hoa Binh and Quang Tri provinces.

### 1.2.2 ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE CITIZENS' VOICE AND SHIFT ATTITUDES

The activities of the F4D project in Vietnam that aim to increase the citizens' voice include awareness-raising and the engagement of citizens in the budget monitoring process through:

- Training (on the rights of citizens in budget management, the state budget cycle, how to participate in budget monitoring, planning and presentation skills)
- Community-based meetings
  - Twelve community groups (six groups each in Hoa Binh and Quang Tri) have been set up and supported in operation. In these meetings, members discuss state-budget related issues and opportunities and plans for state budget oversight in the locality.
- Exchange workshops to share experiences and the results of monitoring state budgets by community-based groups
- Thematic talks in Quang Tri on healthcare issues
- Contests on state budget management from commune to provincial level (in attractive ways like the "Ring the Golden Bell" contest)
- Policy dialogues
- Oversight initiatives and dialogues
  - Community-based groups, including twelve existing groups and eleven newly-established groups, propose and conduct different oversight initiatives on state budget-related issues such as the electricity programme for subsidies for poor households, pre-education fee collection and spending, policies to support women from poor households and ethnic minorities according to the population, services provided by commune health stations, policies to support people with disabilities (in Hoa Binh), payment for forest environmental services (in Hoa Binh), rural road construction and a culture house (using a social audit tool for construction projects)

- Through these oversight initiatives and dialogues, these citizens have brought up many people's concerns and fed back to the governments on behalf of their communities.
- Public consultation and public hearings on budget transparency.
  - People have engaged in public consultations (on vocational training, the commune development budget, the agricultural extension policy, public investment scoring, local fee collection and the citizen budget, and the National Target Program for New Rural Areas.)

## 2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Theory of Change and the objective of this evaluation guided the evaluation questions listed below. These evaluation questions subsequently determined which indicators to assess because they may influence the outcomes of citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes.

**Table 1 Overview of evaluation questions**

<p><b>Main evaluation question:</b></p> <p><b>To what extent have the activities implemented within the SP Finance for Development project in Vietnam contributed to changes in the citizens' voice concerning the revenue, public spending and investment of local and state budgets?</b></p>			
<p>Sub questions:</p>			
<p>1. Raising voice and changes in norms and attitudes</p>	<p>2. Improving knowledge and awareness</p>	<p>3. Budget monitoring activities in communities for health services, schools, public infrastructure or other local government policies and programmes</p>	<p>4. Determinants related to raising the citizens' voice</p>
<p>To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to changes in <b>citizens' voice, and shifted norms and attitudes</b> concerning the revenue, public spending and investment of local and state budgets?</p>	<p>To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to citizens' <b>knowledge and awareness</b> of and participation in local and state budgeting processes?</p>	<p>To what extent have <b>citizens' opinions on access, equality of access, the cost and quality of public services and local public investments</b> changed after project implementation?</p>	<p>To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam influenced the <b>determinants of the citizens' voice, norms and attitudes?</b></p>

In addition to investigating the contribution of the project to the outcomes of increased citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes, the report will also explore more deeply the gendered differences for the relevant outcomes. Furthermore, for some key concepts, further analysis has been done to investigate whether participation in various activities gave better results. Thus, the report also will answer the question: *Are there any differences in selected outcomes for the type of activities that the respondents participated in?*

# 3 EVALUATION DESIGN

## 3.1 EVALUATION DESIGN

This evaluation assessed the contribution of the project to changes in the outcomes of increased citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes. It did so by comparing a sample of project participants at the start of the project (baseline) with a sample at the end of the project (endline). This allowed us to see to what extent changes in outcomes had occurred among the project participants.

## 3.2 SAMPLE

The sampling strategy of this evaluation followed a multistage cluster sampling process. First, the sample was divided into two strata of equal size Quang Tri and Hoa Binh. Second, within each province, the sample had two substrata (districts) – Hải Lăng and Gio Linh in Quang Tri, and Lương Sơn and Mai Châu in Hoa Binh. In each district, we first randomly selected a sample of communes, and thereafter a sample of villages where the survey was conducted.

In each village, all members of a core group were interviewed. The core group was formed by people at the commune level who were selected for training, and this core group spread information to other people in the villages. Around 160 village members formed the core group. Additionally, a group of respondents who were not part of this core group were randomly selected.

The endline fieldwork prioritized data collection with the same respondents from the baseline survey. Project staff used the code lists of respondents who were interviewed at the baseline to identify these same respondents for the endline survey. At the endline, it was possible to interview approximately 44% of the baseline respondents. It was not possible to interview some respondents from the baseline survey because of migration, some respondents were not present in the household because they worked in industrial zones, they were deceased, or they were unavailable for unknown reasons. Therefore, it was necessary to replace the respondents who were surveyed at the baseline but who were not available for an interview at the endline. The selection of these new respondents at the endline was based on a random walk process through the villages.

Furthermore, some respondents could have been living in the villages where the project implemented its activities (potential project participants), but they had not engaged in or recognized any of the project activities. Therefore, in the endline survey, we asked the respondents the following question: *Since 2015, have you participated in activities organised by Hoa Binh Farmer Union and People's Council, Vietnam Fatherland Front or Quang Tri Women's Union and People's Council?*

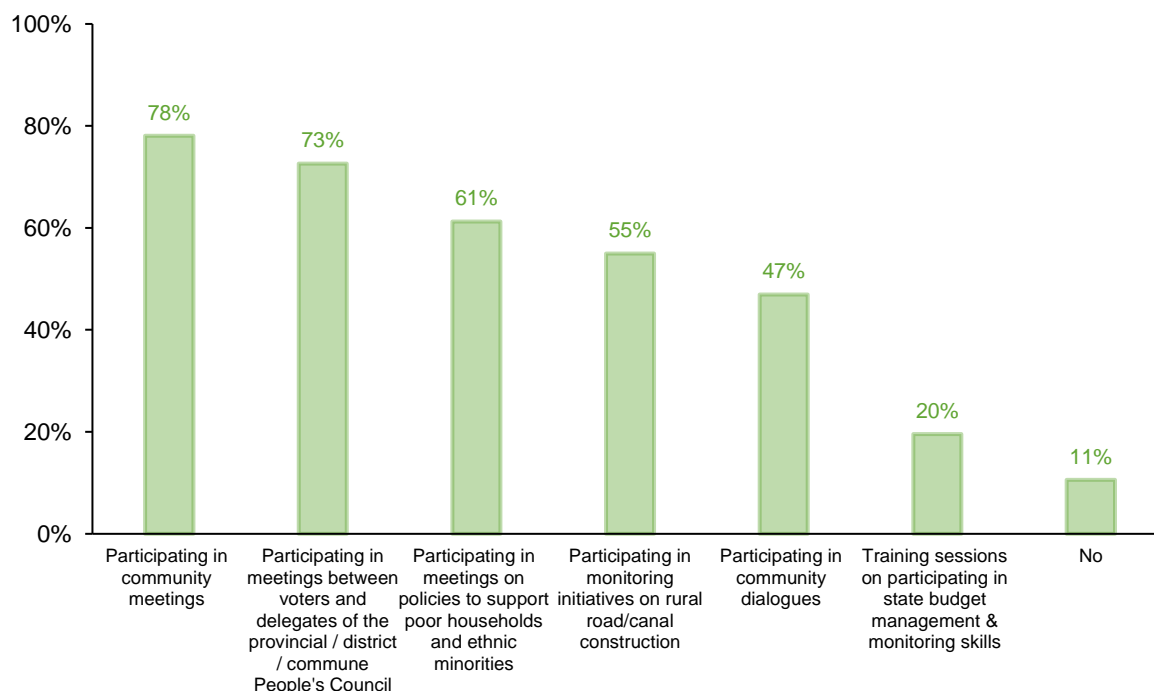
Figure 2 shows the self-reported engagement in project activities for the survey respondents in project areas<sup>3</sup>. It can be seen that 78% of respondents in project areas engaged in *community meetings*, 73% in *meetings between voters and delegates of the provincial/district/commune People's Council*, 61% in *meetings on policies to support poor households and ethnic minorities*, 55% in *monitoring initiatives for rural road/canal construction*, 47% in *community dialogues*, and 20% in *training on participating in state budget management and monitoring skills*. It is worth noting that the project focused the training on specific project participants and supported the community groups in developing and implementing the

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<sup>3</sup> The percentages are based on the 624 respondents comprising the sample for the endline survey before propensity score matching. This sample size includes respondents in project areas and non-project areas. This technique is explained in section 3.3.

local state budget monitoring initiatives. The meetings were open to everybody in the village, and only 11% of respondents in project areas said they did not participate in any activity.

**Figure 2. Engagement in project activities (Endline survey)**



The evaluation findings only include the respondents who self-reported participation in activities. We made this decision because we wanted to focus the evaluation on the changes that the project directly contributed to. Thus, project participants are the respondents who recognized one or more of the project activities. Project participants could either live in areas explicitly targeted by the project or in neighbouring areas. Henceforth, this evaluation report uses the terms project participants, respondents and citizens as synonyms.

The evaluation was based on a sample size of 630 respondents for the baseline, and 544 respondents for the endline – a total of 1,174 interviews<sup>4</sup>. The map in Figure 3 shows the sample sizes for the baseline and endline in each province.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that more interviews were collected during the fieldwork, however, the propensity score matching methodology used in this evaluation requires that respondents are very similar in terms of their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Therefore, the sample size used in this evaluation was smaller than the total number of interviews collected. Additionally, at the time of the baseline survey, we did not know whether all baseline respondents would participate in the project activities. Therefore, we included as many baseline respondents in the analysis as possible. We excluded only baseline respondents who were statistically different from the endline respondents and, at the time of the endline survey, said they had not participated in one or more project activities. The details of the analysis techniques are explained in section 3.3.



Figure 3 Sampled locations at the baseline and endline<sup>5</sup>



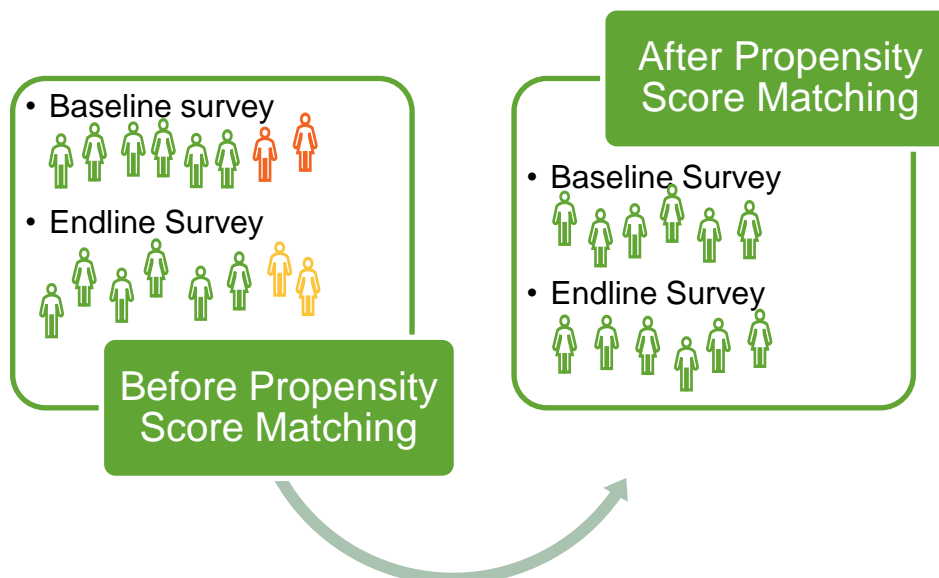
<sup>5</sup> Base map sourced from: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/Vietnam\\_location\\_map.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/Vietnam_location_map.svg)

### 3.3 ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

To assess changes over time in any outcome indicator, researchers would ideally want to interview the same people at least twice. However, this was not possible for all the respondents. Instead of surveying all the same people twice, we surveyed a similar group of the project's participants at both baseline and endline by randomly selecting the respondents. We know that it is very likely that this group of surveyed people is not directly comparable. They likely differ in a range of characteristics.

The primary objective of the statistical technique employed (propensity score matching) was, therefore, to make sure that we were making a valid comparison over time between the sample of respondents at the baseline and the sample of respondents at the endline. Propensity score matching ensured that the respondents from the baseline and endline had comparable socio-economic and demographic characteristics<sup>6</sup>. Figure 4 shows the matching process. Before the propensity score matching some respondents were statistically different in the baseline and endline surveys (orange and yellow figures in Figure 4). After the propensity score matching, only similar respondents were included in the analysis.

Figure 4. Matching process of baseline and endline respondents



We measured the change in the outcome indicator between the baseline and the endline to assess to what extent the F4D project had made a significant contribution to changes in that outcome indicator. Findings in this report are based on calculations using weights from the PSM model<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Covariates included in the matching were respondents' occupation, literacy of the household head, education of the household head, occupation of the household head, district, and an index of the economic profile of the household. With this set of covariates, we also ensured that respondents in the baseline and endline samples were similar in terms of other relevant characteristics: respondents' gender, literacy, level of education, marital status, position in the household (household head or not), and household dependency ratio.

<sup>7</sup> We implemented propensity score matching using a normal (Gaussian) kernel estimator, where each person in the baseline group is given a weight. This weight is a kernel-weighted average, where the weighting is expressed as the proportion of closeness between the subject in the baseline survey and the endline survey. More details can be read in Annex 1.

For a few outcome indicators, we only had endline data, as interest in these indicators only became clear in the process of setting up the endline research. For these indicators, we could not compare the project participants over time, as we did not have baseline data for these indicators. Thus, the analysis was only done at a single point in time and therefore showed descriptive results of the project participants at the endline.

Finally, during the reflection workshop, members of BTAP and Oxfam in Vietnam interpreted the results and conclusions of the quantitative evaluation.

# 4 FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings<sup>8</sup> of the evaluation. The project was judged to have made a significant *contribution* to the changes in an outcome indicator if that change was statistically significant at a confidence level of 95%. Therefore, when the report text mentions a significant *contribution or change*, it means that the change in that outcome indicator between the baseline and the endline was statistically significant at a confidence level of 95% ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ). This means that if the survey were to be re-run 20 times, we would find that the project contributed to the observed changes in 19 of those 20 times. **Generally speaking, a *significant contribution* means that we have enough statistical evidence that the project contributed to a change in an outcome indicator. However, *other external factors may still also have influenced the results.***

Most figures in this report visualize the results as bar graphs that show the proportion of respondents at the baseline and endline surveys answering a question in a certain way or the average response to a given question by respondents in these two surveys. Because data are based on responses from a sample of the people in the baseline and endline surveys, the results are subject to a degree of sampling error. These errors are visualized with a confidence interval in most figures, representing the range of the estimate at a confidence level of 95%. As a general rule of thumb, if the confidence intervals of two estimates overlap, then, it is likely that there is no statistically significant difference between the estimates. If the confidence intervals do not overlap, then it is likely that the difference between the estimates is statistically significant. However, there are exceptions to this general rule of thumb and readers are encouraged to rely on the report text and summary tables for definitive results on which comparisons or associations are significant and which not.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

The interpretation of the findings of this evaluation should be read considering the context where the project was implemented. The project was implemented in a context of social and economic uncertainty, combined with a tightening of civic space. Restrictive legal barriers regulating the rights to association, expression and access to information remain in the country. In some cases, political civil society groups are repressed when they are critical to the Party-state. Moreover, sometimes mass and social media are manipulated by vested interests in the private sector or by some political interests.

Overall, the implementation of the F4D project in Vietnam was, in itself, an achievement, as it laid a solid foundation for transparency and citizen participation and monitoring in the future. Hence, we encourage the reader to consider the social and political restrictions where the project is implemented when making sense of the findings that are presented in the next sections.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This profile gives a general picture of the characteristics of the respondents who were interviewed for this evaluation. To make valid comparisons between the baseline and endline groups, it is important to make sure that we are comparing similar groups of people. Thus, both groups should be similar in terms

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<sup>8</sup> Please note that the sample size for each outcome indicator can be different from the sample size mentioned in section 3.2. This could be due to one or both of the following reasons: respondents did not answer the question(s) related to that outcome indicator or respondents answered 'I don't know'.

of their demographic and socio-economic profiles. The profile presented in this section considered the weightings that had been calculated after the process of matching (see section 3.3)<sup>9</sup>.

The average age of the respondents was 50 years old<sup>10</sup>. The average dependency ratio of the households was 0.53, which meant that for each dependent member in the household (people between 0 and 14 years old or aged 65 or older) there were two members of working age (15 to 64 years old). The gender distribution was 45% men and 55% women. The literacy levels showed that 94% could read and write in Vietnamese or another language. The education levels of the respondents were as follows: 7% had no education, 27% had completed primary education, 48% had completed secondary education, 15% had completed high school, and 3% had completed tertiary, university or postgraduate education.

A total of 78% of the respondents worked in agriculture, hunting, forestry or fishing, 15% in non-farming activities or had their own business, 6% were retired, beyond working age or too disabled to work, and 1% were unemployed. The marital status of the respondents was 2% of respondents were single, 83% were married, or part of an unmarried couple and 15% were divorced, separated or widowed. A total of 54% of the respondents were household heads.

The level of education achieved by the head of the household where the respondent lived was as follows: 7% had no education, 25% had completed primary education, 47% had completed secondary education, 17% had completed high school, and 4% had completed tertiary, university or postgraduate education. The literacy level of the head of the households where the respondent lived was 95%. A total of 74% of heads of respondents' households worked in agriculture, hunting, forestry or fishing, 17% in non-farming activities or had their own business, 8% were retired, beyond working age or too disabled to work, and 1% were unemployed.

The proportion of respondents in each province was 54% from Hoa Binh and 46% from Quang Tri. In each district, the distribution was 14% from Lương Sơn, 40% from Mai Châu, 24% from Hải Lăng and 22% from Gio Linh.

### 4.3 CONTRIBUTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES TO INCREASED VOICE AND SHIFTED NORMS AND ATTITUDES CONCERNING PUBLIC SPENDING

This section aims to answer the first research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to changes in the citizens' voice and shifted norms and attitudes concerning the revenue, public spending and investment of local and state budgets?*

The first part of this section explores the project contribution to changes in the citizens' voice for F4D themes. Secondly, we will look at the citizens' voice in relation to the provincial government. The third section focuses on shifted attitudes and norms concerning how local governments spend their money. Lastly, this section discusses citizens' opinions of stakeholders' responsibility with regard to financial investments.

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<sup>9</sup> On this point, it is important to mention two observations. Firstly, the information presented in this section is the profile of project participants at the endline. We chose to present only the project participants at the endline because there were no significant differences with the project participants at the baseline. The matching process ensured that the two profiles were the same in statistical terms. The details of both groups can be found in Annex 1. Secondly, this profile accounts for the weightings from the matching process, therefore some differences with the actual data that were collected are possible. However, for the accuracy of the results in this evaluation, we gave priority to comparing groups of project participants that were statistically similar, despite the differences with the actual data that was collected. The demographic and socio-economic profiles of the respondents before the matching process, and with no account taken for the weightings, can be found in Annex 1.

<sup>10</sup> The average age at the baseline was 48 years old. The difference between the baseline and the endline was significant. This difference was expected as respondents should be older at the endline. All the other demographic and socio-economic indicators were statistically similar between baseline and endline.

### 4.3.1 CITIZENS' VOICE ON F4D TOPICS

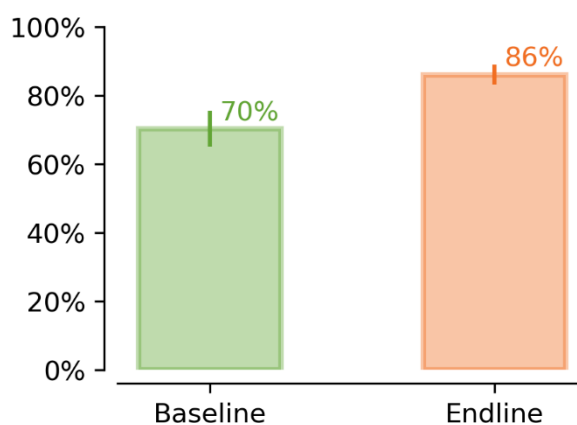
The citizens' voice is about citizens taking action to have their concerns heard by duty-bearers, to challenge the power of the state and the corporate sector and to have a say in the future direction of their society. The project aimed to contribute to citizens raising their voice by awareness-raising, and engagement of citizens in the budget monitoring process through training, community-based meetings, exchange workshops, thematic talks, contests on state budget management, policy dialogues, oversight initiatives and dialogues, and public consultation and public hearings on budget transparency.

Raised citizens' voices can come in different forms and through different actions, so we measured citizens who reported that they had talked with friends or family, and citizens who reported that they had taken action. The F4D project in Vietnam focused on two topics i) defending or supporting the work of social organizations<sup>11</sup>, and ii) how the government raises taxes and fees or spends the state/provincial/district budget.

#### 4.3.1.1 SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS

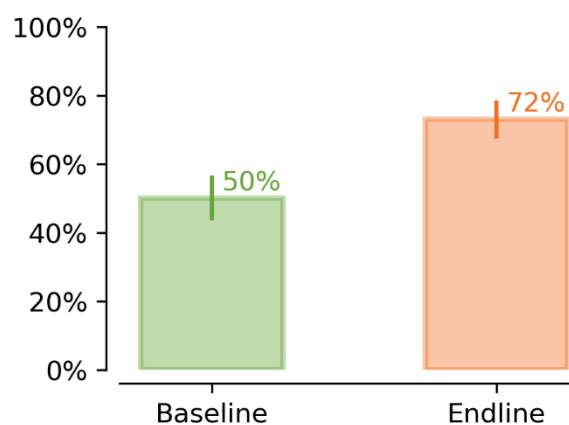
The project contributed to an increase in the proportion of citizens who had talked about and taken action to defend or support social organisations<sup>12</sup>. The proportion of project participants who talked about defending or supporting the work of social organizations increased from 70% to 86% (Figure 5). We also found that the percentage of project participants who had taken action to defend or support the work of social organizations increased from 50% to 72% (Figure 6), among both women and men. Project staff at the reflection workshop thought that this correctly reflected the current situation in both provinces – the project activities are integrated with the activities of the mass organisations

**Figure 5. The project contributed to an increase in the percentage of citizens who had talked about defending or supporting the work of social organisations**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1173

**Figure 6. The project contributed to an increase in the percentage of citizens who had taken action to defend or support the work of social organisations**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1173

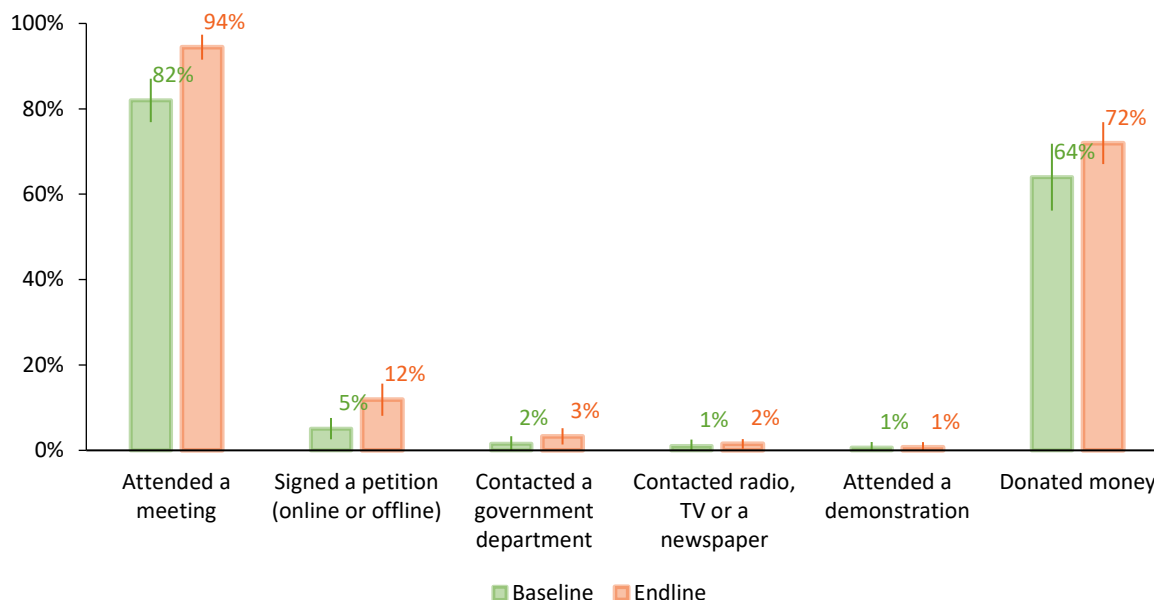
We asked project participants what kind of action they had taken to defend or support the work of social organizations. The most frequently mentioned actions at both the baseline and the endline were participation in meetings or donations (Figure 7). The proportion of citizens who attended community

<sup>11</sup> In the context of the project, social organisations include Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

<sup>12</sup> In the questionnaire, social organisations were clearly defined as including only CBOs and NGOs. Despite this being explained, in the areas where the project worked, social organisations were easily misunderstood as mass organisations (women's union, farmer's union or youth's unions). At the time of the evaluation, there were no local NGOs in Quang Tri.

meetings, donated money or signed a petition showed a significant increase from the baseline to the endline. Hence, the project contributed to increasing a citizens' voice that defends or supports the work of social organisations, by increasing participation in community meetings, making donations or signing petitions.

**Figure 7. Most common actions to defend or support the work of social organizations are participating in meetings or donations. There is a significant increase in the percentage of citizens who attended community meetings, donated money or signed a petition**



#### 4.3.1.2 TAXES AND PUBLIC SPENDING

The F4D project in Vietnam also focused on how the government raises taxes and fees or spends the state, provincial and district budgets. We asked respondents whether they had talked about or had taken action on this matter. Figure 8 shows that the project contributed to an increase in the proportion of citizens who had talked about budgetary issues from 31% at the baseline to 49% at the endline. This positive contribution held for both men and women separately.

The average proportion of citizens who had taken action on budgetary issues did not show a significant increase (Figure 9). However, we did find a significant increase among women, which was a remarkable contribution of the project. Project staff wondered during the reflection workshop if this positive result among women had only happened in Quang Tri, as most people who participated in project activities there were women<sup>13</sup>. Impact Measurement and Knowledge team (IMK) confirmed this idea after the reflection workshop. We found the significant increase in the proportion of citizens who had taken action on budgetary issues happened only among women in Quang Tri and not among women in Hoa Binh.

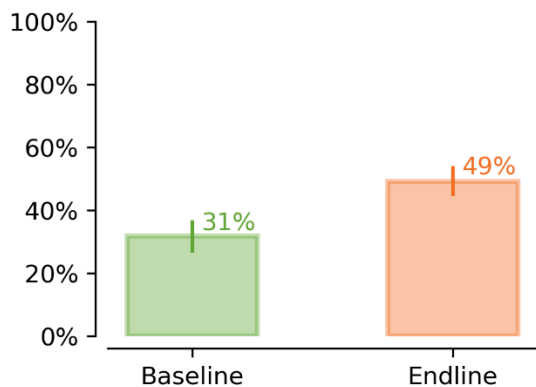
Also, citizens' action on budgetary issues needs to be seen in light of the context where the project works. Project staff<sup>14</sup> stressed that budget monitoring is a sensitive issue and not many people participate in budget processes. In Figure 9, we can see the proportion of citizens who had taken action on this issue was only 7% at the baseline. Project staff expected to identify only a few pioneers or activists who would mobilise other community members to take actions on budgetary issues. Therefore, the increase in the average proportion of citizens who had taken action on budgetary issues from 7%

<sup>13</sup> The proportion of women in Quang Tri was 60%, whereas in Hoa Binh was 51%.

<sup>14</sup> Henceforth, 'project staff' is a combination of BTAP and Oxfam in Vietnam staff, who contributed to the interpretation of the results.

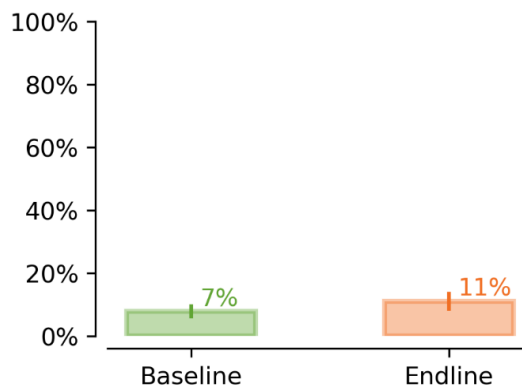
at the baseline to 11% at the endline is noteworthy. According to project staff, this was a very positive result as it meant the percentage of citizens who had taken action increased by 57%<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 8. The project contributed to an increase in the percentage of citizens who had talked about budgetary issues**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1173

**Figure 9. The project expected to identify only a few pioneers or activists who would mobilise other community members to take actions on budgetary issues. There is no significant change in the percentage of citizens who had taken action on budgetary issues<sup>16</sup>**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1174

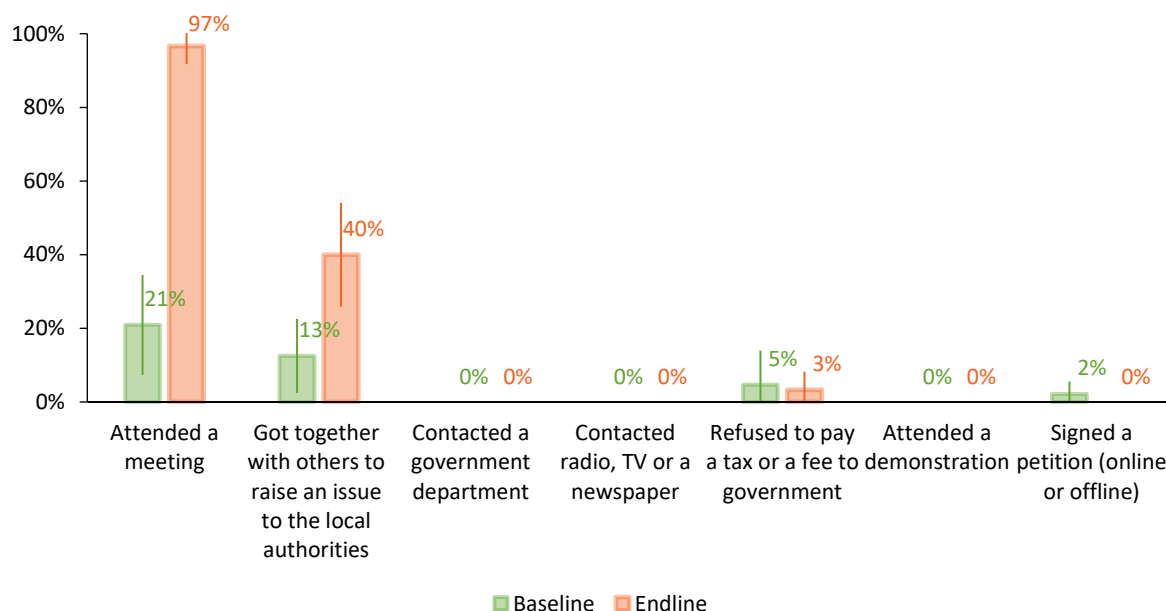
We asked those respondents who had taken action what kind of action they had taken on budgetary issues. The most common action at the endline was participation in meetings (97%, Figure 10). Also, two out of five respondents who had taken action at the endline said they got together with others to raise an issue with the local authorities. We found that the project made a significant contribution to the increase in participation in these two types of actions. This was consistent with the project's strategy, as activities included community-based meetings, thematic talks, policy dialogues, public consultations and public hearings. However, it is important to mention that these activities happened because the project organised them for the first time in the project areas, which explains the large increase from the baseline to the endline. However, whether citizens' participation will remain at these same levels after project finalisation remains to be seen.

<sup>15</sup> A further consideration is the statistical power to detect significant changes. The researchers of IMK estimated that the Minimum Detectable Standardized Effect Size for this outcome indicator, with the sample features of this evaluation, was 0.224227. At a 5% significance level, this means only around six percentage points of change would be detected and smaller changes would not be observed given the sample size.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.



**Figure 10. Most common actions on budgetary issues are participation meetings or getting together with others to raise an issue to the local authorities. There is a significant increase in these two types of actions**



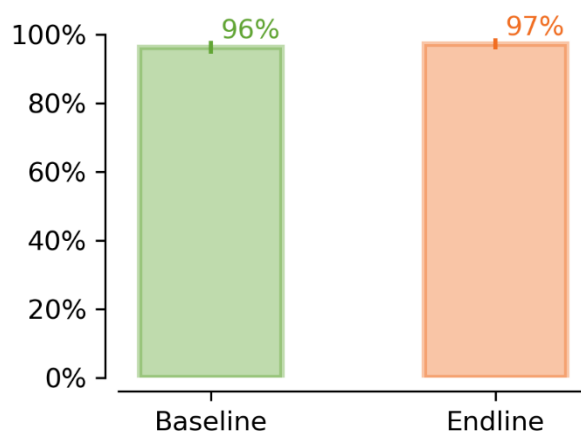
### 4.3.2 CITIZENS' VOICE TOWARDS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Increasing the citizens' voice is concerned with ensuring that duty-bearers consult and take into account the citizens to whom they are accountable. The surveys did not take into account the duty-bearer side of this relationship. Whether and how duty-bearers react to citizens raising their concerns is studied using the outcome harvesting methodology under the outcome area increased political will. However, we did measure citizen's perceptions of the government's responsiveness with the survey question: *Is the voice of people taken into account by the provincial government in any area?*

Almost all respondents thought their voices were taken into account by the provincial government (above 95%). Figure 11 shows the level was already high during the baseline. We did not find a significant change between the baseline and the endline for either men or women. Project staff thought that this reflected the actual situation in the provinces.

However, project staff noted that the project focused its activities more on local government. Unfortunately, we did not have quantitative data for this type of perception for local governments at district and commune levels.

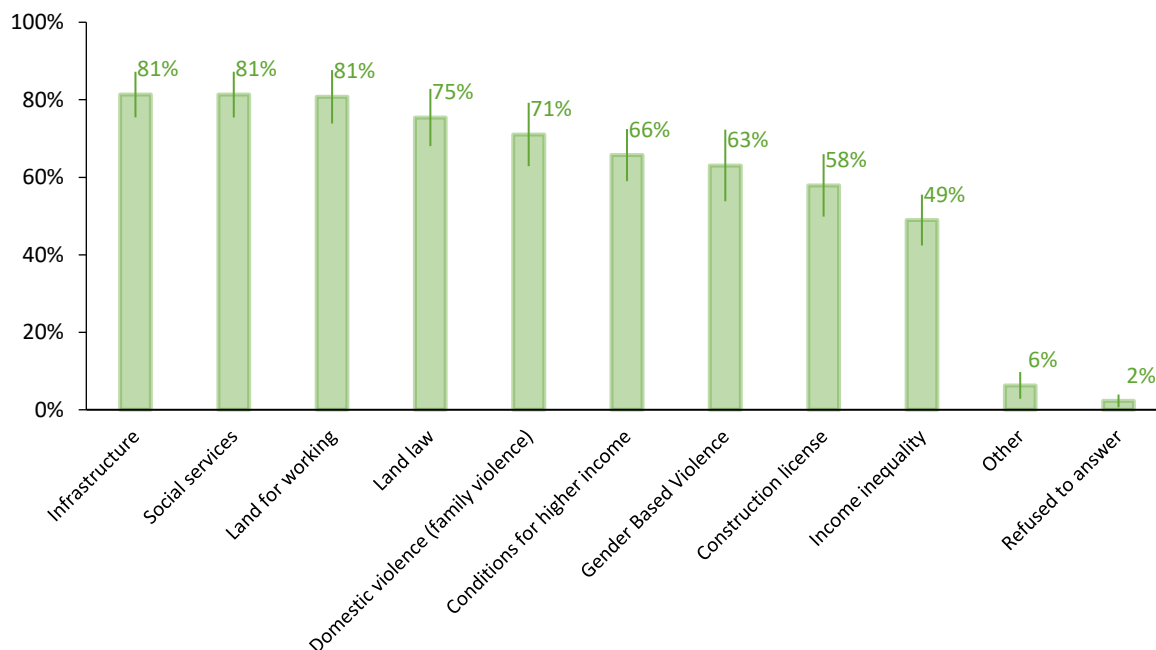
**Figure 11. Almost all citizens think the provincial government takes them into account**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1169

Additionally, respondents mentioned the areas of infrastructure (81%), social services (81%), land for working (81%), land law (75%) and domestic violence (family violence) (71%) as the five most frequent areas in which the provincial government takes them into account (Figure 12). The F4D project in Vietnam works in the first four of these areas.

**Figure 12. Areas in which the provincial government takes into account the voice of people**



In contrast, we asked those respondents who said the provincial government did not take into account their voice what the main reasons were for why this had not happened. The three most common reasons were because local authorities are inherently not transparent and unresponsive, people think that their voice is of no or little consequence, and people lack information to raise their voice at the right time. According to project staff, this was in accordance with the reality where the project works. However, it is important to mention that it was difficult to draw general conclusions from these results because only 15 respondents answered this question.

### 4.3.3 ATTITUDES AND NORMS TOWARDS CITIZENS TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HOW GOVERNMENTS SPEND THEIR TAXES

We assumed that attitudes towards accountability, public participation in budget processes and perceived norms on participating in budget processes would influence a citizens' disposition to participate in such processes. We gauged attitudes towards public accountability by asking respondents a question on whether they thought citizens should play a role in deciding how tax revenue is spent or whether the government and its advisors improved their understanding on these issues. Additionally, we asked respondents about the perceived level of ease in participating in budget processes. Finally, we asked whether respondents found participation in budget processes usual or desired behaviour, which may indicate social norms as an influence on their own disposition to participate in local budget monitoring processes.

We considered someone to have a positive attitude towards public accountability if a respondent strongly agreed or agreed to the statement: *Money that the government gets from taxes belongs to the citizens – the citizens should play an active role in deciding how it is spent*. In contrast, a negative attitude meant a respondent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: *The government and its advisers understand the needs of the country best and should decide how to spend tax money*.

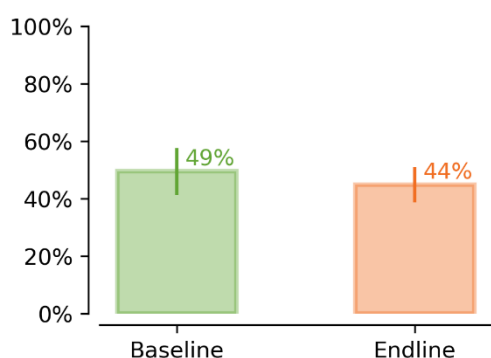
Less than half of the respondents agreed that citizens should play an active role in deciding how the government spends taxes (Figure 13). This was 49% at the baseline and 44% at the endline. In contrast, 51% of the respondents at the baseline and 56% at the endline agreed that the government understands the needs of the country best and should decide how to spend tax money. The changes in both opinions did not show a significant change between the baseline and the endline.

When we explored gender differences, we found that women's perceptions of this topic were stable over time, whereas the percentage of male respondents who agreed that citizens should play an active role in deciding how the government spends taxes showed a significant reduction. Project staff thought that this perception might be difficult to change because the more the citizens know about budgetary issues and their complexities, the more doubtful they might feel about taking ownership regarding government accountability.

Also, respondents felt that it was generally "quite difficult" to participate in budget processes at the local level (Figure 14). This perception did not change between the baseline and the endline for women or men. Project staff mentioned that authorities at the commune level faced difficulties in making decisions on budget spending, as authorities make such decisions at district and provincial levels. It is often the case that the budget plan proposed by each commune is not taken into account by district and provincial authorities. Therefore, if it is difficult for authorities at the commune level to participate in budget processes, so it would be even more difficult for people to do so.

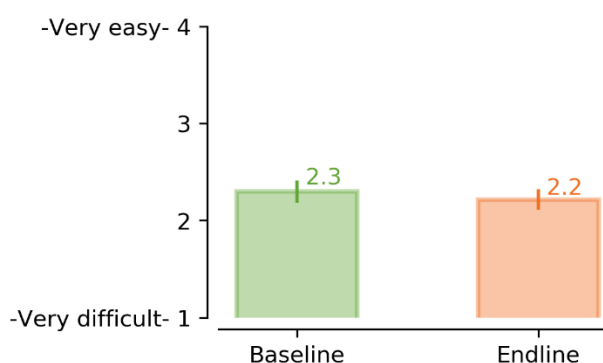
Also, project staff pointed out that the project interventions were adjusted to focus on higher authority levels rather than the commune level. Nonetheless, project staff stressed that policy change and new budget process are rolled out gradually. Therefore, people do not have many opportunities to participate.

**Figure 13. Less than half of respondents think that citizens should play an active role in deciding how the government spends taxes. This proportion did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1117

**Figure 14. Citizens think that participation in budget processes at the local level is difficult. This perception did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1051

We tried to identify whether social norms could influence an individual's participation in local budget processes. We defined a social norm as "an unwritten behavioural rule to which individuals prefer to conform on the condition that they believe that most people in their reference group conform to it, and most people in their reference group believe they should conform to it" (adapted from Bicchieri 2006 and Bicchieri et al. 2014). This relates to what they believe others do (empirical expectation) and what they believe others think they should do (normative expectation).

We considered respondents to believe that participation was a common behaviour when they answered that all people in the community participate in budget processes. A neutral perception was when a respondent believed only some of the community members participate. Lastly, a rare perception was when a respondent said that only a few or none of the community members participate in budget processes. This social norm is what we call empirical expectations. Figure 15 shows whether project respondents thought that participation in local budget processes was common, neutral or rare behaviour. We found that project participants had a neutral perception of participation in budget processes, and this did not change between the baseline and the endline.

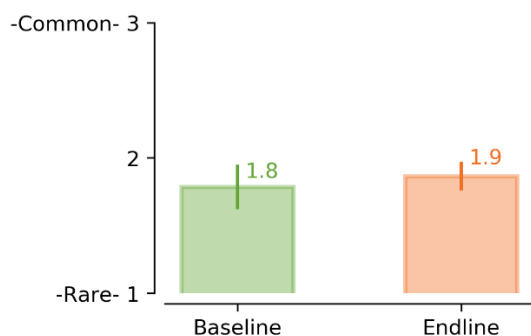
These results contrasted with the level of citizens' action on budgetary issues, which were presented in Figure 9. People thought that some of the community members participated in local budget processes, but only a small proportion of citizens had actually taken action on budgetary issues. Project staff mentioned that participation in local budget processes was not common behaviour in the context where the project works. They only expected some pioneer representatives of the community to participate in this sensitive and political processes.

Despite challenges to participating in local budgetary issues, and citizens thinking that participation was relatively neutral, they did think it was *desirable* behaviour. A positive perception of participation in budget processes means that respondents think that other people would think that participation is a good thing. A neutral perception is when respondents think that others do not have a specific opinion about it. A negative perception is when respondents believe that others would think it is a bad thing. This indicator of social norms is called normative expectations. Figure 16 shows that project participants believed that others positively valued participation in budget processes. Also, this positive perception did not change between the baseline and the endline.

Finally, it is worth noting that the indicators of attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not change between the baseline and the endline, but the project contributed to an increase in the citizens' voice over time. Additionally, we did not find a significant correlation between

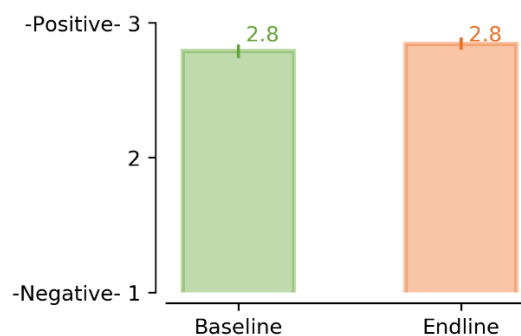
citizens' action<sup>17</sup> and the four outcome indicators presented in this section. Overall, this suggested that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not explain the increase in the citizens' voice among project participants.

**Figure 15. Citizens believe only some of the community members participate in local budget processes. This perception did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=994

**Figure 16. Citizens believe that participation in budget processes at the local level is desired behaviour in the community. This perception did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1012

#### 4.3.4 STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS

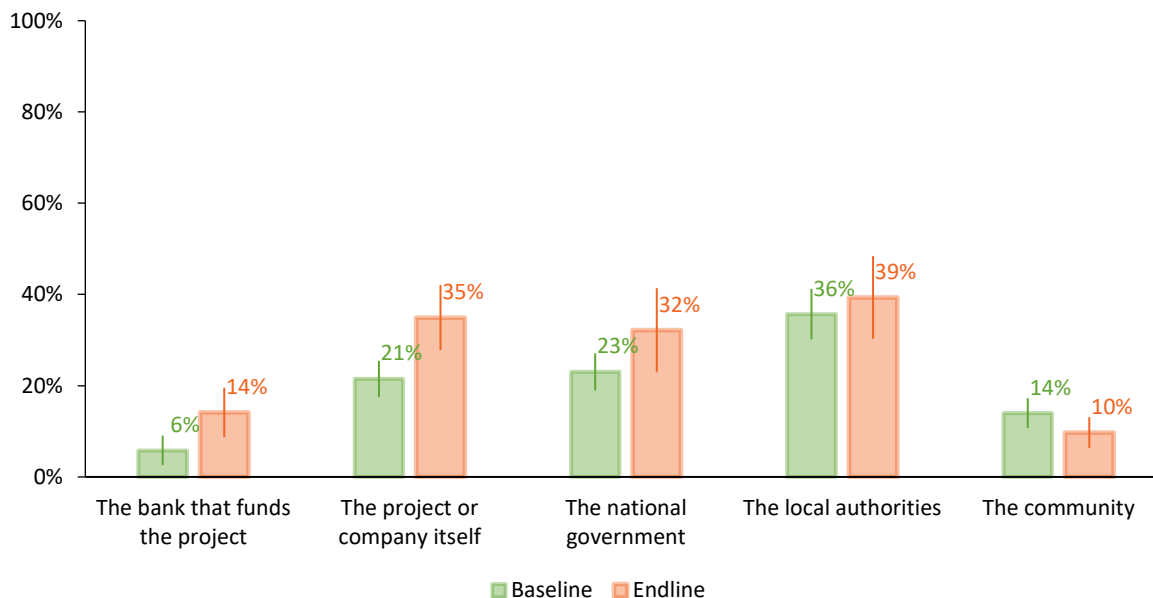
Oxfam's work on financial sector investments seeks to raise awareness regarding the role that the financial sector plays in financing initiatives that may impact the lives of people living in communities. Examples of such initiatives include the construction of dams or the appropriation of land for large-scale farming. As little research has been done into citizens' perceptions of financial sector investments, we presented a hypothetical situation of a development initiative negatively impacting people's lives. We asked the respondents to assign responsibility to different actors involved in this process, with the following question: *Now imagine a new development project, company or agricultural plantation was being developed near you, and people living in the area were being forced to move away to allow this investment. Who do you think is the most responsible for this?*

Similar proportions of project participants said the local authorities, the national government and the project or company would be the most responsible for negative impacts caused by financial investments. Although, at first sight, it might seem there were some differences between the answers for these three stakeholders (Figure 17), these differences were not significant. This suggested there was no single dominant opinion among the group of citizens.

However, the proportion of respondents who would assign responsibility to the company itself or to the bank that funds the investment showed a significant increase. This suggested that project participants became more aware of the role of the private sector. Project staff noted that the results were consistent with their expectations, as the project worked to raise awareness about the role that the financial sector plays in financing initiatives that may impact citizens' lives.

<sup>17</sup> We tested separately the correlation between each indicator and the types of citizens' action: i) to defend/support the work of social organisations and ii) on budgetary issues. We tested these correlations only with the endline survey.

**Figure 17. Citizens think the government authorities and companies would have a shared responsibility for negative impacts caused by financial investments**



#### 4.3.5 SUMMARY

The project contributed to an increase in the citizens' voice. This was reflected in an increased proportion of citizens who had spoken out to defend or support social organisations, had taken action to defend or support social organisations and had talked about budgetary issues with peers.

Citizens' actions on budgetary issues showed a significant increase among women but only in Quang Tri. However, the proportion of men who had actually taken action on budgetary issues did not change between the baseline and the endline. It is important to bear in mind that budget monitoring is a sensitive issue in Vietnam, and not many people participate in budget issues.

Moreover, less than half of the respondents thought that citizens should play an active role in deciding how the government spends taxes. Also, citizens perceived participation in budget processes at the local level to be difficult. Project participants thought that participating in budget processes was relatively neutral, contrasting with our observation that only a very small proportion of citizens had actually taken action on budgetary issues. Also, project staff stressed that participation in local budget processes was not common behaviour in the context where the project works. Despite challenges in participating in these processes, respondents believed that others would have a positive opinion about them if they would participate.

We found that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes were not correlated with the citizens' action. These types of attitudes and social norms did not change over time, but citizens' actions increased, suggesting that the attitudes and social norms did not explain the increase in citizens' actions among project participants.

Virtually all respondents (95%) thought that the provincial government took their voices into account. Project staff noted that this only reflected one government level, and the project focused its activities more at the local government. Unfortunately, we did not have data about the perceptions towards local governments at district and commune levels.

Lastly, the project contributed to raising awareness about the role of the private sector in financing initiatives that may impact citizens' lives, as the findings showed an increase in the perceived responsibility of banks in the eyes of citizens.

## 4.4 CONTRIBUTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES TO KNOWLEDGE OF BUDGETING PROCESSES AND PLANNING

This section focuses on the research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam contributed to citizens' knowledge and awareness of and participation in local and state budgeting processes?*

This section has two parts. First, we examine changes in citizens' knowledge of how to influence how the local authorities spend public money. Secondly, we explore citizens' perceptions of their level of information about local projects.

### 4.4.1 KNOWLEDGE FOR INFLUENCING LOCAL BUDGET PROCESSES

A key component of the F4D project in Vietnam is to increase citizens' involvement in budget processes. The first step in this process is that citizens must know how they can get involved in influencing how the authorities spend public money. For this reason, we asked the respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statement: *I know how to influence how the local (provincial, district and commune) authorities spend money from their budgets.*

Project participants' perceptions of their level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes saw a slight reduction (Figure 18) and was statistically significant. Also, the results suggested that project participants did not feel very confident about how to influence local budgets, as their average perception was in the middle of the scale. This was consistent with our finding that participation in budget processes at the local level is difficult.

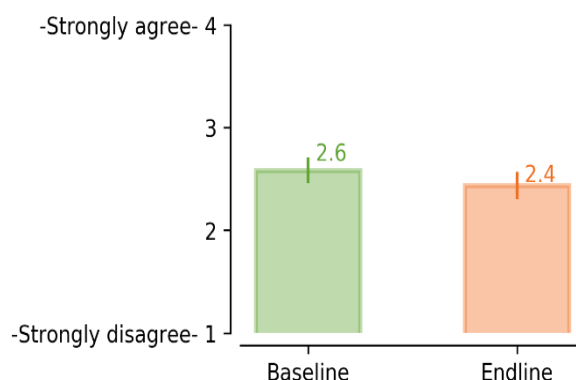
Furthermore, it is worth noting that we found differences between men and women: women participating in the project felt less confident about their level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes at the endline than at the baseline. In contrast, we did not find any significant change over time for men. This indicated that the general reduction that we see in Figure 18 was mainly due to the significant reduction among women.

Possibly, after participation in project activities, women were more aware of how difficult it is to influence local budgets. Therefore, at the endline, they rated themselves lower than at baseline. Project staff thought this was a feasible explanation for the results. Also, Vietnamese women in these communes are usually shy and humble. They would rarely say out loud that they know enough or say they feel confident in influencing local government policies.

Project staff also reflected on the question used for this indicator. They thought the question was not clear enough about the form of influence ('how to influence') or the level of government authority (provincial, district or commune authorities). For instance, participation in budget monitoring activities is an influencing activity, but project staff thought that some people might not consider it to be influencing. Moreover, the question did not classify influencing and the different levels of authority. The project activities were mainly at the commune level, but in the same question, we asked about influencing the budget expenditures of provincial and district authorities.

Finally, in section 4.6 we found that despite an average decrease among all project participants, the confidence to influence local budget processes increased among citizens who participated in more than one project activity (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training).

**Figure 18. Citizens' perceptions of their level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes showed a slight reduction. The level of knowledge is low**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1142

#### 4.4.2 KNOWLEDGE OF PLANNING AND BUDGETING FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

We asked the respondents whether they believed they are well informed of the planning and budgeting for projects implemented at the local level. Project participants rated the amount of information they received positively (Figure 19). We did not find a difference between the baseline and the endline.

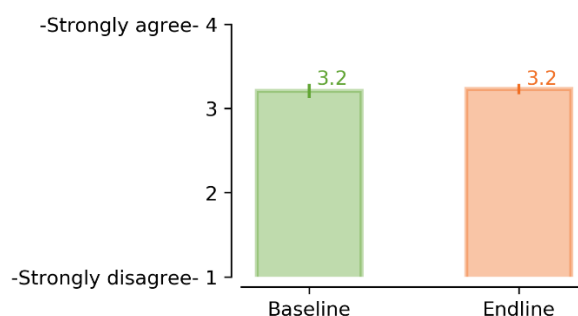
Moreover, at the endline survey, we asked respondents about their perception of how well-informed local people were in four policy areas: healthcare, infrastructure building, education and the electricity system. We found that perceptions in each area were approximately the same as those found in the general results shown in Figure 19. We did not find significant differences between these areas.

This contrasted with the results shown in Figure 18. On the one hand, project participants did not feel very confident about their own level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes. On the other hand, project participants believed that local people were well-informed about budgeting and planning. This suggested that citizens thought they had information about local projects, yet they did not feel very confident about how they could use this information to influence how local authorities spend public money.

Finally, we asked the 8% of people at the endline who had strongly disagreed or disagreed that local people were well-informed a follow-up question. We asked for the main reasons why local people were – in their opinion – not well-informed about planning and budgeting in healthcare, infrastructure building, education and the electricity system. We found that across the four areas, the two most mentioned reasons were 'this is a task for local authorities, not for citizens' and a 'lack of capacity of local people to understand and address this issue'.



**Figure 19. Citizens thought that local people are well-informed of planning and budgeting of local projects. This perception did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1144

### 4.4.3 SUMMARY

Citizens did not feel very confident about how to influence local budget processes. Their perception of their level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes showed a slight reduction. This was consistent with the results for how difficult it was to participate in local budget processes.

Women felt less confident about their level of knowledge for influencing local budget processes, but there was no significant change among men. This suggested that after participation in project activities, women were more aware of how difficult it was to influence local budgets.

Citizens had a positive perception of the general level of information that local people had about the planning and budgeting for local projects. We found similar perceptions when we looked at healthcare, infrastructure building, education and the electricity system.

Overall, our findings demonstrated that citizens thought they had information about local projects, yet they did not feel very confident about how they could use this information to influence how the authorities spend public money.

## 4.5 ACCESS, EQUALITY, COST AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND INVESTMENTS

F4D in Vietnam focuses on finance for basic services, especially health. Therefore, in this section, we try to answer the third research question: *To what extent have citizens' opinions on access, equality of access, the costs and quality of public services and local public investments changed due to project implementation?*

First, this section investigates changes in the access, equality, costs and quality of health services. Secondly, this section explores attitudes towards redistributive policies.

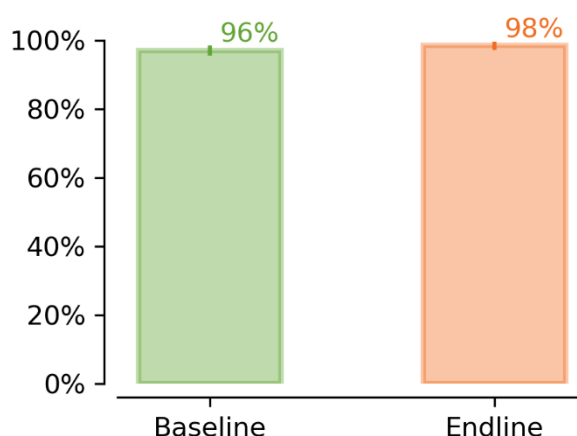
### 4.5.1 ACCESS, EQUALITY, COSTS AND QUALITY OF HEALTH SERVICES

We asked the respondents whether they had access to a health post, clinic or hospital in their district. Access to health services reported by respondents remained high over time as almost all respondents (above 95%) said they had access to health services (Figure 20). We did not find significant changes between the baseline and the endline. There were also no differences when we looked at men and women separately.

We also investigated citizens' perceptions of equal access. Project participants did not perceive big issues in terms of equal access (Figure 21). This meant that they thought that all people could access health services regardless of, for example, their ethnicity, country of origin, or income level. This perception did not show a significant change between the baseline and the endline.

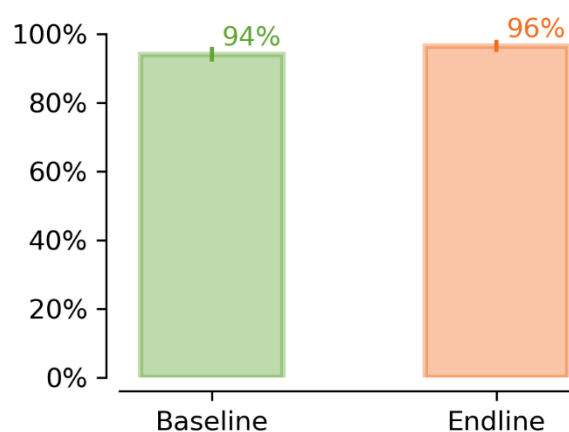
However, when we looked at changes among men and women separately, we found a significant increase only among men. Men's perception of equal access was already 91% at the baseline. This increased to 96% at the endline, which was similar to the proportion for women. We did not find a significant increase among women because, at the baseline, approximately 96% already said that all people had equal access to health services.

**Figure 20. Citizens reported high access to health services. The level of access did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1103

**Figure 21. Citizens think all people can have equal access to health services. This perception did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1082

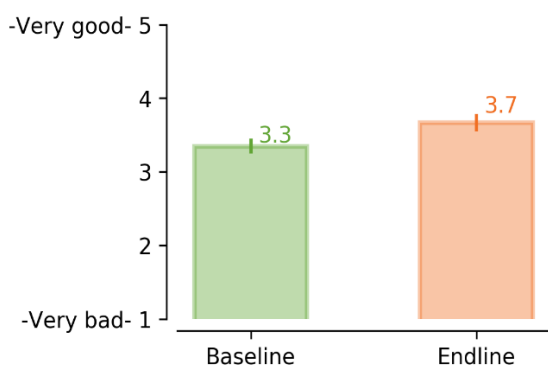
For the few respondents who said that some people did not have equal access, we asked about the main reason for this view. The most common reason was related to the costs of services. They thought that some people did not have equal access because they could not afford the costs of health services, either totally or partially. This reason was also the most common in the baseline survey. It is important

to mention that during the endline survey, some respondents said there was no access for ethnic minorities, whereas no one mentioned this reason at the baseline.

The third aspect we enquired about concerning health services was their quality (Figure 22). Project participants' opinions about the quality of health services in their district showed a slight increase. This increase was significant and was similar when we looked at men and women separately. Nonetheless, the quality of health services was still not yet rated as good.

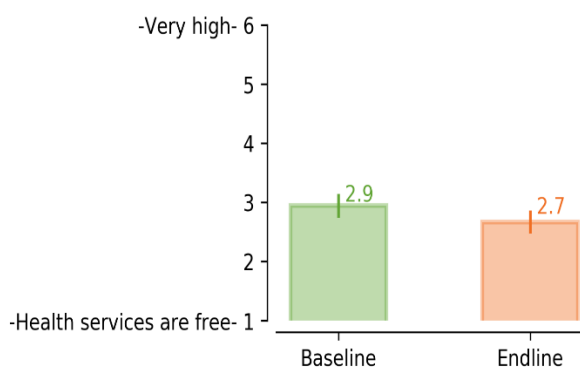
Citizens thought that the costs of health services were low, on average<sup>18</sup>. More citizens thought the costs were lower at the endline than at the baseline (Figure 23). This difference was significant. On further investigation, we found differences between men and women. Men perceived the costs of health services as lower, whereas women did not perceive a significant change between the baseline and the endline.

**Figure 22. Citizens' opinion of the quality of health services in their district increase slightly. This increase is significant**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1077

**Figure 23. Citizens thought the cost of health services was lower at the endline. The difference is significant for men, but not for women**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1024

#### 4.5.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS REDISTRIBUTIVE POLICIES

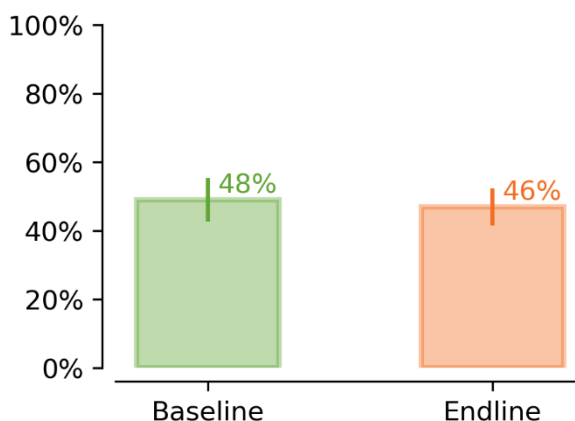
Support for redistributive policies is essential for improved access, equality of access, and the quality and affordability of public services. We measured attitudes towards redistribution with two questions, first, by asking respondents whether they would support pro-poor redistributive policies or liberal economic policies. We asked respondents to choose between two statements: *The government should focus its spending on services that benefit the poor the most, or the government should focus its spending on anything that boosts economic growth.* Secondly, we asked the respondents to choose between two statements: *People who have more should pay more tax and fees, or everyone should pay the same amount of tax and fees.*

Citizens were almost evenly divided between support for pro-poor policies and a preference for policies predominantly geared towards increasing economic growth. We see in Figure 24 that fewer than half of the respondents supported pro-poor policies, and more than half supported policies geared at boosting economic growth.

<sup>18</sup> Average costs of health services were 2.9 at the baseline and 2.7 at the endline. This was slightly below 'Cost is low' in the response scale for this survey question. The response scale was: 1 *Health services are free*, 2 *Cost is very low*, 3 *Cost is low*, 4 *Cost is neither high nor low*, 5 *Cost is high* and 6 *Cost is very high*.

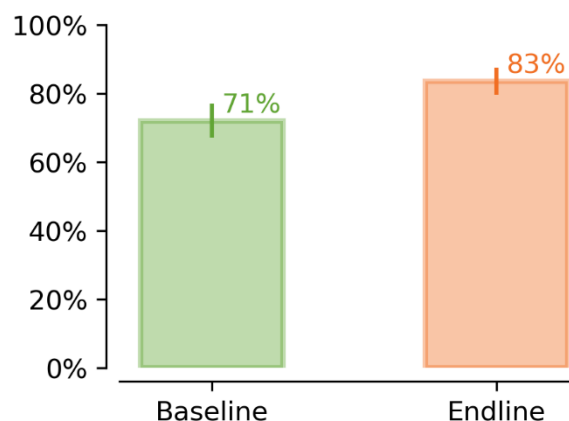
For the second survey question, at the baseline 7 out of 10 respondents supported progressive taxation, which increased to 8 out of 10 respondents at the endline (Figure 25). These results were similar for both men and women. Project staff thought that this was expected, as the project worked with citizens to gain stronger support for progressive tax policies.

**Figure 24. Citizens are almost evenly divided between support for pro-poor policies and support for liberal economic policies**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1140

**Figure 25. Citizens' support for progressive taxation showed a significant increase**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1141

### 4.5.3 SUMMARY

Health services still face challenges in relation to their quality. Citizens rated the quality of health services as less than good. Nonetheless, citizens thought that access to health services was high, with almost equal access for everybody and at low cost. In cases where people thought there was no equal access to health services, the most mentioned reason was related to the costs of services.

Citizens were almost evenly divided between support for pro-poor policies and support for liberal economic policies. However, despite this 50/50 division, the majority of people supported a progressive taxation system. The findings showed a significant increase – at the endline up to 8 out of 10 respondents supported progressive tax policies.

## 4.6 INFLUENCE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES ON SELECTED DETERMINANTS OF CITIZENS' VOICE AND ATTITUDES

In addition to outcomes directly related to the F4D project, we identified several determinants that we considered to be key enablers or barriers to changes in attitudes, norms and the citizens' voice. These determinants go beyond the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. In the case of the F4D project in Vietnam, they are characteristics that may influence the extent to which the project succeeds in increasing the citizens' voice. At the same time, these characteristics may also be indirectly influenced by the project itself.

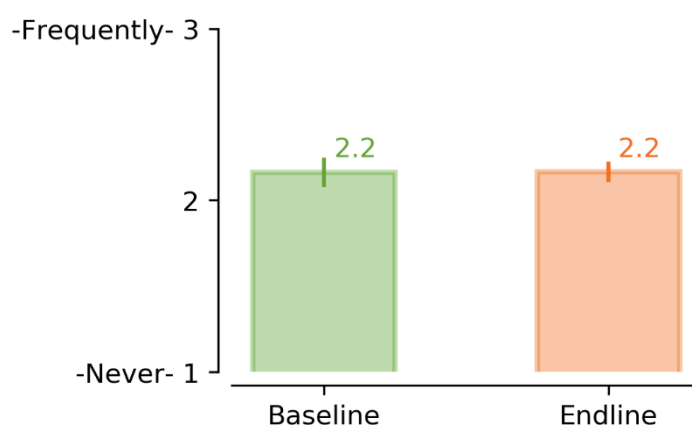
Hence, the objective of this section is to answer the research question: *To what extent have the activities implemented by the F4D project in Vietnam influenced the determinants of citizens' voice, norms and attitudes?*

### 4.6.1 DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION

First, we looked at the respondents' interest in politics. Citizens who discussed politics regularly were more likely to understand various political positions, discuss the pros and cons of different political standpoints, form opinions and attitudes, and were more likely to hold duty-bearers accountable for their actions (Klingemann, 1979). Through discussions, citizens may also be more knowledgeable of political principles, and this may affect the acceptance of democratic principles, attitudes toward specific issues, and their participation in efforts to voice their concerns towards duty-bearers (Galstone 2001). In light of this, we assumed that citizens who engaged in political discussions more often were also more likely to be sensitive to the actions our projects promote. Interest in and discussion of political affairs is an important motivating factor for citizens to be able to voice their concerns (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, 1995; Dalton, 2008).

We asked the respondents whether they discussed political matters frequently, occasionally or never, when they get together with their friends or family. Project participants did not discuss politics more often at the endline than at the baseline (Figure 26). They discussed political matters 'occasionally', and we did not find any gender differences.

**Figure 26. Citizens discussed political matters occasionally. The frequency did not show a significant change**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1169

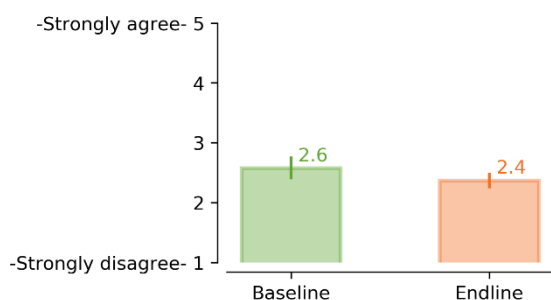
People's political efficacy is important for civic engagement. Political efficacy is a citizen's "feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954, p. 187). Political efficacy is expected to influence the

extent to which an individual may engage with the topics covered by this project since people must believe change is possible and also that they can play a role in this change. Political efficacy has both an internal and external dimension. Internal political efficacy is the belief in one's competence to understand and influence politics (Craig, Niemi & Silver, 1990). In other words, internal political efficacy deals with how a person feels about their skills, knowledge, and abilities and whether they can have an effect on the political system. External political efficacy is the belief that the government will respond to citizens' demands.

To measure internal political efficacy, we asked the question: *Do you feel that people like yourself can generally change (improve) things in your community if they want to?* We measured external political efficacy with the question: *How much do national government leaders care about people?*

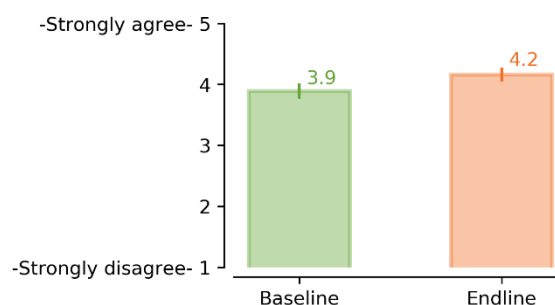
Citizens' perceptions of their influence for improving things in their communities showed a slight reduction but only among women. Also, since the baseline this perception was not high. Remarkably, we found a slight increase in external political efficacy but only for women.

**Figure 27. Internal political efficacy showed a slight reduction. This reduction was significant**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1169

**Figure 28. External political efficacy showed a small increase. This increase was significant**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1156

#### 4.6.2 DETERMINANTS REFLECTING ON CSOs

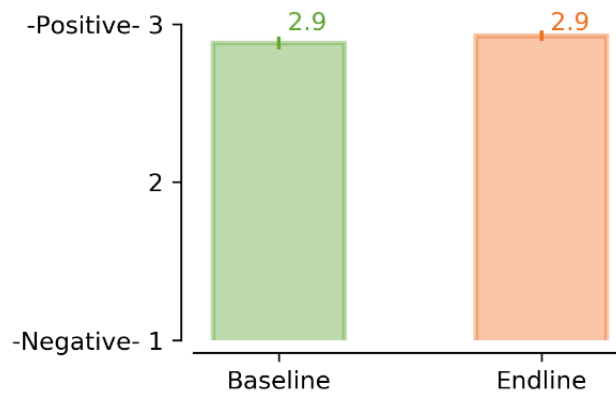
CSOs are at the heart of the Strategic Partnership programme and carry out the majority of the work on citizens' attitudes, norms and voice. In this evaluation, we only asked respondents about their normative expectations regarding social organisations. No questions about empirical expectations were asked.

To measure normative expectations, we asked respondents the following question: *What would other people in your community think if you were actively involved in the work of social organisations?* For this measurement, respondents with a positive perception were those who said: *They would think it is a good thing*. Neutral perceptions were the responses: *They wouldn't care; they wouldn't know what to think about it*. Negative responses were the answers: *They would think it is a bad thing*.

Normative expectations towards CSO were very positive (Figure 29). According to the respondents, other community members would have a positive opinion if they knew that respondents participated in the work of social organisations. Normative expectations towards CSOs were similar for men and women<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> We found a significant change in normative expectations towards CSOs between the baseline and the endline. This change was driven by a significant change among men, as there was no significant change among women. However, this change was too small to be seen in the graph. Furthermore, men and women had a similar score for this indicator at the endline. As normative expectations were and remained very positive, we did not mention this change in the main text.

**Figure 29. Normative expectations towards CSOs are very positive**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1114

#### 4.6.3 DETERMINANTS RELATED TO GENDER JUSTICE

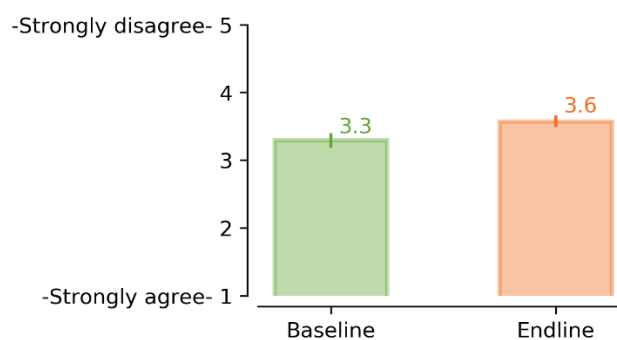
Fostering gender justice is at the heart of our programming. Women are often at a disadvantage, compared with men, in the different aspects of empowerment. Therefore, the F4D project in Vietnam worked with women's unions, and women formed most of the core group in Quang Tri. Also, the project delivered training on gender-responsive budgeting tools.

We measured attitudes on gender equality to provide a general picture of attitudes towards male privilege. Such attitudes, when held by women themselves, or by others in society, may influence the willingness of and possibilities for women to raise their voices. Respondents were asked about their attitude to gender equality in three domains: education, work and political leadership:

- i. *A good education is more important for a boy than for a girl.*
- ii. *When women work outside the home, the whole family suffers.*
- iii. *On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.*

The project contributed to increased positive attitudes towards women's empowerment (Figure 30). Note that in Figure 30, lower values represent more acceptance of male privilege. This increase was also significant for men and women when considered separately. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that on average, citizens' attitudes were still in the neutral range of the scale.

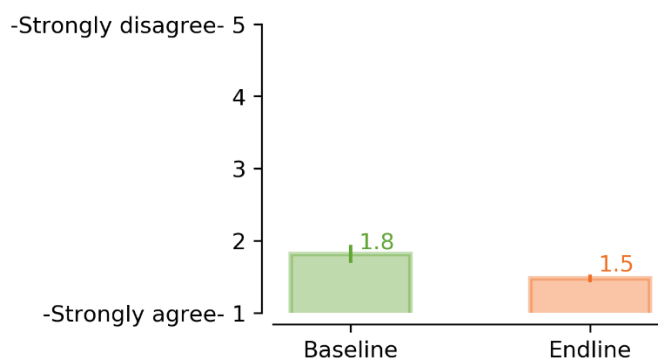
**Figure 30. Citizens' attitudes towards women's empowerment are more positive**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1173

Lastly, we looked at experiences of discrimination. We asked the respondents the question: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “Generally, I feel like a full and equal citizen in this country with all the rights and protections that other people have.”* Lower values for the scale in Figure 31 means that citizens felt more equal in terms of rights and protections. Citizens perceived there to be less inequality in terms of rights and protections at the endline than at the baseline. This change was also significant when we considered men and women separately. Project staff expected an improvement in this perception because the project worked on participation rights.

**Figure 31. Citizens feel more equal in terms of rights and protections**



Source: SP VN F4D surveys, n=1166

#### 4.6.4 SUMMARY

Political interest remained unchanged between the baseline and the endline. Citizens discussed political matters 'occasionally', and we did not find any differences between men and women. Citizens' perceptions of their influence to improve things (internal political efficacy) and external political efficacy changed between the baseline and the endline but only for women. On the one hand, women felt less able to improve things in their communities themselves but felt that government cares for the people. On the other hand, external political efficacy increased. For both types of political efficacy, the significant changes were driven by significant change among women and not among men.

Normative expectations towards CSOs were very positive and similar for men and women. Attitudes towards women's empowerment became increasingly positive among both men and women. The project contributed to this change. Nonetheless, citizens' attitudes could still be improved. Additionally, citizens perceived less inequality regarding rights and protections at the endline than at the baseline. Project staff expected positive changes on gender equality attitudes and rights equality, as the project worked on these areas.



## 4.7 EXPOSURE TO A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND BETTER RESULTS

In this section, we will explore to what extent exposure to a combination of different project activities brought better results in key outcomes. The project staff validated a proposal for clustering activities during the pre-analysis stage. There were five types of activity i) no activities, ii) training, iii) communication activities, iv) monitoring activities and v) advocacy meetings. The group ‘no activities’ was formed by respondents who did not self-report their participation in any of the activities of the project. This could have been because they did not participate or because they responded that they did not know about any of the activities. The group ‘training’ included participation in training on state budget management and monitoring skills. The group ‘communication activities’ included participation in community meetings and community dialogues. The group ‘monitoring activities’ included participation in monitoring initiatives on the construction of rural roads and canals. The group ‘advocacy meetings’ included participation in meetings on policies to support poor households and ethnic minorities, and participation in meetings between voters and delegates of the provincial, district or commune People’s Council.

We investigated whether the project had contributed to the significant differences in the key outcomes for those who did not self-report participation in any of the groups of activities, those who attended communication and advocacy activities, those who participated in monitoring activities in addition to communication and advocacy activities, and those who attended training in addition to monitoring, communication and advocacy activities. The combinations of groups of activities that were explored are shown in Figure 32.

Figure 32. Clusters of activities explored

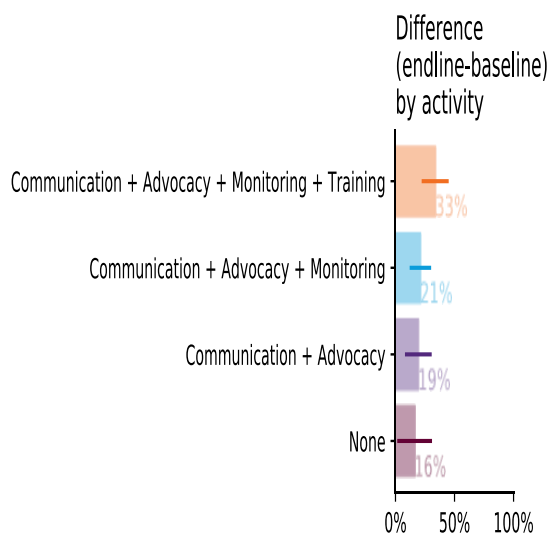


The key outcome areas that we explored were citizens’ voice, attitudes towards public accountability and knowledge of influencing local budget processes. In the area of citizens’ voice, we measured the contribution of the project with two indicators: the proportion of respondents who took action to defend or support social organisations and the proportion of respondents who took action on budgetary issues.

Citizens’ actions to support social organizations increased between the baseline and the endline in all four groups of respondents (Figure 33). Two main results are highlighted here. First, there was a significant increase among the group of respondents who did not self-report participation in project activities. Some people might not have been participating in the project, but they took action to support social organisations anyway. However, as we did not have a comparison group, we cannot determine to what extent the project had some indirect effect on the non-participants or if this positive result was due to external factors. Secondly, we found that this type of citizens’ action increased more if people participated in additional project activities. Thus, the increase was larger among people participating in communication, advocacy, monitoring and training.

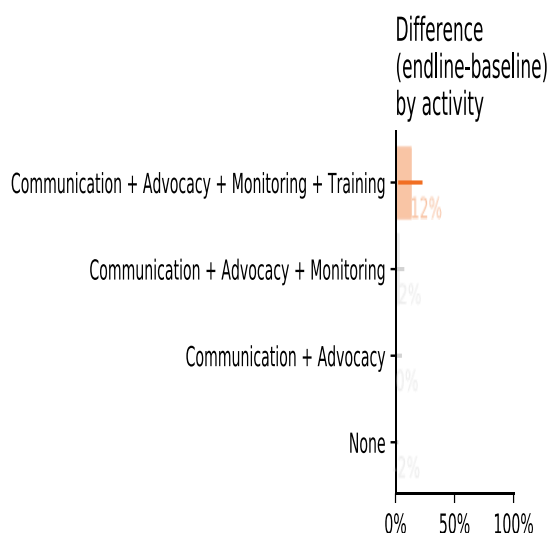
Citizens' actions on budgetary issues showed a significant increase but only among respondents who attended all the types of activities: communication, advocacy, monitoring and training (Figure 34). This suggested that an increase in citizens' actions on budgetary issues is possible with peoples' engagement in a larger set of activities. As we mentioned in section 4.3.1.2, this is a sensitive issue in Vietnam, and not many people participate in it. Nonetheless, the significant increase among citizens who participated in this group of activities could have been expected. They could be pioneers or activists who were highly motivated to take action, so they were also engaged in a broader set of project activities.

**Figure 33. Change between the baseline and the endline for citizens' actions to support social organization by activity**



Source: SP VNM R2F surveys,  
Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals  
Differences that are not statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  greyed out

**Figure 34. Change between the baseline and the endline on citizens' action on budgetary issues by activity**



Source: SP VNM R2F surveys,  
Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals  
Differences that are not statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  greyed out

We measured attitudes towards public accountability by the proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement: *Money that the government gets from taxes belongs to the citizens – the citizens should*

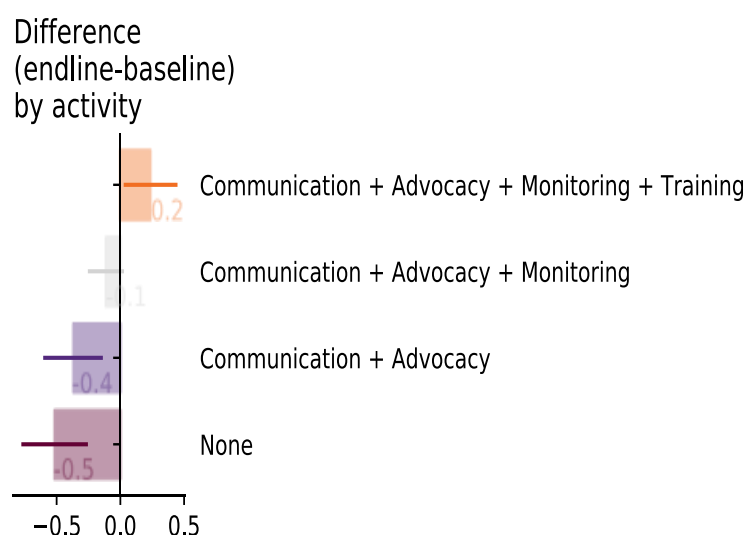
*play an active role in deciding how it is spent.* For this outcome area, we did not find any significant changes between the baseline and the endline across the clusters of activities. Overall, less than half of the respondents agreed with the statement. This suggested that participation in more activities did not contribute to a change in attitudes.

We measured citizens' knowledge for influencing local budget processes by asking respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statement: *I know how to influence how the local (provincial, district and commune) authorities spend money from their budgets.* For this outcome indicator, we found changes in opposite directions (Figure 35). Confidence to influence local budget processes decreased among citizens who did not participate in any project activity and among those who only participated in communication and advocacy activities. Project staff thought a possible reason for this finding was that after participating in communication and advocacy activities, people understood more about the budget processes and realized that it would be difficult for them to have any influence.

Conversely, citizens who participated in the broader cluster of project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training) felt more confident of their knowledge of how to influence local budgeting. Once again, this result was expected. This group of citizens participated in training and monitoring activities, and, therefore, they gained a better understanding of the complexity of local budgeting, and this increased their perception of their knowledge of how to influence local authorities regarding budgets and public spending.

Project staff mentioned some examples of how participation in monitoring and training contributed to better results. For instance, some community groups enhanced their budget monitoring knowledge and skills through training. Also, project staff pointed out that the initiative to monitor local construction sites (roads, canals, communal houses) was very meaningful because people gained a better understanding of how to monitor those constructions and they felt more confident in doing it. Furthermore, some citizens participated directly in local budget allocations, management and expenditure. Also, some citizens proactively oversaw construction sites financed by the state budget at the local level, even without support from the project.

**Figure 35. Change between the baseline and the endline on knowledge for influencing local budget processes by activity**



Source: SP VNM R2F surveys,  
 Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals  
 Differences that are not statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  greyed out

# 5 CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the main conclusions of the evaluation report of the F4D project in Vietnam. The conclusions are presented in three parts. The first part of this chapter presents the main conclusions of the research questions and is divided into five parts: i) citizens' voice, norms and attitudes, ii) knowledge of budgeting processes and planning, iii) access, equality, costs and quality of public services and investments, iv) determinants of citizens' voice, and v) differences in outcomes between treatment groups. The second part of this chapter presents the limitations, and the third part presents the main conclusion of the evaluation.

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS FOR EACH RESEARCH QUESTION

### 5.1.1 CITIZENS' VOICE, NORMS AND ATTITUDES

The project contributed to an increased citizens' voice to defend or support social organisations. Citizens' action on budgetary issues only increased among women in Quang Tri, which is a remarkable contribution of the project. The targeting strategy could have influenced this positive result, as the project targeted more women in this province (60% of participants in Quang Tri were women). Also, project staff expected that only a few pioneers or activists would take action on budgetary issues, as this is a sensitive topic in Vietnam. Hence, the results were consistent with our expectations. We also saw that citizens thought that participation in budget processes at a local level was still difficult, and only some community members participated in these processes. Despite these challenges, citizens believed that others would have a positive opinion about them if they would participate.

We found that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not change significantly over time, yet the project contributed to an increased citizens' voice. Also, we found that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes were not correlated with the citizens' voice. This suggested that these types of attitudes and social norms did not explain the increase in the citizens' voice among project participants.

Lastly, some citizens thought that the local authorities would be the most responsible for the negative impacts caused by financial investments. In contrast, others pointed towards the national government and some towards companies. Therefore, there was not one popular opinion about which actor would be the most responsible. Nonetheless, the project contributed to raising awareness about the role that the private sector plays.

### 5.1.2 KNOWLEDGE OF BUDGETING PROCESSES AND PLANNING

Citizens still did not feel very confident about how to influence local budgets. In particular, we found that women felt less confident about how to influence local budget processes than at the start of the project. Project staff thought that after participation in project activities, women were more aware of how difficult it is to influence local budgets. Project staff mentioned that the cultural context in Vietnam also plays a role.

Citizens thought that the general level of information that local people had about planning and budgeting of local projects was good. This perception was similar when we looked at the specific areas of healthcare, infrastructure building, education and the electricity system.

It seems that citizens thought that they had information about local projects, yet they did not feel very confident about how they could use this information to influence how the authorities spend public money.

### **5.1.3 ACCESS, EQUALITY, COSTS AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND INVESTMENTS**

Citizens' opinions of the quality of health services were still rated as below good. Access, equality and the costs of health services were also well rated. Findings suggested that citizens would support redistributive policies for improving public services. Citizens showed strong support for progressive tax policies, and this support increased between the baseline and endline.

### **5.1.4 DETERMINANTS OF CITIZENS' VOICE**

The project contributed to more equal attitudes towards women's empowerment, among both men and women. Nonetheless, citizens' support for gender equality was still not very strong. Also, the project contributed to improved perceptions of equal rights among citizens. Project staff expected positive results for these indicators, as the project had worked on these areas.

Citizens discussed political matters 'occasionally', and political interest did not change over time. Nonetheless, project staff did not expect large changes in this determinant. Internal political efficacy decreased, whereas external political efficacy increased. These average changes in political efficacy were solely due to significant changes for women, as political efficacy was stable for men. Hence, women felt less confident about their own abilities to influence changes in their communities, but they did feel that the national government had become more responsive to the citizens' needs. However, it is difficult to derive strong conclusions from these changes, as they were small. Finally, normative expectations towards CSOs were very positive.

### **5.1.5 EXPOSURE TO A COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND BETTER RESULTS**

Exposure to more than one of the project's activities brought better results. Participation in more types of activities led to positive changes in more outcome indicators and with larger magnitudes. Citizens' actions to support social organization increased more as people participated in additional project activities. Thus, the increase was larger among people participating in communication, advocacy, monitoring and training. Citizens' actions on budgetary issues showed a significant increase only among respondents who attended all the types of activities: communication, advocacy, monitoring and training. Also, citizens who participated in more than one of the project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training) felt more confident about their knowledge to influence local budgeting. This contrasted with the significant reduction in the confidence to influence local budgeting for citizens who participated only in communication and advocacy activities. Nonetheless, attitudes towards public accountability did not change, regardless of the clustering of project participation.

## **5.2 LIMITATIONS**

- The evaluation looked at the outcome of raising the citizens' voice only and hence did not show the impact of the full project in all the outcome areas.
- The findings of this evaluation were only based on the quantitative survey. This limited the possibility of investigating more deeply explanations for the key findings and how the changes happened. Therefore, this evaluation is unable to capture qualitative changes. The findings need to be read together with findings from qualitative research, such as outcome harvesting and stories of change.
- The evaluation only looked at the contribution of the project for the participants or respondents who self-reported participation in project activities. This approach limited the possibility of assessing the influence of external factors on the outcomes.

## 5.3 CONCLUSION

The project contributed to an increased citizens' voice to defend or support social organisations. Citizens' actions on budgetary issues only increased among women in Quang Tri. This was consistent with citizens' perceptions of the ease of participation in budget processes at the local level, as they perceived this to be difficult. Overall, their confidence about how to influence local budgets was modest. Citizens thought that they had information about local projects, yet they did not feel very confident about how they could use this information to influence how authorities spend public money. However, citizens who participated in more than one of the project activities (communication, advocacy, monitoring and training) felt more confident about how to influence local budgets. Interestingly, findings suggested that attitudes and social norms towards participation in local budget processes did not explain the increase in the citizens' voice. Nonetheless, budget monitoring is a sensitive issue in Vietnam. Hence, project staff expected to identify only a few pioneers or activists who would mobilise other community members to take action on budgetary issues.

# 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- A gendered targeting strategy seemed to be effective. In Quang Tri, 60% of project participants were women, and we found a significant increase in the proportion of women who had taken action on budgetary issues. Future programmes should consider a gendered targeting strategy if it intends to achieve better results among women.
- Future projects with similar characteristics should include interventions at all the appropriate government levels. Authorities make some decisions on local budget spending at district and provincial levels. Hence, authorities at the commune level also face challenges in making decisions on local budgets. If commune-level authorities already face difficulties, it is even more difficult for citizens to influence local budget expenditures. The project interventions were adjusted to also focus on district and provincial authority levels instead of just the commune level. In the future, this could be done from the start of the project.
- For future budget monitoring efforts, it would be useful to target citizens who have already been active in voicing concerns on other matters. Findings showed that citizens who engaged in a combination of communication, advocacy, training and monitoring activities had taken more action, and felt more confident about how to influence local budgets.
- Project staff mentioned that integrating the supervision of community groups with the local community supervision board / Fatherland Front at the local level helped people to participate in monitoring activities. Community groups alone might not be enough to promote citizens' participation in budget monitoring because some citizens still consider this to be a sensitive topic.
- Project staff mentioned that it would be interesting to explore public hearing models. This would require advocacy activities to promote the establishment of official mechanisms where citizens could contribute ideas and opinions for the process of budget planning directly. Project staff think this could help the community groups to optimize the results of capacity building activities on the state budget.

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# ANNEX 1. STATISTICAL ANNEX

We implemented propensity score matching using a normal (Gaussian) kernel estimator, where each person in the baseline group was given a weighting based on the characteristics used in the matching model. This weighting was a kernel-weighted average, where the weighting was expressed as the proportion of closeness between the subject in the baseline survey and the endline survey. Subsequently, when calculating the average values for the outcome indicator for people in the baseline survey, each person was given a weight, so that closer and better matches (more comparable people) had a greater influence on this average than worse matches.

The matching model for this evaluation included the following covariates: respondents' occupation, literacy of the household head, education of the household head, occupation of the household head, district, and an index of the economic profile of the household. With the matching model, we calculated the propensity scores in order to select or match people in the baseline survey so that their distribution of covariates was similar to the distribution of covariates for people in the endline survey.

The model we used ensured that the respondents from the baseline and the endline had comparable socio-economic and demographic characteristics on a wide range of covariates. In addition to the set of covariates that we used in the model, the respondents were also balanced according to the following characteristics: respondents' gender, literacy, level of education, marital status, position in the household (household head or not), and household dependency ratio. In other words, we chose to use the most parsimonious model with the lowest number of covariates that ensured a balance between all the characteristics that we considered relevant. The extent to which these groups are balanced before and after matching for the relevant characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Balance table before and after matching

	Before PSM		t-test	After PSM		t-test
	Base-line	End-line	Difference	Base-line	End-line	Difference
	Mean	Mean	(1)-(2)	Mean	Mean	(1)-(2)
<b>Socio-demographic characteristics</b>						
<b>Age</b>	48.124	50.213	-2.089**	47.598	50.213	-2.615**
<b>% of female respondents</b>	0.552	0.554	-0.002	0.543	0.554	-0.012
<b>% of respondents who can read and write</b>	0.940	0.943	-0.003	0.959	0.943	0.016
<b>% of respondents who have not completed education</b>	0.037	0.068	-0.032*	0.043	0.068	-0.025
<b>% of respondents who have completed primary education</b>	0.224	0.265	-0.041	0.234	0.265	-0.030
<b>% of respondents who have completed secondary education</b>	0.484	0.480	0.004	0.503	0.480	0.023
<b>% of respondents who have completed high school education</b>	0.217	0.154	0.063** *	0.180	0.154	0.026
<b>% of respondents who have completed tertiary, university or postgraduate education</b>	0.038	0.033	0.005	0.040	0.033	0.006
<b>% of respondents who work in work in agriculture, hunting, forestry or fishing</b>	0.757	0.778	-0.020	0.776	0.778	-0.001
<b>% of respondents who work in non-farming activities or have their own business</b>	0.144	0.151	-0.006	0.158	0.151	0.007
<b>% of respondents who are retired, beyond working age or too disabled to work</b>	0.003	0.009	-0.006	0.008	0.009	-0.001
<b>% of respondents who are unemployed</b>	0.095	0.063	0.033*	0.058	0.063	-0.005
<b>% of respondents who are single</b>	0.030	0.020	0.010	0.035	0.020	0.015
<b>% of respondents who are married or are in an unmarried couple</b>	0.848	0.827	0.021	0.844	0.827	0.017
<b>% of respondents who are divorced, separated or widow(er)</b>	0.122	0.153	-0.031	0.121	0.153	-0.032
<b>% of respondents who are head of household</b>	0.565	0.542	0.023	0.569	0.542	0.027
<b>% of respondents in households where the head of household can read and write</b>	0.937	0.950	-0.014	0.957	0.950	0.006
<b>% of respondents in households where the head of household has not completed education</b>	0.037	0.068	-0.032*	0.054	0.068	-0.014
<b>% of respondents in households where the head of household has completed primary education</b>	0.222	0.248	-0.026	0.246	0.248	-0.002
<b>% of respondents in households where the head of household has completed secondary education</b>	0.483	0.471	0.012	0.500	0.471	0.029
<b>% of respondents in households where the head of household has completed high school education</b>	0.221	0.171	0.050**	0.157	0.171	-0.014

% of respondents in households where the head of household has completed tertiary, university or postgraduate education	0.038	0.042	-0.004	0.043	0.042	0.001
% of respondents in households where the head of household work in work in agriculture, hunting, forestry or fishing	0.722	0.739	-0.017	0.744	0.739	0.005
% of respondents in households where the head of household work in non-farming activities or have their own business	0.168	0.169	-0.001	0.170	0.169	0.001
% of respondents in households where the head of household is retired, beyond working age or too disabled to work	0.013	0.006	0.007*	0.004	0.006	-0.001
% of respondents in households where the head of household is unemployed	0.097	0.086	0.010	0.081	0.086	-0.005
Household dependency ratio	0.530	0.528	0.001	0.498	0.528	-0.031
Lương Sơn	0.254	0.138	0.116	0.137	0.138	-0.001
Mai Châu	0.254	0.397	-0.143	0.405	0.397	0.008
Hải Lăng	0.254	0.246	0.008	0.244	0.246	-0.002
Gio Linh	0.238	0.219	0.019	0.213	0.219	-0.005
Progress Out of Poverty Index	3.120	1.759	1.361**	1.709	1.759	-0.050

Note: \*\*\* differences that are statistically significant with a confidence interval of 1% (alpha < 0.01), \*\* differences that are statistically significant with a confidence interval of 5% (alpha < 0.05)

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This report has been produced by the Impact Measurement and Knowledge team, with Francisco Bolaños as the main author and lead of this study. Data analysis was carried out by Francisco Bolaños, in consultation with Rik Linssen.

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The picture on the front page shows a group of women of Kim Boi farmer group. The picture was taken at Hoa Binh Farmer Union.

Published by Oxfam Novib in September 2020.

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