

# Paper Tiger, Roaring Dragon.



**“No desire  
without  
restraint”**

**– Master Li Mu Bai**

# Preface.

## **Paper Tiger, Roaring Dragon**

In the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), by director Ang Lee, a young Chinese warrior steals a sword from a famed swordsman and then escapes into a world of romantic adventure with a mysterious man in the frontier of the nation.

At a certain moment in the film, the young warrior comes to Master Li Mu Bai in desperation because of the constraints surrounding her. Master Li Mu Bai answers: “No growth without assistance. No action without reaction. No desire without restraint. Now give yourself up and find yourself again.”

Civil Society needs to reinvent itself each time when faced with new challenges. New attitudes of governments and businesses can certainly be genuine - but can also be lip-service to voters and consumers. And often, no initiative is taken without some political pressure. Wisdom comes with knowing yourself, as Aristotle famously stated, and each new challenge requires a new approach, sometimes fierce and outspoken, sometimes diplomatic and in negotiations.

In 2015, OxfamNovib – and its global Oxfam Family working with numerous CSOs worldwide – and SOMO, an independent, critical, not-for-profit knowledge centre on multinationals, have joined forces in a programme called ‘Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network’.

The evaluation of this Strategic Partnership demonstrates that many of the CSOs that were part of this programme have worked in the spirit of Master Li. They have successfully learned, adapted where needed, and successfully employed various strategies and tactics that can be summarised as ‘Paper Tiger, Roaring Dragon’.

This title also reflects the intentions of the Dutch government paper ‘Dialogue and Dissent’, which has financially supported this partnership. The policy encourages its grantees to enter in dialogue when feasible, and to stand up when needed.

As a team, we have evaluated the three sub-themes of the programme, Right to Food, Finance for Development and Conflict and Fragility over a period of more than one year, from December 2019 until February 2021. The evaluation was supposed to be ready by September 2020, but its completion was severely delayed by the global Covid pandemic. In addition, one of our team members, Kim Caarls, suddenly had to lay down her work as she became ill (not Covid, by the way).

The evaluation consists of an assessment of in-country programmes per theme, an assessment of global initiatives per theme, and an assessment of the cross-cutting theme ‘capacity development for influencing’. The evaluation team was assisted by

local consultants in Uganda, Myanmar and Cambodia.

We certainly hope that the evaluation provides food for thought and is an interesting learning experience for those involved. As a team we thank the people at OxfamNovib and SOMO for their support and commitment. Despite the obstacles mentioned, we have very much enjoyed this process and we also learned a lot ourselves. We wish everyone a fruitful continuation of this relevant work.

Haarlem/Rotterdam, February 2021,

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## PART I - BACKGROUND

Note that this document has been modified for external publication. After a thorough review, some content has been either edited or redacted in accordance with Oxfam's Open Information Policy. Oxfam is committed to transparency, therefore only text that compromises one of the nine principles in the policy has been removed or redacted.

Content that has been removed is marked as “[This text has been redacted in line with Oxfam's Open Information Policy].”

The policy can be viewed here:

<https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/IATI%20Open%20Data/Open%20Information%20Policy.pdf>

## PART I - BACKGROUND

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## Part I Background

### 1. Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the staff of Oxfam Novib and of SOMO, for their support and prompt responses to our requests. We specifically thank Caroline van Koot - Hodges and Anne Oudes, who were our immediate focal points and who have done a great job in providing information and coordinating all communication between our team and the two lead agents of the programme. Also the other members of the internal evaluation task force have provided us with a wealth of information, including well-written internal contribution stories, and they were always ready to answer our questions; thank you Lauren Burrows, Irene de Goede, Stine Chen and Karen Biesbrouck. Also thanks to all the other staff members at Oxfam Novib and SOMO who provided help and feedback. Special thanks to Erik Boonstoppel and the members of the External Reference Group.

We are highly indebted to our 'local consultants', Yon Sineat in Cambodia, Moses Muwanga in Uganda (Kampala), Ugenmungu Dan Evans in Uganda (Nebbi) and Khin Nyein San in Myanmar. They have done an excellent job in carrying out field studies in their countries, despite all the constraints with regard to free travel. We would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the Oxfam offices and their partners in Uganda, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Myanmar and Nigeria. And – last but certainly not least – we are very much obliged to all the people we have spoken to from governments, CSOs, private companies, multilateral organisations and in communities. Thank you for your time, your wisdom and your commitment!

### 2. Glossary

Some of the terms used in this evaluation report are:

- > Strategic Partnership (SP), the Programme: the programme under evaluation.
- > Partners: the national civil society organisations that are directly supported by the SP.
- > Oxfam Country offices: the national Oxfam organisations.
- > Stakeholders: the individuals, groups and organisations that have an interest in the issues that the programme deals with.
- > Alliance: a union or association between independent organisations (mainly CSOs) to reach a shared goal or interest.
- > Changes/outcomes: the observable change in agenda, behaviour, policy or practice in another social actor that contributes to one or more of the project's objectives to which the project has directly or

indirectly contributed. Changes/outcomes can be positive or negative, expected or unexpected.

- > Civil society's influencing capacity: includes the capacity of the different elements of civil society, including citizens, civil society organisations, other organisations and institutions that are independent of the government and companies, to get their voice and opinions heard and taken into account by duty bearers. A specific part of influencing capacity is the (thematic) knowledge CSO staff members have on the issues they are advocating for.
- > Behaviour of governments and companies: the policies and practices of government bodies and private sector actors, taking into account not only their written policies but also the implementation of these policies.
- > Social and economic justice: policy and practice changes that promote fairness and justice in the social and economic spheres, taking into account the needs and voices of people, including those living in poverty, ensuring they get a fair share of power and resources.
- > Relevance<sup>1</sup> (*is the intervention doing the right things?*): the extent to which the effects of interventions make a sustainable contribution to achieving the ultimate objective (the impact).
- > Effectiveness (*to what extent is the intervention achieving its objectives?*): the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.
- > Impact (*what difference does the intervention make?*): the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.
- > Coherence (*how well does the intervention fit?*): the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.
- > Sustainability (*will the benefit last?*): the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue after the programme ends. Elements affecting sustainability include: Are the stakeholders involved in the outcome (ownership)? Are stakeholders capacitated to guard and even further develop the outcome? Are the outcomes secured into local systems/institutions/policies? Can the outcome easily be undone?
- > Systemic change: affects how the whole system functions, its structure and its inter-relationships. For systemic change to occur, root causes of the current – problematic – system need to be addressed.

### 3. Evaluation Summary

#### Introduction and background

<sup>1</sup> The evaluation team follows the evaluation criteria and definitions as developed by the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation and the IOB, see: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelo>

[mentassistance.htm](http://mentassistance.htm) and <https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/publications/regulations/2009/10/01/evaluation-policy-and-guidelines>

## PART I - BACKGROUND

In 2016, Oxfam Novib and SOMO jointly entered a Strategic Partnership for five years with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its Dialogue and Dissent policy framework (D&D). This Strategic Partnership 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' covers three themes, each with its own Theory of Change:

- > Right to Food (R2F), with long-term outcome: "Small-scale food producers and agricultural workers, particularly women and their communities, to benefit from local, national and global public and private sector policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience."
- > Finance for Development (F4D), with long-term outcome: "More women, youth and other citizens benefit from higher quality and quantity of finance for development, an enhanced fiscal system and a sustainable and inclusive financial and corporate sector, tackling extreme inequality."
- > Conflict and Fragility (C&F), with long-term outcome: "Marginalised groups have a say in policies that affect their lives; governments and international institutions support inclusion of women and promote protection of marginalised groups in security and peace building; and the private sector contributes to peace and development."

The programme is implemented through 24 country projects, 8 regional projects and 7 global projects in a total of 17 countries.

In 2019, Oxfam Novib and SOMO started an elaborate and unique, phased evaluation process that consisted of an overall internal contribution assessment of all its outcomes, followed by an external evaluation and validation process by a team of external consultants, who were engaged from the onset in selection and decision-making.

The evaluation set out to answer the following evaluation question:

*"To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society's influencing capacity and changes in the policies and practices of governments and companies in favour of social and economic justice? How did these changes take place?"*

The external evaluation team used different methods to answer this question and its eleven sub-questions ('the evaluation questions', see also table 1.). The external evaluation verified the outcomes (largely based on a critical assessment of the 'contribution narratives' developed by the internal evaluation team). In addition, it verified the programme's claimed contribution to that outcome and investigated alternative explanations of how the outcome came about. This way, the external evaluation team finished the contribution analysis that the internal evaluation team started. Next to this, the external evaluators assessed the sustainability of the changes and analysed to what extent the outcomes have had an impact on social and economic justice.

The evaluation is also unique in a sense that it has focused on a narrative approach, developing stories and highlighting individual perceptions to illustrate and underline the evaluation findings and to enable more effective learning. Another innovative element was to challenge and to critically assess the credibility of the

contribution stories that were produced and to develop and to test alternative contribution hypotheses. A third specific method that was applied is the 'Collective System Analysis', a method to assess obstacles and opportunities to move from the current to the desired system.

The external team has reviewed the overall achievements of the programme and the overall basic narratives (i.e. the database with harvested outcomes) produced by the internal evaluation team. However, for in-depth research purposes, a selection needed to be made.

In the first phase of the sampling, a total of three sub-themes – one from each theme – were selected (out of eleven). In the second phase, 9 projects from these three sub-themes (out of 39 projects) were selected.

In a third phase of sampling, a selection was made of two to three sets of outcomes per sampled project. In total 22 sets were selected for further substantiation and exploration, partly global and partly in country. These 22 cases are described in detail in this report.

The research also looked into a cross-cutting narrative (i.e. changes in civil society influencing capacity), which followed the same sampled projects.

### Right to Food (R2F)

Selected sub-theme: 'Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers'.

Projects: Uganda, Myanmar & Global (total selected 8 sets of outcomes).

The R2F programme was implemented in eight countries, three regions and at global level by 8 international, 7 regional, 121 national, 45 sub-national and 29 local partners. The external evaluation built upon the efforts and resulting data from the internal evaluation processes. The external evaluation team selected from the internal contribution stories 8 sets of outcomes, based on a number of criteria. The criteria included the level and quality of the outcomes, representation of the different pathways and themes, and the time and money invested by the programme.

### Uganda

- > *National Seeds Policy.* The evaluation concludes that R2F partners and especially FRA have played a substantial role in reigniting the policy and more importantly in changing the content of the policy. They have chosen a strategy that is based on a solid understanding of the draft policy and its implications (capacity development) and alliance building.
- > *Rejection of the GMO Bill.* The evaluation concludes that the contribution of the R2F programme to the outcome is strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. There is good evidence of outcomes, outputs (Position paper, etc.), and some on contribution (arguments in the position paper were used by the Ugandan president). The R2F partners used different strategies to make the outcome happen.



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- > *Rejection of the proposed amendments to 'Article 26'* (a plan of the government of Uganda to make it easy to dispossess farmers from their land). The evaluation concludes that R2F's contribution to the outcome is considered strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. There is sufficient evidence on outputs, supporting underlying outcomes and R2F's contribution to changes in practices of communities and the MPs and as such to the outcome. The R2F consortium has been very effective in building alliances that stretch far beyond their own group of partners.

### Myanmar

- > *Agricultural Development Strategy recognises smallholder farmers' role and CSO participation.* The evaluation concludes that working through the international (multilateral) community (FAO, ADB and LIFT) has proven to be an effective strategy for civil society to be included in the ADS process and to get a seat at the table. Unfortunately the partners were not satisfied with the end result of the ADS and its process.
- > *Building alliances in Kachin to combat Tissue Banana plantations.* The evaluation concludes that the overall contribution of the R2F programme to the establishment of the alliance is assessed as medium. In the eyes of the alliance members the R2F was neither necessary nor sufficient. Nevertheless, time was needed to build trust and ultimately the R2F programme was relevant to the alliance, and with the R2F resources many more activities could be conducted and it gave the alliance an impetus. The question whether the land rights of smallholder farmers in Kachin has improved can be answered by concluding that at least their rights did not further deteriorate and there is ongoing attention and action for their right to land.

### Global Contribution Stories

- > *Land in the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals.* The contribution of the R2F programme to the outcome is considered strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. The R2F built upon the work of the already existing 'Land Community'. One of the assumptions of getting the land right indicators on the SDG list was that governments and duty bearers (and eventually private actors) would be encouraged to deliver data on land rights and shape their policies and practices. Formally this has hardly happened yet and the indicators are still Tier 2 indicators, meaning that reporting is not compulsory yet.
- > *FMO adopts its new sustainability policy and publishes its first Human Rights Progress Report.* The intervention was successful. Probably because of the context of the Agua Zarca case, FMO gave even more space to three NGOs (Oxfam Novib, Both Ends and SOMO), and institutionalised their advice. With that they had real policy influence on FMO. At the level of FMO, policies changed indeed. Practices and implementation need to follow. Oxfam Novib and

their fellow NGOs are using FMO as champion/example (insider approach) in the hope other Dutch and international investors will improve their policies as well.

- > *Holding companies in Coca Cola value chain to account for land grabs in its sugar value chain.* The evaluation concludes that work done with the Behind the Brands campaign has shown to be effective and relevant for this case and possibly others, holding big companies accountable for resources used, showing concrete cases, making them move to better policies and practices and using their leverage.

### Overall conclusion Right to Food

Based on the data provided by the internal evaluation, including the Harvested Outcomes and the result of the CATool (measuring progress in advocacy capacity of partners) the external evaluation confirms that the SP has contributed to many (384) changes in policy and political will in general.

Creating a 'roaring dragon' through CSO strengthening and building alliances by R2F in the sampled countries is considered effective, relevant, sustainable and a core outcome of the programme, as countervailing power in the harsh political environments. It is a strong potential pathway for influencing government policies. Moreover, working through an alliance is a rather 'safe' pathway for influencing, especially in a restricted civic space context of the sampled projects. Research and evidence-based advocacy, 'speaking with one voice' and using social media added to the influencing power of CSOs.

The 'roaring dragon' has in the sampled countries contributed to some changes in government -, private sector - and international policies. From the example of the ADS Myanmar it has become clear that a 'roaring dragon' is not always sufficient: voices need ears, or with other words: voices need political will.

Contribution of the R2F to the sampled policy outcomes is assessed as medium to strong in seven of the ten sets of outcomes. In many cases the SP contribution was perceived as necessary but not sufficient, as is common in policy advocacy programs.

### Finance for Development (F4D)

Selected sub-theme: 'Pro-poor fiscal policy (reducing inequality)'.

Projects: Cambodia, Uganda & Global (total selected 8 sets of outcomes).

The F4D programme was implemented in 10 countries and also through the global programme FAIR/Even it Up (FAIR/EiU). FAIR/EiU incorporates Oxfam's broader work on inequality, complemented by a 40+ country programme for capacity building and national level advocacy. A part of the FAIR/EiU programme is captured under the Strategic Partnership. The external evaluation team selected from the internal contribution stories 8 sets of outcomes, based on a number of criteria. The criteria included the level and quality of the outcomes, representation of the different pathways and themes, and the time and money invested by the programme.

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### *Cambodia*

- > *Increase in education budget by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.* The evaluation concludes that the outcome was achieved, but the contribution narrative as developed by Oxfam Novib on this outcome does not seem very probable. Major contributors to the outcome are not included in the contribution narrative.
- > *Disclosure of budget information by the Ministry of Economy and Finance.* The evaluation concludes that the proof of the outcome is clear and not in question. The internally drafted contribution narrative, however, does not accurately reflect the contribution of the SP. It is not very likely that the SP contributed to a large extent to the (2016) outcome, as the SP at the time was only in the start-up phase.
- > *Nine communes in the target provinces-Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, and Prey Veng, to allow core groups to participate and engage in commune budget planning and to raise women's voices.* The evaluation concludes that proof of the outcome is strong, with an evident contribution of the SP. The outcome is also a clear result of the activities of Oxfam partners (TI and GADC): the selection and training of core group members convinced commune councillor members to open periodic spaces for dialogue and advocacy on budget matters of the commune, especially regarding gender responsiveness.

### *Uganda*

- > *Campaigning against the tax on Mobile Money Transfers.* The evaluation concludes that the proof of the outcome is evident and undisputed. The internally drafted contribution story is largely substantiated by the external interviews and desk review. The main contributor to the abolishment of the tax was the broadly supported, and cleverly executed campaign designed and led by two Oxfam partners, SEATINI and CSBAG. These organisations managed to effectively coordinate the opposition against the tax from a relevant number of actors. Maybe most notable was the participation of the mobile money vendors, and other private sector actors in the campaign.
- > *Increasing social sectors budget education, health, agriculture and social development.* The proof of the outcome (i.e. budget increase) is conclusive. A limitation on the assessment of the contribution is that no government official was found available to reflect on the influence of CSOs on the increased budgets. Nevertheless there is little doubt that Oxfam partners participating in the F4D programme have evolved into serious actors regarding governmental fiscal policies. The fact that a sizeable proportion of CSO-proposals regarding extra attention for the social sectors were included in the 2018/2019 budget, is a clear indication that these organisations are capable of influencing the government agenda.

### *Global Contribution Stories*

- > *Strengthen the Fight Inequality Alliance and broaden national alliances, with a focus on the outcome of the World Economic Forum in Davos.* The

evaluation concludes that it is likely that the SP contributed to the changing narrative on equality during the yearly Davos meeting. The yearly report on inequality invariably drew lots of media attention. Messages produced by Oxfam and its partners were repeated on many platforms and were frequently mentioned when 'Davos' was in the news. Oxfam had developed as a relevant voice in the worldwide discourse on inequality. To what extent Oxfam contributed to the inequality narrative cannot be determined. The evaluation confirms the contribution to national alliance building and capacity strengthening of these national alliances as part of the FAIR/EiU Knowledge & Learning Strategy.

- > *Introduction and promotion of the Fair Tax Monitor to assess national tax systems in eight countries.* In the cases that were assessed, the development of the Fair Tax Monitor facilitated some clear outcomes. It identified, for example, the fact that a trade deal between Uganda and the Netherlands was detrimental to Ugandan development interests. Oxfam Novib arranged a unique meeting between Ugandan CSOs and the trade negotiators. In Pakistan the FTM made clear how local VAT taxes increase inequalities and do not result in effective revenues for the government. As a result the tax was significantly lowered. Increased capacities and strategic alliance building played important roles in the outcomes.
- > *Evening up Vietnamese taxes.* The evaluation concludes that the evidence of the output is fairly clear. The SP has created a movement towards more progressive tax policies (and other pro-poor fiscal policy changes) in Vietnam, and has been effective, specifically by engaging an official of the National Institute for Finance (Ministry of Finance). The interventions by the SP have been an important factor in the realization of the changes. There has been a clever interplay between international lobby efforts and national advocacy.

### **Overall conclusion Finance for Development**

Based on the data provided by the internal evaluation, including the Harvested Outcomes, the result of the CATool (measuring progress in advocacy capacity of partners) as well as a selection of Stories of Change and survey results, the external evaluation confirms that the SP has contributed to many (730) changes. The strengthening and growth of NGO-alliances and networks, facilitated by the SP, has been effective. Coordinated advocacy and 'speaking with one voice' added to the influencing power of NGOs. The programme has succeeded in increasing the knowledge of CSOs on fiscal and budgetary matters. And this has contributed to their influencing capacities and ultimately to changes in political will. The external evaluation has identified many examples of effective contribution of the SP to favourable changes in public policies on budgetary and fiscal matters.

### **Conflict and Fragility (C&F)**

Selected sub-theme: 'Private sector and conflict sensitivity'

## PART I - BACKGROUND

Projects: Myanmar, Nigeria & Global (total selected 6 sets of outcomes)

Working within alliances and with partner organisations within the Conflict and Fragility part of the SP, activities in the field of capacity development and influencing have been implemented in eight different country projects, two regional programmes and one global programme. Oxfam Novib and SOMO's work in the Conflict and Fragility programme is centred around a global Theory of Change (ToC) with three focused sub-themes of Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Security Sector Reform, and the Private Sector and conflict sensitivity. The latter coincides with the primary targeted outcome: 'Private sector actors do no harm, behave conflict-sensitively and are accountable to citizens and communities'.

### Myanmar

- > *Moving beyond copy-paste in mining laws.* In this case, like in other cases, Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM) has worked with and through its partner MATA (Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability, a national network of over 450 civil society actors). The evaluation concludes that MATA played a central role in the law revision process. It is likely that without MATA's interventions, the mining law revision process would not have taken place. The 'champion'-approach, closely working with the MPs in a participatory and multi-stakeholder process, was successful in that it created increased political will among the MPs, who then advocated for the community issues to be taken into consideration in parliament.
- > *Giving a face to civic space.* This outcome is related to influencing at both national and international level in the framework of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an international multi-stakeholder platform, which has established a global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources. The evaluation concludes that MATA and OiM have been effective in getting EITI to reassess their initial rating regarding civic space, which is quite remarkable considering the other stakeholders in the Board, including governments and private sector.
- > *Preventing a toxic legacy.* This outcome relates to the desire to conduct a state-level review of the Tigyit coal fired power plant and a regional-level public consultation, before deciding whether the plant and mining should continue operations. The Ministry of Health and Sports had called for this state-level review of the plant. Although it could not be proven what specifically has prompted the Ministry, it is made plausible that the various efforts of MATA contributed to this, particularly MATA's evidence-based research and collaboration with the community, alliance partners and MPs. MATA was more effective than earlier CSOs in advocating the government on the Tigyit Coal Mine. However, this was an outcome that did not last. Very soon, the coal fired plant was given the green light to continue.

### Nigeria

- > *Communities stand up against gas flaring.* The evaluation concludes that combined efforts of Oxfam in Nigeria and partners CODE and CISLAC have had a pivotal influence on increased awareness among communities and better interaction with other local actors, including private sector actors, at the local level. At the national level, it is more diluted. Oxfam and partners have been key in getting stakeholders together at the Roundtables, but no concrete changes in policies or practices can be seen yet. There is not yet enough evidence to suggest that the project has contributed to any change in government actors' willingness to begin to hold oil companies to account.

### Global Contribution Stories

- > *Influencing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' conflict-sensitive private sector policies.* The evaluation confirms the identified key outcome of the project, namely that SOMO and Oxfam Novib 'successfully influenced the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa) and the Netherlands enterprise agency (RVO) to create conflict-sensitive policies and frameworks.' The contribution of the SP mainly lies in a further acceleration of already existing political will and developments in the Ministry.
- > *Engaging with a Chinese giant (CITIC) in Myanmar to ensure that CITIC's interventions meet international standards and engage community leaders.* Without having spoken to the Chinese company, it is difficult to truly come to a definitive conclusion on the contribution of the C&F programme to the outcome. However, it is plausible that the combined efforts of Oxfam Confederation, the project in Myanmar and the added position of the Policy Advisor contributed to the outcome. CITIC's specific request to collaborate with SI to engage with communities is an indication for this. Furthermore, the evaluation confirms that Oxfam's approach of having a specific policy advisor to support with (mainly non-western) private sector actors has enhanced knowledge among Oxfam Novib staff and their local partner on more strategic engagement with the private sector.

### Overall conclusion Conflict and Fragility

The external evaluation built upon the efforts and data from the internal evaluation process, including the Harvested Outcomes, the result of the CATool (measuring progress in advocacy capacity of partners) as well as a selection of Stories of Change and survey results, the external evaluation found that the SP has contributed to 57 cases of increased political will and 35 changes in public policies in the Conflict and Fragility programme. Advocacy regarding the private sector was in most cases targeted to the government, to hold the private sector to account. There are examples of increased political will in the form of commitments, but the translation to concrete changes in policies or legislation has not materialised (yet). Strategic engagement with the private sector operating in fragile and conflict-affected states itself was found challenging, especially for local partners. There is

some early indication that engagement has led to perceived increased political will (some documented commitments), where the company has declared to take issues into consideration or has requested more input from the local partner (DRC, Myanmar and Nigeria). The programme has been quite successful in raising local communities' voices. Almost half of all the 23 outcomes in the overall C&F related to increased citizens' voice fall under the sub-theme Private Sector. The programme has laid the groundwork, initial results are promising, but it is too early to develop conclusions on impact.

### **Cross Cutting Narrative on Civil Society Capacity Development**

Civil society strengthening is one of the two main areas of change of the Strategic Partnership, alongside policy change. Civil society capacity development was intended to be woven throughout the three thematic programmes – Right to Food (R2F), Conflict & Fragility (C&F) and Finance for Development (F4D). Other cross-cutting elements are 'gender', 'civic space' and 'conflict sensitivity'. Based on the internally produced cross-cutting narrative and external verification, the external evaluation confirms substantial results in capacity development on (a) Context and power analyses, (b) Strategizing, (c) Lobbying the government, (d) Building alliances and (e) MEAL for influencing. The capacity development efforts have contributed to an important increase in the capacities of Oxfam country offices and their partners. Technical influencing capacities have increased, as well as thematic knowledge and 'soft skills' like communication skills. The increased capacities have been instrumental to improve the efforts of CSOs to advocate for the policy and practice changes targeted in the respective ToCs. The increased capacities have also contributed to more effectiveness of the advocacy interventions. In all sampled outcomes increased capacities have been a vital element of success. In most of the cases the increased capacities of Oxfam country teams and their direct partners have been transferred and disseminated to other actors. The primary actors benefitting from the dissemination are other CSOs. This happened primarily through the strengthened and widened alliances. Other actors benefitting from the dissemination of capacities are groups and individuals at grass-root level and government actors. The sustainability of capacity development has probably increased through this dissemination process.

### **A summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

The SP has contributed to considerable changes in government policies, though most outcomes in the outcome overview (finalised early 2019, which was the basis for sampling the sub-themes and projects) can be identified in the realm of 'political will'. The policy cycle usually takes a longer time to turn political will into new/improved policies and policies into practice.

The evaluation found that there has been less focus on the private sector. Part of the explanation for the limited results in the private sector lies in the sampled sub-theme as was the case for F4D. However, in the sampled sub-

themes of R2F and C&F the role of the private sector – and especially Chinese companies – is important and relevant, but the number of changes in the policies and practices of the private sector are limited. Strategic engagement with the private sector itself was found challenging, especially for local partners in the sampled C&F and R2F countries. Some effective examples of private sector work include the R2F Global project (FMO and 'Behind the Brands') where engaging the international private sector enables work at national level on compliance to international standards, or company policy commitments.

The SP has been particularly strong in strengthening CSOs and building alliances, with other words in creating a 'roaring dragon'. The influencing capacities of CSOs have increased notably as a result of the SP, either through mutual capacity development interventions or through working together and inviting experts and researchers. Specific training on capacity development for advocacy was less mentioned as key factors in strengthened capacities. CSOs have especially increased their capacities to design and implement advocacy strategies and related interventions.

In most countries the policy cycle is a longer-term cycle without quick results. At this moment in time, it is still too premature to draw conclusions whether the policy changes supported social and economic justice. First steps have been taken in influencing policy changes, and first steps can be seen in changes in policies. Within the F4D work, the evaluation team found a disconnect between the outcomes on policy level and 'real change', i.e. implementation and enforcement on a practical level.

The research shows that through the programme a vast and sustainable network of organisations, alliances and people has been built in the sampled countries and capacities have been strengthened in a sustainable way. Sustainability of the public policy changes shows a mixed picture. Some of the sampled policy outcomes (R2F Ugandan National Seed Policy, Tissue Banana Plantation policies) seem sustainable. However, no result of the political and legislative process is written in stone. Close monitoring is needed to ensure that changed policies are implemented and not revoked or turned into dead letters.

The change pathways and the underlying assumptions of the thematic ToCs have to a large extent been found valid. Some elements are less comprehensively included in the ToCs. Working towards changes in the private sector is not very clearly strategised in the ToCs. Engaging the private sector often involves other strategies, approaches and partners, as compared to dealing with government.

Recommendations include (a) more attention for Chinese companies, (b) more balance between 'reducing harmful policies' and 'developing and stimulating beneficial policies', (c) more attention for connection between the national and the global level, (d) review and extension of the Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool), (e) attention to prevent current high staff turnover, (f) more attention to spin-off results, (g) better planning and scenario development beyond the programme time horizon, (h) more attention to engaging multi- and bilateral agencies, (i) develop clear and explicit private sector pathways, (j) more consistency in the development and implementation of various Theories of Change, (k)

explicit assumptions how targeted outcomes should lead to long-term impact.

### 4. 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' (programme background)

The Strategic Partnership (SP) between Oxfam Novib and SOMO with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to achieve that 'more people, especially marginalised groups, play an active role in building an equitable world where they can realise their basic rights: their right to food; the right to live in a democratic society with a fair distribution of public resources; and the right to live in peace and security'.<sup>2</sup> The partnership is called 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network'. This Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN) is projected to contribute to a redistribution of power and a structural change in the behaviour of governments and companies in favour of social and economic justice.

The SP falls under the Dialogue and Dissent policy framework (D&D), developed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The objective of the D&D policy framework is to contribute to sustainable inclusive development for all, and to fight poverty and injustice by promoting the political advocacy and lobbying role of 'Southern' Civil Society organisations (CSOs). It aims to support the capacity of civil society organisations to influence the decisions that affect their lives and to actually achieve impact in these realms.

The SP works on two key areas of change: a) capacity strengthening of civil society, enabling it to influence governments and the private sector to b) change their policies and the implementation of these policies. 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' covers three themes, each with its own Theory of Change:

- > Right to Food (R2F), with long-term outcome: "Small-scale food producers and agricultural workers, particularly women and their communities, to benefit from local, national and global public and private sector policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience."
- > Finance for Development (F4D), with long-term outcome: "More women, youth and other citizens benefit from higher quality and quantity of finance for development, an enhanced fiscal system and a sustainable and inclusive financial and corporate sector, tackling extreme inequality."
- > Conflict and Fragility (C&F), with long-term outcome: "Marginalised groups have a say in policies that affect their lives; governments and international institutions support inclusion of women and promote protection of marginalised groups in security and peace building; and the private sector contributes to peace and development."

Each thematic area is subdivided into a number of sub-themes:

#### *R2F*

- > Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers
- > Fair value creation and increased transparency in value chains
- > Secure predictable flows of finance for smallholder producers and for climate

#### *F4D*

- > Enhanced civic space and civil society strengthening
- > Measures against tax evasion and avoidance
- > Pro-poor fiscal policy (reducing inequality)
- > (New forms of) development aid and innovative finance
- > Inclusive, sustainable and stable financial sector

#### *C&F*

- > Security sector reform
- > Women, peace and security
- > Private sector in conflict

The programme is implemented through 24 country projects, 8 regional projects, and 7 global projects in a total of 17 countries.

'Gender justice', 'civic space' and 'conflict sensitivity' are identified as important cross-cutting issues. These cross-cutting issues are integrated and operationalised in the projects. 'Changes in civil society influencing capacities' is also a cross-cutting issue. At the same time 'capacity strengthening of civil society to enable it to influence governments and the private sector' is one of the two key areas of change.

According to the programme document (p8), the types of interventions and approaches the SP programmed to undertake are:

- > Agenda setting and lobby
- > Building evidence
- > Develop, monitor and demand compliance to international standards
- > Public pressure and digital campaigning
- > Working with others; building networks and alliances
- > Multi-stakeholder platforms and public private partnerships

Obviously, capacity strengthening of CSOs is an important activity as well.

### 5. About this evaluation

The evaluation of the SP 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' was unique because it was a joint,

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<sup>2</sup> Towards a worldwide influencing network – Programme document for the Strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs – final version, October 12, 2015 (p.4)

coordinated and phased effort between Oxfam/SOMO and the external evaluators.

In the first phase of the evaluation, a large part of the groundwork was conducted by an internal evaluation task force (composed of OxfamNovib staff). This task force gathered information from the projects in order to get an overview of the results achieved. This so-called 'basic narrative' (also 'outcome database') contributes to the data produced in phase two. They reviewed the validity of the contribution claims, and investigated alternative hypotheses by gathering additional information. In the fourth phase the external team focused on synthesising *all* evidence and on formulating the answers to the evaluation questions based on the evidence. The drafting of the final report was part of this phase as well.

The methodologies used in the four phases are described in the Methodology section (next).

The evaluation has a dual purpose: *accountability* (what has changed?) and *learning* (how has change happened? What contributed to the results?).

In line with the specifics as described in the ToR, the external evaluation assessed the outcomes and results of the SP between Oxfam Novib and SOMO with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This ToR was approved by Oxfam Novib, SOMO and the Ministry (see annex 7).

The external evaluation was based on a sample of sub-themes and projects from the three thematic areas, and a fourth, cross-cutting theme focusing on changes of the influencing capacity of CSOs (see next paragraph on sampling).

Oxfam/SOMO's decision to select the cross-cutting topic 'influencing capacities' implied that the other cross-cutting issues ('civic space', 'gender justice' and 'conflict sensitivity') were not part of the evaluation assignment. However, the issue of 'civic space' came up in almost all interviews, so civic space is mentioned throughout the report. As part of an extra assignment, we were able to do additional interviews with Oxfam staff and partners' staff on civic space. Where appropriate, insights resulting from these interviews were included in the report. Additionally, we have taken the findings of the mid-term evaluation, executed in 2018, into account.

The end-report/portfolio is designed to be readable and accessible, presenting the narrative description of change pathways in a way so that stakeholders can actually use it. We aim to ensure that even relative outsiders can relate to and understand not only which outcomes were achieved, but more importantly *how* they were achieved. We have deliberately searched for how change came about, the contribution of this partnership to the observed change, what obstacles were encountered and how they were dealt with.

The evaluation set out to answer the following main evaluation question, as specified in the ToR: "To what extent has the SP contributed to changes in civil society's influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of governments and companies in favour of higher quality and quantity of finance for development and tackling extreme inequality? How did these changes take place?"

This main evaluation question was divided into 11 sub-questions ('the evaluation questions'). The evaluation

questions are outlined in table 1. (the Evaluation Matrix), including the sources and the methodologies used to answer the questions.

## 6. Methodology

As indicated before, the evaluation has been conducted in a coordinated effort by the two separate teams: the internal and the external evaluation team.

The internal evaluation team developed contribution stories/narratives of the sampled projects within the sampled sub-theme (the sampling is described below) plus a cross-cutting contribution narrative. Each story described a) the outcomes that the project is assumed to have contributed to, b) the way in which lower-level outcomes are linked to the higher-level outcomes, and c) how the project activities contributed to those outcomes.

The internal contribution stories are based on different sources:

- > *Outcome Harvesting (OH)*. OH has primarily been used to monitor changes in political will and in policies of governments and private sector actors. Project staff regularly drafted 'outcome statements', that capture the change observed, relevance of the change and contribution of the project. Claims made had to be plausible and backed with evidence that proved both the change as well as the project's contribution. Several rounds of review were included in the process, to maximize quality of the outcome statements.
- > *Narrative annual reports*: All projects in the Strategic Partnership have drafted narrative annual reports. In these reports they reported among others on achieved outcomes, referencing to MEAL data, on linkages between these outcomes, changes in context, lessons learned and what all of these mean for next year's plans.
- > *Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool)*. The CATool measured changes in CSOs' capacity, with a focus on influencing capacities. It is a self-assessment tool that measures changes in CSOs' influencing capacities. During the baseline, the tool was applied to assess the capacity development needs of partners through a dialogue. During the midline and endline, the CATool was adapted to a survey to measure changes in capacity and provide data on how increased capacities have contributed to the partner organizations' influencing results.
- > *Surveys*. The SP conducted baseline and endline surveys to measure changes in people's attitudes and in the extent to which they raised their voice. Over 11,000 people were interviewed for these assessments. As the surveys were distributed among project participants as well as non participants and at both baseline and endline (difference in differences),

the survey in general allowed for a solid analysis of attribution of changes to the Strategic Partnership.<sup>3</sup>

- > *Stories of Change*. This qualitative instrument, based on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, aimed to investigate the process of change, identifying key accountability part of the evaluation.

Phase two started with the external evaluators taking a sample of the sub-themes and the projects. Based on this sample, the internal team further developed the outcomes and produced contribution narratives for all outcomes in the sampled sub-themes and projects. In addition, a contribution narrative was developed on the cross-cutting issue (influencing capacities).

In the third phase, the internal evaluation task force handed over their work to the external evaluators. In order to ensure independence and rigour, the external evaluators investigated and assessed the work and the enabling factors and blockers. In addition, *Stories of Change* were used to highlight individuals' perspectives on observed changes and as such complement the other monitoring methodologies.

The data gathering instruments mentioned above (i.e. the CATool, the surveys and the *Stories of Change*) did not cover the entire SP, a selection was made of countries, cases and organisations. The evaluators were not informed on what grounds selections were made.

The task of the external evaluation team was to challenge and/or expand the credibility of the contribution stories produced by the internal evaluation team, by looking not only at the strength of the evidence provided by the internal team, but also by critically and creatively reviewing these stories, collecting additional data and by formulating an alternative/revised contribution story. To achieve this, the evaluators mainly focused on external sources (e.g. advocacy targets, staff members of other (I)NGOs, civil servants, media and influencers), distinguishing their work from the research carried out by the internal evaluation team.

At the request of Oxfam Novib and SOMO, the external evaluation team followed a story based approach: Oxfam Novib and SOMO were looking for 'stories about change' and 'lessons learned stories'. The external evaluation was largely qualitative. It did not include surveys nor any other specific quantitative method methods. Whenever possible, we triangulated our findings and practiced the principle of 'audite et alteram partem' (also listen to the other side). In some cases, however, interviewees provided insights or opinions that were not repeated by others, but which did seem valuable. As we selected interviewees based on their specific position, insight or expertise, we feel that also minority opinions have value. So we decided to include such 'N=1 observations' in the report, either by a quote or by paraphrasing the issue that was raised. Always indicating that a certain opinion or conclusion was only voiced by one interviewee.

### Approach taken by the external evaluation team

For this evaluation, the external team applied a largely qualitative, narrative approach, aiming to verify what outcomes have been achieved (evaluation questions 1-4), to assess how outcomes have been achieved and to analyse the contribution of the programme's interventions to the identified outcomes (evaluation questions 7-10), to verify the sustainability of the changes (evaluation question 6), and to analyse to what extent the outcomes impact social and economic justice (evaluation question 5). Finally, the external evaluation team formulated suggestions and recommendations for the programme's Theory of Change (evaluation question 11). All evaluation questions can be found in the Evaluation Matrix (Table 2).

The external team used a mixed methodology of desk study, contribution analysis, (group) interviews, CSA workshops, and Investigative Stories, see Table 1. Evaluation question 11 is answered by taking all data and methodologies into account.

Table 1. Data collection strategy

Method	Evaluation Questions
Desk study	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Contribution Analysis	7, 8, 9, 10
Interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Collective System Analysis	5
Stories	7, 8, 9, 10

### Desk study

The external team conducted a desk study of relevant documents, e.g.: Programme documents, thematic ToCs, project ToCs, documents on (sub)-thematic context, documents on national contexts and documents providing context on specific outcomes. In addition to these documents, the desk study included the 'basic outcome overviews' (or outcome database) as well as the results of the Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool) and 'Stories of Change', as presented by the internal evaluation team.

The task of the external evaluation team was to assess the credibility of these data and the identified outcomes. The basic overview, the assessment of the outcomes included therein, and the desk study of the above mentioned documents will provide answers to evaluation questions 1-5.

<sup>3</sup> More information on the surveys can be found here: <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/kenniscentrum/impact-measurement->

[and-knowledge/news/speak-up!-impact-measurement-shows-changes-in-citizens-raising-their-voices](https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/kenniscentrum/impact-measurement-)

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	RELATES TO
1. What changes in public and private sector policies and practices has our SP contributed to?	Internal: Basic overview, contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects, secondary in documents	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews	Effectiveness
2. What changes in civil society's influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?	Internal: Basic overview, capacity strengthening narrative External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects, secondary in documents	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, Surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews	Effectiveness
3. What is the nature of the changes in policies and practices? (e.g. New policies? Amendments to existing policies? Implementation / enforcement of policies? Were they local, national or global level policies?)	Internal: Basic overview External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting External: Desk review, interviews	Effectiveness, relevance
4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society's influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)	Internal: Basic overview, capacity strengthening narrative External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews	Effectiveness, relevance
5. Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?	External: Group discussions	External: Desk review, interviews, Collective System Analysis	Relevance, impact
6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?	Internal: Basic overview, capacity strengthening narrative External: Interviews with stakeholders, groups.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, (group) interviews	Sustainability, effectiveness
7. What was the contribution of our SP to these changes in relation to other actors and factors?	Internal: contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.[R3]	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews, Investigative Stories	Effectiveness, coherence
8. Which factors/strategies were most important to achieve or contribute to the observed changes in policies and practices?	Internal: contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews, Investigative Stories	Effectiveness, relevance
9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacities?	Internal: contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews, Investigative Stories	Effectiveness, relevance
10. Can the changes in civil society's influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?	Internal: contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, surveys, Stories of Change External: Desk review, interviews, Investigative Stories	Effectiveness, relevance
11. What do the answers to the above questions mean for our Theory of Change?	Internal: contribution stories External: Internal sources, Primary sources in projects. Secondary in documents.	Internal: Outcome Harvesting, CATool, surveys, Stories of Change External: Synthesis and analysis of change processes	Effectiveness, relevance

Table 2: Evaluation Matrix



### Contribution Analysis <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

The internal evaluation team produced nine Contribution Stories: one for each of the three projects selected within each of the three sub-themes. Additionally, there was one cross-cutting narrative on civil society strengthening. These stories can be seen as the product of three steps of a six-step Contribution Analysis:<sup>4</sup>

1. Develop the results chain. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
2. Assess the existing evidence on results. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
3. Assess the alternative explanations. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
4. Assemble the contribution story. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
5. Seek out additional evidence. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
6. Revise and strengthen the contribution story. <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

The internal evaluation team worked on step 1,2 and 4, based on internal evidence (e.g. the outcome statements, CATool, Stories of Change, the impact surveys, annual reports). The external evaluators completed the Contribution Analysis by assessing alternative explanations (step 3), and by collecting additional evidence and by developing revised Contribution Stories (steps 5 and 6). This process answered evaluation questions 7 to 10.

To be able to go more in-depth than the Contribution Stories as developed by the internal evaluation team, the research for additional data focused on a selection of outcomes (see section below on Sampling).

On the basis of additional data collected the external evaluators assessed whether the identified contributions to the outcomes were weak, medium, or strong. The contribution assessment was based on two aspects:

- > The available evidence and the perception of interviewees. A distinction was made between evidence if the outputs took place and evidence that the outputs indeed contributed to the outcome (causal linkage).
- > A distinction was made between *necessity* of the programme's contribution (would the outcome have happened without the programme) and *sufficiency* of the programme's contribution (the outcome is the result of the programme only). Note that outcomes that are the result of advocacy are seldom based on just one contributing actor.

To develop alternative and strengthened contribution stories, the external evaluators made use of *creative sessions* and interviews. The findings from these two methods were complemented with information from the desk study.

During the creative sessions, the external evaluators, the internal evaluation task force and staff members of relevant Oxfam and SOMO offices discussed the sampled outcomes, the contribution narratives as developed by Oxfam and the possibilities of alternative or additional

contributing (f)actors. During these sessions, stakeholders were identified who could also be interviewed by the external evaluators. The final choice of interviewees was made by the external evaluators. The selection criteria for interviewees were mainly purposive: next to interviews with people involved in the programme, we wanted to talk to people who knew about the intervention, but were not part of the SP and not financed by the SP. We wanted the list of interviewees to include advocacy targets, to hear how the interventions by the SP influenced their policy making. We realised that in some cases policy makers will not readily confess that their actions are influenced by external lobby. In some cases policy makers were not available for interviews. In those cases we tried to identify other external sources, e.g. well informed journalists or staff members of other organisations.

The external evaluation team also looked into the interventions and outcomes regarding capacity strengthening.

Interviews with Oxfam and SOMO staff (both in the Netherlands and in the countries where the programme is executed) provided information to develop alternative or strengthened contribution narratives. Finally, the alternative hypotheses were tested through further desk study and interviews with external stakeholders.

### Collective System Analysis

The Collective System Analysis<sup>5</sup> was used as a review tool with two main objectives: 1) to assess which actors and factors are hindering and/or facilitating the transformation towards – in this case - a just social and economic system, and 2) to assess whether interventions are really targeting these actors and factors and thus contributing to systemic change. At country project level per sub-theme, the results of this analysis were fed back into the project's Theory of Change. The CSA provided input for the sub-thematic narratives and for answering evaluation questions 5 (*Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?*) and 11 (*What do the findings mean for the Theory of Change?*).

The CSA method followed the following steps:<sup>6</sup>

- > Harvesting obstacles to move from the current to the desired system from interviews/desk review and/or on-line workshop.
- > Harvesting opportunities to move from the current to the desired system from interviews/desk review and/or on-line workshop.
- > Harvesting current interventions through discussions interviews/desk review and/or on-line workshop
- > Analysing the obstacles and opportunities in a matrix and reflecting on: what do we see, (how) does that influence our Theory of <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>Change? <sup>[17]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

<sup>4</sup> Mayne, John (2001). *Addressing attribution through Contribution Analysis: using performance measures sensibly*. The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, 16(1): 1–24; John Mayne *Contribution analysis: Coming of age?* Evaluation 2012 18: 270 DOI: 10.1177/1356389012451663

<sup>5</sup> The CSA-methodology is further explained in Mierlo, Barbara van, Marlèn Arkesteijn and Cees Leeuwis (2010) *Enhancing the Reflexivity of System Innovation Projects with System Analyses*. *American Journal of Evaluation* 31(2): 143-161. SAGE Publications.

<sup>6</sup> Due to Covid 19 the CSA method was adapted to an online approach.

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The matrix used for analysis has a horizontal and a vertical axis. The vertical rows of the matrix comprise a number of system characteristics while horizontally there are various actors that perpetuate the system barriers and/or play a part in the creation of system opportunities. The vertical row headings with system characteristics always remain the same. The column headings of organisations/actors are real-world actors that are specifically important to the project/programme in question.

The system characteristics include the following: The 'knowledge infrastructure' facilitates or obstructs access to and development of research and knowledge.<sup>[1]</sup> The 'physical infrastructure' facilitates or obstructs physical or virtual accessibility and the way actors operate.

'Rules and Legislation' refers to the formal rules that can promote or hinder innovation, such as technical standards, employment legislation or the legal framework.<sup>[1]</sup> 'Values, norms' refers to the political and economic climate and the culture of a country, region or sector, and to social norms and values.

'Interaction' can be too intensive, meaning that the actors' relationships become so tightly intertwined that nobody can take the first step, and their view of reality will be distorted; it can also be too loose and too narrow in scope, so that people are unaware of each other's visions.<sup>[1]</sup> The 'market structure' refers to the system barriers and opportunities that arise due to a range of market phenomena such as monopoly, oligopoly, supply and demand.

In the matrices that can be found throughout the report, we share our findings from the system analyses. The system obstacles are coloured yellow, the opportunities green, and the interventions are blue circles.

### Stories

Stories are a powerful tool to show the how and the why of outcomes of social change interventions. What were the key interventions? How did people react to these interventions? How do individual actors and actions influence particular change processes? A well-told story can bring the complex realities of social change to life and enable the evaluation audience to connect with and learn from the results of a project or programme. In this evaluation we have shaped the contribution analysis in the form of stories.<sup>7</sup> The stories provide more insight into the actual causal mechanisms, including enablers, blockers and other influences, as described in the contribution narratives. For some of the projects we used a more journalistic approach to the stories: we called them 'investigative stories'.<sup>8</sup>

The investigative stories included in the report are journalistic presentations of a change process and they

constitute the most in-depth aspect of this evaluation. The Investigative Stories are also used as 'regular' contribution stories, strengthening the Contribution Stories developed by the internal evaluation team. The topic for each Investigative Story was selected within the sample chosen for the Contribution Analysis. It will provide further in-depth information on the contribution, providing detail, context and opinions of those involved. We selected the specific topic of each Investigative Story during the process of gathering additional information for the alternative Contribution Story.

### Sampling

To allow in-depth investigation, the evaluation teams had to limit its focus to a selection of the SP's sub-themes, projects and reported outcomes.

In the first phase of the sampling, a total of 3 sub-themes – one from each theme (or ToC) – were selected (out of 11). In the second phase 9 projects from these 3 sub-themes (out of 39 projects) were selected. The research into the cross-cutting narrative (i.e. changes in civil society influencing capacity) followed the same sampled projects.

In a third phase, a selection was made of 2-3 sets of outcomes per sampled project. In total 22 sets were selected for further substantiation and exploration.

The following selection criteria were followed:

*Criteria for the first stage of sampling – sub-theme level (n=11 sub-themes)*

- > One sub-theme per ToC (i.e. R4D, F4D, C&F), 3 sub-themes in total;<sup>[1]</sup>
- > The sub-theme constitutes a meaningful part (significant number of projects and funds) of <sup>[1]</sup>the total ToC budget and scope <sup>[1]</sup>
- > At least one of the sub-themes selected should include the work of SOMO <sup>[1]</sup>
- > Avoid duplication of evaluation efforts on the same project (i.e. not part of the MTR)
- > Thematic expertise of the evaluation team <sup>[1]</sup>

*Criteria for the second stage of sampling – project level (n=39 projects)*

- > Main languages spoken in the country and by thematic experts from the evaluation team
- > At least two global or regional projects should be included. <sup>[1]</sup>
- > Availability of information on the projects: sufficient background information available (i.e. <sup>[1]</sup>there is a preference for projects/countries where the survey and/or the Stories of Change methodology has been applied, in particular also countries where the SoC have focused on capacity development). <sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The approach for these stories is more elaborately described in 'The Power of Stories' (WiW, 2018, unpublished): <https://www.wereldinwoorden.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/There-is-nothing-more-powerful-than-a-good-story-14-09-1.pdf> <sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Originally, our stories and approach were called 'Stories of Change'. To distinguish 'our' Stories of Change from ON's Stories of Change we will refer to these stories as 'Investigative Stories'.

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- > The sampled projects should work significantly on that sub-theme and not only have a minor contribution to the sub-theme. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- > Substantial in terms of number of outcomes. <sup>9</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- > Feasibility: e.g. is a country accessible enough to carry out fieldwork? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- > Finally, a geographical spread, e.g. to include projects from two different geographical regions. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

### *Criteria for third stage of sampling- sets of outcomes*

- > Representing all pathways of change
- > Representing diverse outcome areas (global actors, public actors, private actors).
- > Targeted outcomes (i.e. higher level outcomes).
- > Significance of the outcome
- > Large claim on contribution in combination with (weak) evidence.
- > Investment by the programme in time and budget.
- > Pragmatism: Is the contribution story researchable / interviewing international, EU and NL actors

Considering all sampling criteria, the external evaluation team used the following sample of projects:

#### *R2F*

- > Sub-theme: 'Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers'
- > Projects: Uganda, Myanmar & Global
- > 8 sets of outcomes

#### *F4D*

- > Sub-theme: 'Pro-poor fiscal policy (reducing inequality)'
- > Projects: Cambodia, Uganda & Global (Even it up)
- > 8 sets of outcomes

#### *C&F*

- > Sub-theme: 'Private sector in conflict'
- > Projects: Myanmar, Nigeria & Global
- > 6 sets of outcomes

Oxfam Novib and SOMO were consulted on the sample and on the methodology of sampling, but the decision on the sampling framework and the sample remained with the external evaluation team.

An evaluation based on a sample means that a large part of the work done by the SP and its partners was not taken into account. Sometimes very interesting and even groundbreaking outcomes could not be addressed as they fell outside the sample. A clear example is the much-publicised F4D work of Oxfam Novib and SOMO on

addressing and questioning the (corporate) tax regime in the Netherlands.

The sample drawn by the evaluators was not intended to be representative of all that has been done in the programme. The aim was to assess the credibility of the internal contribution stories and the related body of evidence.

The analysis and therefore the conclusions in this report are based on both the research into the sampled outcomes and on the validated evidence produced by the internal evaluation team and the SP's MEAL data.

### **Informed consent**

As mentioned above, interviewees were first identified during the 'creative sessions' with Oxfam Novib/SOMO staff and staff-members of Oxfam's country offices. Final selection of interviewees was done by the external evaluators, in close contact with local consultants. In many cases it proved difficult to interview government officials and elected politicians.

All interviewees received, prior to their interview, a consent form (see annex 3) explaining the goal of the interview, the way the interview would be used and the rights of the interviewee to refuse participation. We asked for permission to use quotes. We indicated that interviewees could at all times opt to be presented under an alias. The interviewees either signed the consent form or verbally – on tape – agreed to the stipulations in the consent form. All quotes were presented to the interviewee for authentication. The use of quotes for other purposes than the evaluation report, must again be agreed to by the interviewee.

### **Limitations of the external evaluation research**

Obviously, the coronavirus pandemic influenced the work of the external evaluation team. The most drastic consequence was that field trips were cancelled. As a result, most interviews were done online, and in situ observations were impossible for the evaluators. This hampered the ability of the evaluators to get a good sense of the local circumstances and the 'look & feel' of the work on the ground.

Especially for the production of investigative stories, the lack of eyewitness reports was sorely missed. The investigative stories partly lost their 'journalistic' character, and the difference of approach and tone between the investigative stories and the other contribution stories became less than anticipated.

By involving local consultants, some of the negative effects of the travel ban could be averted. But even local consultants could not visit the places where the interventions were carried out. Only in Uganda for the R2F Article 26 outcomes (Nebbi, West Nile) and in Cambodia for the F4D Core Groups, the local consultants

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<sup>9</sup> For C&F, the sub-theme Private sector was sampled because it covered SOMO's work, it was not included in the MTR, it linked to the thematic expertise of the evaluator, and it was feasible to travel

for the evaluator. At the time of sampling, the evaluation team was not aware that this sub-theme had started later than the other projects.

## PART I - BACKGROUND

were able to visit the sub-national places. These stories most resemble the investigative stories as originally anticipated, i.e. stories with lots of detail, descriptions and input from the target group.

Also the Collective System Analysis (CSA) was affected by Corona measures. In the light of Corona-related restrictions, the external evaluation team developed an alternative CSA. The main adjustments made to the original approach were that specific, additional interviews were conducted on 'root causes', opportunities and system change, and the programmed live workshops were converted into – less intensive – online sessions. Based on the data resulting from both exercises, and from additional desk study, the external evaluators drew matrices defining the main actors (variable) & factors (main system characteristics). The harvested 'root causes' and opportunities were placed in the matrices by the external evaluator. Based on desk research and interviews, the main fields of interventions were added to the matrices for analysis. The matrices were then shared with the participants of the online workshops for validation, comments, and reflection.

In some countries it turned out to be difficult/impossible to reach all the interview candidates who were identified. In Uganda (R2F and F4D), for example, the upcoming elections resulted in most government representatives and politicians refusing to be interviewed (or rather not responding to our repeated requests). In Kenya (Global project F4D) demonstrations and subsequent police brutality affected the dialogue between CSOs and the government, leading to a situation where Oxfam urged the evaluators not to seek contact with government officials. As in these cases the government was the advocacy target, not being able to interview representatives of the state hampered our contribution assessment.

Another limitation is that the 'outcome database' did not yet contain outcomes from 2019 and 2020. This probably accounts for the fact that a relatively high number of outcomes is on an early or intermediate level (e.g. changes in political will). Quite a few of these outcomes could have developed into targeted outcomes in the last stage of the programme timeframe. During the interviews of the external evaluators on the selected outcomes, events after 2019 were discussed and, where possible, added to the report.

The private sector sub-theme for C&F started later than other projects in the SP (this was discovered after the sampling had been done). This meant that outcomes captured in the programme were still relatively early and conclusions drawn about the sampled outcomes in this sub-theme pertain to a relatively short period of implementation. The evaluation has not been able to highlight work that was done on other sub-themes within the C&F programme as this fell outside of the scope of this evaluation.

And finally, during the final stages of this evaluation some major political developments have taken place in countries that form part of this evaluation, for example the coup d'état in Myanmar at the beginning of February 2021 or the unrest in Uganda – both related to elections. First and most importantly, this has an enormous impact on the population and on civic space for CSOs to carry out

their work. For the evaluation, this means that some of the findings and recommendations pertain to a different situation and are not as relevant anymore (e.g. collaboration with progressive parts of the NLD regime in Myanmar).



## Part II Right to Food

### Introduction

With the Right to Food programme, Oxfam Novib and SOMO seek to strengthen CSOs, citizens and public and private sector champions in their combined efforts to improve policies and practices, aimed at tackling injustices in our food system. The impact they seek with ‘Right to Food’ is for women, men and children living in poverty to realise their right to food.

For this to happen a more just food system is required, that sustainably addresses the needs and aspirations of small-scale food producers, agricultural workers and vulnerable communities. The long-term outcome is that small-scale food producers and agricultural workers, particularly women and their communities, will benefit from local, national and global public and private sector policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience. Secure rights to land, water and seeds are an important focus of R2F advocacy efforts, as these ensure that food producers and rural communities have effective control over these resources over the longer term. Secure rights will also stimulate food producers to invest in and to sustainably use land and water. Similarly, farmer-breeders are more likely to invest in developing new varieties when they feel protected by supportive seed laws or intellectual property rights laws.

Women, men and children living in poverty will realise their right to food if they benefit from local to global public and private sector policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience. To this end, two things need to happen:

- > First of all, national, regional and global CSOs should have increased capacity to influence (sub)national governments, the private sector and international institutions on the right to food and participate in more inclusive governance systems. This will happen if alliances are stronger and wider, and if CSOs and communities are capable of influencing decision makers.
- > Secondly, governments, the private sector and international institutions have implemented policies and practices that advance the opportunities of small-scale producers and agricultural workers. This will happen if there’s increased political will in the public and private sector to change policies and practices, and if the terms of debate are favourable. Political will emerges if public and private sector champions have demonstrated the feasibility of more sustainable, pro-poor business models, policies and practices, and if the worldwide R2F alliance succeeds in mobilising citizens and media in order to put pressure on public and private sector stakeholders.

In order to achieve the R2F long-term outcome, Oxfam Novib and SOMO distinguish three pathways for change. The first pathway is strengthening of civil society organisations, enabling them to increase their access to and influence on local, regional and global governments, institutions and the private sector and to build public and private support for more equitable governance of natural resources and resilient livelihoods. The second pathway focuses on engagement with (potential) champions from the public and private spheres, with whom we prepare and make the case for policies,

practices and alternative business models that address the interests of food producers and rural communities, particularly women, and the implementation thereof. A third pathway is that the public and media exert critical pressure on key public or private decision makers, pushing for improved policies and practice on a range of local to global issues.

R2F’s most effective influencing strategies consist of a combination of the three pathways: strengthening CSOs to engage in insider dialogue (with companies, governments and certification initiatives) where possible, and using outsider approaches (public campaigns, complaint mechanisms) when required.

The R2F programme is being implemented in eight countries, three regions and at global level by 8 international, 7 regional, 121 national, 45 sub-national and 29 local partners.

### The evaluation of R2F

For the evaluation of the R2F programme, the external evaluation team selected, based on a range of criteria the following sub-theme and projects:

- > Sub-theme: ‘Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers’ (511 of the 682 reported outcomes fall under this sub-theme);
- > And within the sub-theme three projects: Uganda, Myanmar & Global

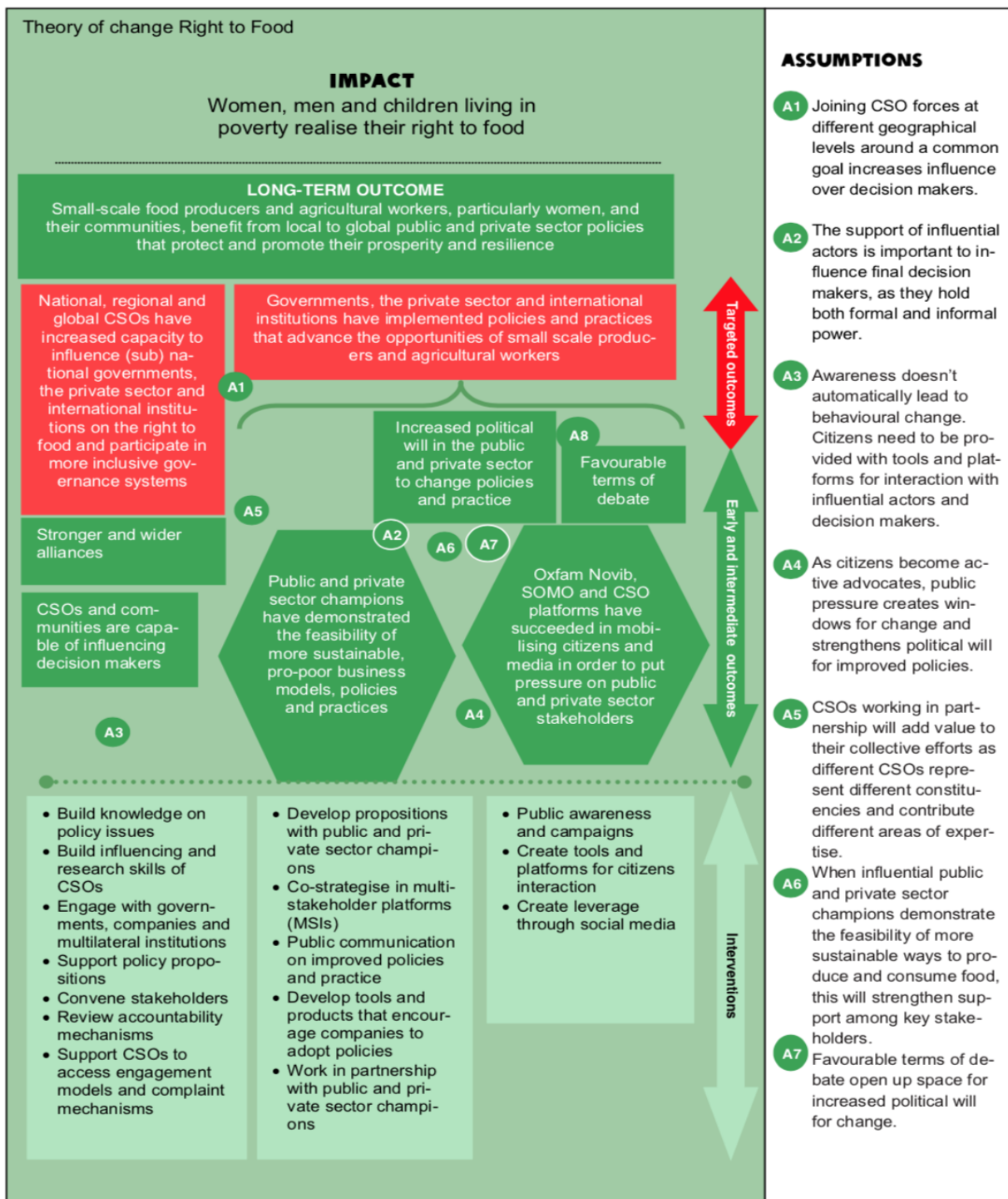


Figure 1. Theory of Change Right to Food

Based on this selection, the internal evaluation team wrote contribution stories for the three projects Uganda, Myanmar and the Global project in which they explain (per country/project) the problem at hand, the Theory of Change and expected results, the context and the contribution story with evidence of outcomes and outputs, capacity development and lessons learned. Due to a lack of capacity, it was not possible for the internal evaluation team to conduct a contribution analysis of all outcomes that were harvested on the sub-theme in Uganda, Myanmar and for the Global project. The staff

from the SP selected outcomes for the internal contribution story, based on two criteria. First, to ensure relevance and opportunities for learning, the outcomes had to be higher-level outcomes. Secondly, the set of outcomes to be included in the contribution story had to be diverse and represent the main areas of work of the project. In total the SP staff selected 26 sets of outcomes: 7 sets for Uganda, 6 sets for Myanmar, and 13 outcome sets for the Global project.

Another internal team wrote 'A cross-cutting narrative on the Strategic Partnership's capacity development of

civil society for influencing’, highlighting the work and results of the capacity development efforts of the programme.

The external evaluation built upon the efforts and resulting data from the internal evaluation processes. The external R2F evaluation team selected from the internal contribution stories 8 sets of outcomes, based on a number of criteria. The criteria included the level and quality of the outcomes, representation of the different pathways and themes, and the time and money invested by the programme. In so-called Creative Sessions a first assessment was made of the selected outcomes, and alternative actors and factors explored that could have contributed to the outcomes as well.

The external evaluation team further reviewed the selected outcomes, explored the contribution of other actors and factors and collected additional information to substantiate the Contribution Stories produced by the internal evaluation team.

The external evaluation team furthermore answers the 11 evaluation questions by critically assessing the findings of the internal evaluation team combined with collecting additional external information and providing an external view.

For the R2F part of the external evaluation a desk review was combined with interviews, either online or face-to-face interviews (see table 3 for the number of interviews and types of interviewees). For the face-to-face interviews, two local consultants were recruited in Uganda: One consultant to conduct interviews at national level, and one at local level in Nebbi, West Nile. For Myanmar and Global all interviews were done on-line. For Myanmar the services of an online interpreter were hired.

## 1. Uganda Contribution stories

### Introduction

Based on the general R2F Theory of Change, the R2F project in Uganda developed their context specific Theory of Change. They aimed to address the identified root causes of food insecurity: insecure land rights, seed insecurity and lack of adequate extension services. The project used a rights-based approach, as this would ensure long lasting changes in the power imbalances that sustain poverty, discrimination and injustices in Uganda’s food production system. The long-term outcome for the project was to let food producers and their communities enjoy inclusive local, national and global private and public sector policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience. Two pathways to reach this long-term outcome were defined: 1) To increase CSOs’ capacities and build alliances for influencing, and 2) To influence policies and practices of governments, the private sector and international institutions, either through using champions and alternative models or through the strengthened CSOs and alliances.

Implementing partners for the R2F project were PELUM Uganda (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Association), ESAFF Uganda (Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers’ Forum), FRA (Food Rights Alliance) and COPASCO (Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organisations).

In the first phase of the programme a lot of effort was put into building alliances with other CSOs active on land and seed rights, and connecting with duty bearers at the relevant Ministries and Members of Parliament. For phase 2 the focus of the influencing strategy was to work closely with citizens to consolidate the gains made in the first phase and to strengthen collaborations and linkages with different stakeholders.

### Selection of outcome sets for the evaluation

R2F Uganda and the internal evaluation team delivered contribution analyses on seven (sets of) outcomes divided over four topics:

#### *Securing land rights*

- > Parliament rejected proposed amendment article 26 of the constitutions (2018)
- > MAAIF Top Planning & Management Committee approves Rangeland Management and Pastoralism Policy

#### *Seed security*

- > Cabinet passed the National Seeds policy and its implementation strategy, March 2018
- > Strengthened CSOs in alliance curtail implementation of Plant Variety Protection Act
- > President rejected Genetically Modified Organisms Bill (GMO Bill) twice

Interviews	Global project	Uganda project	Myanmar project	Overall R2F program	Total
Oxfam/SOMO /Partner staff	11	10	14	3	38
Externals	8	21	4	-	33
Total	19	31	18	3	71

*Table 3 Number of interviews per group and project*



*National agricultural extension policy/strategy*

- > National Agriculture Extension Policy/Strategy (2016/2017)

*Partners' capacities*

- > Partners use their newly acquired influencing capacities, contributing to their influencing results (2016-2019).

The external evaluation team selected three out of the seven internal contribution stories and reviewed the claimed contributions of the programme, and researched effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, capacity development and system change from an external point of view.

The following stories were selected based on criteria mentioned earlier:

- > Cabinet passed the National Seeds policy and its implementation strategy, March 2018
- > Parliament rejected proposed amendment article 26 of the constitutions (2018)
- > The President rejected the Genetically Modified Organisms Bill (GMO Bill) twice.

At least 34 of the total 65 outcomes of the sub-theme that were reported by R2F Uganda in the Outcome database are connected to these three stories.

## 1.1 Contribution Story 1

# National Seeds Policy

### Introduction

*Outcome: In March 2018 the Cabinet passed the National Seeds Policy and its Implementation Strategy.*

In their contribution narrative the internal evaluation team shows how the programme contributed to this outcome: “R2F project allied with many other actors such as the CAADP Secretariat, established strategic collaborations with research institutions, held bilateral meetings with policy makers, PELUM participated in the reviews and made technical contributions to the policy with field inputs (data generated from models) that ISSD Uganda used as inputs while reviewing the National Seeds Policy with MAAIF. In all national and sub-national engagements, R2F project supported participation of farmers’ representatives who actively spoke for their seeds security and this justified the urgent need for the national seeds policy.

By increasing citizens voices, CSOs working in alliances with other strong actors and presenting grassroots experiences from the CMSS model, FACT and Farmer Field Schools at sub-national and national level engagements, R2F project contributed to the passing of

the National Seeds Policy and its implementation strategy in 2018.” (Page 19, Internal Contribution Stories)

### The Contribution Story revisited

Based on the internal evaluations, desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following contribution story.

*The Uganda National Seeds Policy and Implementation Strategy<sup>10</sup> provides the regulatory framework for the seed sector in Uganda and is supposed to ensure that farmers and other seed users have access to affordable quality seeds. The draft version of this policy remained on the shelves of the Ugandan Government for more than 3 years.<sup>11</sup> In the eyes of the R2F Consortium the draft favoured seeds companies above the farmers seeds systems, while the farmers get 85% of their seeds from their own system. To improve the Policy and to get it passed Parliament, the R2F alliance started their journey to reignite the dormant draft Policy.*

The national seed inspector of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) sighs and tries to remember how it all happened and why the Policy was stalled. The MAAIF is the national duty bearer of the Policy and responsible for the development and implementation of the policy. “The policy formulation process for the National Seed Policy started way back in 2010 but it dragged on until 2014. When the Cabinet demanded a Regulatory Impact Assessment of the National Seed Policy (stakeholder assessment, MA), there were so many actors that came on board while others were falling off.”

The R2F consortium, consisting of Oxfam in Uganda, Food Right Alliance (FRA), PELUM, COPASCO and ESAFF, wanted to reignite the shelved Policy to improve it. A staff member of one of the partners of R2F explains: “We desired a policy that could integrate the needs of the smallholder farmers. For instance, the breeding provision within the draft policy was not pro-farmers and all the breeding rights had been given to professional breeders and sidelining smallholder farmers as potential breeders. The provision had also outlawed smallholder farmers’ seed exchange and storage rights. This was intended to pave way for the commercialisation of the seed sector.”

The R2F and its partners were not alone in this mission. There were other actors working on improving the Seed Policy, like the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) – a project implemented by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation in partnership with the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) and funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Uganda – and USAID.

The Consortium, led by FRA, did the CSOs consultations on the policy that was required for the regulatory impact assessment. The first thing FRA did was to convene with the R2F partners, seed experts and researchers

<sup>10</sup> FAO: National Seed policy and strategy 2014/15-2019/2020. Final draft validated by Stakeholders.  
<http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC175068/>

<sup>11</sup> The reasons why it remained in draft was never formally disclosed to the public (interview partner)

(including those of ISSD) to fully analyse and understand the draft policy, and to come to a shared influencing strategy to get the policy moving. One of the staff members of FRA explains: “The experts and researchers provided technical assistance which helped the CSOs to fully comprehend the provisions of the draft policy.”

After that FRA expanded the alliance to include all member organisations of PELUM, ESSAF and COPACSO. “This enabled our message to go deep and far due to a wide network of member organisations that have local based structures and smallholder farmers.”

The staff member of FRA continues: “Then we targeted the Members of Parliament. We discovered they were sometimes ignorant about seeds and policy formulation. Caritas Uganda was key in mobilising the MPs for capacity development workshops and dialogues in the form of breakfast meetings. We empowered the MPs to debate the seeds policy on the floor of parliament from an informed point of view. They used our position papers with researched facts as a basis to task the Minister of Agriculture to table and pass the seeds policy.”

National and regional radio shows mobilised smallholders to directly call in and talk to the MPs and ministry staff that were present at the shows.

Since FRA was directly working with the Ministry, they could directly influence the Ministry as well.

In March 2018 the National Seed Policy and its implementation strategy were passed in the Cabinet. “I believe that the interventions by R2F partners greatly contributed to this approval. The R2F interventions included wide public consultations and training”, the ISSD advisor explains.

The national seed inspector of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries explains how the Policy was not only passed by the Cabinet, but also showed significant improvements. “Without the R2F contribution, the policy would have focused on the commercial certification system and not on farmer’s rights to produce and market seeds, especially indigenous varieties. The debate initiated by R2F influenced a policy shift to a pluralistic seed system.”

FRA is not totally satisfied yet. “Our efforts and those of our partners under the R2F programme were geared towards reviewing the policy to ensure that the farmers’ storage and exchange rights of the seed were protected. However, we did not win completely on that. The content of the seeds policy was amended to allow smallholder farmers the right to store and exchange seed, but it also stipulates that seeds should have a certain quality i.e. Distinct Uniform Standard (DUS). This type of seed is difficult for smallholder farmers to breed. However, with a policy in place now, the CSOs now have a basis for future advocacy for effective implementation of the seeds policy.”

#### Unintended outcome

“We registered some additional process outcomes of our advocacy campaigns: The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries no longer regards CSOs as antagonists but as complementary partners. For

instance, we now co-convene dialogue meetings with MAAIF. And there is sharing of resources, especially technical resources. This we have achieved because we changed our strategy from being alarmist to playing a complementary role using research based advocacy approaches. In fact, our research is contributing to MAAIF policy statements and government policy frameworks”, the R2F partner tells us. And the Ministry confirms that view.

So now it is time for implementation. The FRA staff member explains: “In Uganda, implementation of policies was a nightmare. Under our advocacy work, we have research-based advocacy that solicits for funds to implement the policy. For instance, we have the capacity to estimate the resources needed for implementation of a policy and then request – or lobby – parliament to allocate the necessary resources for policy implementation.”

In the media some outcries can be found to strengthen the implementation of the Seed Policy.<sup>12</sup> It is against this background that MAAIF in partnership with ISSD decided to organise national dissemination meetings to sensitise the District Agricultural Officer (DAOs) and farmer representatives especially from the district farmer’s association about the need to implement the policy.

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

The final contribution assessment can only be based on the perceptions of the interviewees and cannot be considered as conclusive. Based on perceptions only, the external evaluation team assesses the contribution to the process as medium, while the contribution to the content is assessed as strong. The internal story has been further substantiated and the outcomes made more explicit.

When reading the contribution story and listening to the interviewees carefully, it becomes evident that the central outcome consists of two aspects: 1) The passing of the Policy and Implementation Strategy through the Cabinet (process) and 2) the Inclusion of the farmers seed system in the Policy (content).

Ad 1) Passing of the policy in 2018: According to the interviewees, the R2F interventions are not necessary or sufficient to reach the outcome. The process would have slowed down if the R2F had not been there, but there were other actors that were working on awakening the policy like the ISSD and USAID. Nevertheless, the R2F contributions are considered useful and helpful.

Ad 2) Inclusion of the farmers seed system: The Consortium and particularly Food Rights Alliance undertook scientific research and hired crop and seed experts to assist them to internalise issues and write policy advocacy papers. This shifted the policy debate from being only focused on commercial certification to also embrace seeds rights of farmers to multiply and market seeds and promote protection of indigenous varieties.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1523790/seed-policy-spur-uganda-agricultural-development> retrieved 4 January 2021

Till date the external evaluation team has only received the National policy and strategy as evidence of the outcome. Despite various requests to the R2F partners, no evidence was received on the various outputs that led to the outcome. Also no evidence was received on the contribution to the outcome. It is not clear to the consultant whether the lack of evidence is a matter of not having time to respond to the external evaluators, or whether there is a lack of evidence itself.

Table 4. Contribution Assessment

National Seed Policy		
	Process	Content
<b>Evidence</b>		
Output	None received	None received
Contribution	None received	None received
<b>Perceptions</b>		
Necessary Was R2F necessary for outcome? (Without R2F no outcome)	No	Yes
Sufficient Was R2F sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of R2F only)	No	Yes
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Not determined</b>	<b>Not determined</b>

### On effectiveness

The R2F partners and especially FRA have played a role in reigniting the policy and more importantly in changing the content of the policy. They have chosen a strategy that is based on a solid understanding of the draft policy and its implications (capacity development) and alliance building. Based on that they started influencing MPs (directly through meetings and indirectly through mobilising farmers), the MAAIF and the farmers. At the same time they proposed an alternative farmer based seed system that influenced—although not fully satisfactorily, the policy itself.

When reviewing these strategies in the light of the R2F Uganda Theory of Change, it becomes clear that capacity development of MPs and the Ministry (MAAIF in this case) is a missing strategy for influencing in the Theory of Change.

### On relevance

Seed rights and quality seed are vital for the development of the agricultural sector and food security now and in the future in Uganda. RFA and other R2F partners have strengthened the relevance of the policy for smallholder farmers. For the policy and strategy to become effective, attention is needed for guiding the implementation so that smallholder farmers do indeed benefit from this policy.

### On sustainability

The strengthened CSOs will very likely continue after the R2F, and also many other CSOs and farmers have been strengthened, which will prevail. The policy is there and now attention is needed for guiding the implementation, so that smallholder farmers benefit from this policy. The specific attention given to the budget part (see comment of partner before) is an indication of the intention of partners to get the implementation done. Yet, the policy cycle takes longer than the timeline of the R2F project.

### On capacity development

FRA participated in the online media advocacy workshop, the Lobbying and Advocacy workshop, and the Farmer Field School. For this Seed Policy case the R2F partners engaged with experts in seeds and laws to fully understand the contents of the Seed Policy.

Next to that the R2F programme strengthened the capacities of the MPs and the MAAIF, to fully understand the implication of the draft policy for smallholder farmers.

## 1.2 Contribution Story 2

### Rejection of the GMO Bill

*Outcome: In 2017 and 2019 the President refused signing the GMO Bill.*

The internal story shows how the R2F partners used different strategies to make the outcome happen: 1) Building a strong coalition (Biodiversity Coalition of Uganda) with a shared strategy, 2) Targeting the MPs directly, 3) Indirect targeting of MPs through campaigns that made the public and farmers aware of the Bill, and 4) Direct influencing of the president.

### The Story revisited

Based on the internal evaluation, desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following contribution story.

*In 2017 the Parliament passed the Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill (in 2018 renamed 'Genetic Engineering Regulatory Bill'). The bill was meant to provide a regulatory framework that facilitates the safe development and application of biotechnology and biosafety mechanisms to regulate research, development and general release of genetically modified organisms. In December 2017, President Museveni rejected the bill and presented to Parliament 11 points of concern. Upon the rejection the Parliament revised the bill. In 2019 the President refused signing the Bill for a second time.*

When the R2F programme started in 2016, proponents of the Bill including the National Council of Science and Technology (NCST), Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Consortium (UBBC) and National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) were actively promoting

the passing of the Bill by Parliament.<sup>13</sup> Their reasoning was that GMOs would contribute to transforming agriculture, combat pests and diseases and increase food security in Uganda.

The R2F partners felt this was their chance to make Ugandans aware of the detrimental effects of GMOs. For that purpose they gave birth to the Biodiversity Coalition of Uganda (BCU) in 2017,<sup>14</sup> with Caritas as host and bringing together many actors including Oxfam, PELUM, ESAFF, FRA. The BCU had two purposes: To get a better understanding of the Bill and to develop a joint strategy.

For getting a better understanding scientist and lawyers were brought in. An ally of the R2F Consortium explains: “Dialoguing with scientists and lawyers played a major role in information generation. They gave us technical assistance through scrutinising and analysing the bill more critically, clause by clause. They helped us a lot in drafting position papers which helped quite a great deal.”

The CSOs drew up a list of concerns and recommendations for improving the Bill. Their recommendations included among others that a) adequate safeguards against possible adverse effects needed to be established, b) liability was to be extended to developers of the technologies, researchers involved in experimentation, distributors, agents and importers, and c) they demanded that isolation measures and distances for any person involved in genetic material research and production be clearly spelled out.

As the CSOs wrote in a position paper in October 2019: “The bill in its current form and urgency to pass it, hides behind the picture that giving an open gate reception to GMOs is the magic bullet to our famine, climate change, nutrition, pest and disease problems yet these problems are still being faced by nations that have openly embraced GMO technology. Much of the efforts have been channelled towards cash crops exposing the commercial interests of those fronting biotechnology rather than humanitarian interests of society.”<sup>15</sup> At the same time the CSOs proposed a stronger focus on further developing agro-ecology.

The Parliament had passed the Bill already in October 2017, so the CSOs geared their attention directly to let the President revoke the Bill. A staff member of one of the R2F partners says proudly: “We had private engagements with the president and presented a well written evidence based position paper. We worked with Uganda Joint Christian Council that also has access to the president. He included our recommendations in his letter to the Parliament”.

In December 2017, President Museveni rejected the bill and presented to the Speaker of Parliament 11 points of concern. According to the position paper presented by the CSOs the rejection of the president ‘echoed’ their advocacy: “Incidentally, these points were much similar to the objections to the bill which Ugandans (CSOs) had

presented to the Parliamentary Committee on Science and Technology” (CSO paper 2019).<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, Caritas, FRA and PELUM organised meetings with Members of Parliament to explain the dangers and shortcoming of the Bill, in both 2018 and 2019 and engaged in this way more than 30 MPs.

Between December 2018 and May 2019 the general public was mobilised to influence their MPs as well through brochures, flyers, and radio spot messages that encouraged them to call their members of Parliament to urge them to refuse the Bill ending up in laws. “The main outcome for us was that the awareness of the public has been raised tremendously on GMO” as an R2F ally explains.

The professor that co-authored the Bill does not agree, “I think the advocacy campaigns against the GMO bill were not relevant because it was not based on scientific arguments. The advocates did not have scientific evidence of what they were claiming. The advocacy was just based on speculation and emotions. We are into parallel worlds, the world of belief and the world of reality. The advocates belong to the world of belief.”

The Parliament revised the bill and it was passed once again in November 2018. It did not fully incorporate the President’s views (including measures that would ensure that GMO crops do not contaminate organic crops). This prompted the President to refuse signing the Bill for a second time in July 2019.

The professor sees it as a big drawback for research on GMOs. “Let all the laboratories in Kawanda, Kabanyoro and Makerere University be closed. If the president listens to only safety rhetoric by human rights advocates and religious fundamentalisms of his close friends and family members. Let him promote his peasants. We have spent 30 years on one bill and we are still moving in circles just because of emotional advocacy sentiments.”

Although the President rejected the Bill twice, the fight is not over yet. “The outcome is one, but the Bill is still there,” says the R2F partner, “The Parliament is destined to vote on the bill in its current form and if two-thirds majority vote in favour of the bill, it will automatically turn into law without the President’s assent.”

In late 2020, newspapers report that the President himself is ready to sign the Bill. In the Biocrop Update<sup>17</sup> the President is quoted: “Initially, they (GMO opponents) had some good reasons but I now think it is time to insist. We shall now call the caucus and resolve this.” Also in the Cornell Alliance for Science a similar message is broadcasted.<sup>18</sup>

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

The contribution of the R2F programme to the outcome is considered strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. There is

<sup>13</sup> UBBC (Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Consortium), Leaflet on Biotechnology and Biosafety Law process in Uganda

<sup>14</sup> See the ‘Anti-GMO doc’, announcing the BCU.

<sup>15</sup> GMO Position paper, Caritas, FRA and others, October 2019.

<sup>16</sup> GMO Position paper, Caritas, FRA and others, October 2019

<sup>17</sup>

<https://www.isaaa.org/kc/cropbiotechupdate/article/default.asp?ID=18030> retrieved on 4 January 2021

<sup>18</sup> <https://allianceforscience.cornell.edu/blog/2020/03/ugandan-president-wants-gmo-bill-passed/> retrieved on 4 January 2021

good evidence of outcomes, outputs (Position paper, etc.), and some on contribution (arguments in the position paper were used by Museveni). The interviewees agree on the necessity of the R2F for approaching the President, and to a certain extent on the sufficiency (allies approached the President, and the BCU wrote the position paper).

Table 5. Contribution Analysis

Contribution assessment GMO	
Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was Oxfam necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without Oxfam no outcome</i> )	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? ( <i>Outcome is result of Oxfam only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome</i> )	Probably
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

### On effectiveness

The story of the internal evaluation is confirmed by the external evaluation team: The R2F partners used different strategies to make the outcome happen: 1) Building a strong coalition (Biodiversity Coalition of Uganda) with a shared strategy, 2) Targeting the MPs directly 3) Indirect targeting of MPs through campaigns that made the public and farmers aware of the Bill, and 4) Direct influencing of the president.

Within the ToC of R2F Uganda, there is no explicit pathway for direct influencing of governments, MPs and/or the President, except for working with champions within the government. For learning purposes it would be helpful to make the ToC more explicit with the various pathways of influencing.

A very strong underlying strategy practiced by the CSOs was to get a good understanding of the implications of the bill by engaging GMO experts and lawyers. This helped the strategy of influencing the President, the public and the Members of Parliament.

The strategy of directly influencing the President was very effective for quite some time: The President rejected the bill twice (end 2017 and August 2019).

However, the bill was passed twice in the Parliament (October 2017 and November 2018), and as such the CSOs did not convince a sufficient number of MPs. Around 2,000 people signed the petition. Knowing that Uganda has an estimated population of more than 45 million, this was not an effective strategy.

### On relevance

Clear policy development regulating GMOs is highly relevant for food security and resilience of small farmers, which is the core of the R2F overall goal. At this moment the so-called GMO Bill is GMO-friendly. A GMO friendly policy seems premature and risky and more in the

interest of large companies than in the interest of small holders.

### On sustainability

The rejection by the President itself is not sustainable. The Bill can re-enter the arena any time. The strengthened CSOs and their alliance will sustain and will remain vigilant also beyond the scope of the R2F project. The CSOs recognise there is still a way to go: "GMO is encouraged by big companies, so we need to be strong and continue." (R2F Ally). Last but not least, the R2F consortium has given voice to the farmers and communities. They may stay aware and come into action when needed. It shows how influencing and systemic change needs a long breath, and sustainable alliances beyond the project and grant mode.

### On capacity development

Through building an alliance (BCU) the different CSOs channelled experiences on GMO and influencing strategies together. Through working together they exchanged knowledge and capacities. Inviting researchers and consultants further strengthened the alliance capacities.

There was quite a range of capacity development efforts through the R2F (see Contribution Stories Internal evaluation and cross cutting narrative on capacity development). Also third party capacities were strengthened, e.g. Members of Parliament and farmers.

## 1.3 Investigative Story Uganda

# Rejection of the proposed amendments of Article 26

*Outcome: In September 2018 the Parliament rejected the proposed amendments of article 26 of the Constitution. Spin off outcomes: Several other land-related laws were redrafted as well as a consequence of the work on Art 26, including the Survey Act (1939), National Land Evictions Guidelines of 2018, the Land Acquisitions Bill, the Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy (LARRP) and the National Land Policy Implementation Action Plan.*

In the internal story a number of main strategies are presented that were used to let the Parliament reject the amendments of Article 26: Capacity strengthening and alliance building (partly through digital work); Public Campaigning to influence MPs indirectly; Collaborating with the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development. The internal story also mentions the role played by the media, and other organisations like ActionAid and LASPNET.

### The Story revisited

Based on the internal evaluation, desk review and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story:

*This story is about the protest of Ugandan CSOs against the plan of the government of Uganda to make it easy to dispossess farmers from their land.*

*On 13 July 2017 a constitutional amendment bill of Article 26 (the Constitutional Right to Protection from deprivation of property) was tabled before Parliament. With the amendments the government wanted to resolve delays in infrastructure and investment projects. The amendments would take away the requirement of prompt and prior compensation and enable the government to compulsorily acquire land before owners have agreed on compensation.*

*For the consortium of R2F partners, the proposed amendments were not intended as a solution to the problems mentioned, but an attempt of the government to make it easy to take land from citizens. And so they started their efforts to persuade the Parliament to reject the proposed amendments and strengthen the land rights instead.*

19 November 2020. Yesterday Bobi Wine – candidate for the 2021 Ugandan presidential elections - was arrested once more and people were killed during riots following his arrest. The programme coordinator of one of the large CSOs working on land rights is somewhat distracted. “It is an unsettling situation, but we swore we would be non-political. We refrain from direct political work, so we can’t participate in direct action. But there is awareness in communities to ask for their rights, not only for food rights but also for other – political – rights.”

And that is exactly what happened during the campaign to protest against the Amendments of Article 26 of the Constitution. Through building a network that permeated the smallest veins of society, citizens and communities were mobilised to call upon their Members of Parliament to reject the Amendments. At the same time Members of Parliament were approached directly by a large alliance of CSOs to let them understand what the consequences would be if the Amendments were accepted. And it worked. In September 2018 the Parliament rejected the proposed amendments.

So how did it all begin?

In July 2017 the proposed Amendments of Article 26 were tabled for Parliament. It did not take land right activists as a surprise. A staff member of Oxfam in Uganda staff recalls: “In 2017 we organised a capacity development workshop on physical and digital campaigning. There were rumours that an amendment to Article 26 would be upcoming, so we asked the co-trainer of the workshop to stay and work with us on a physical and digital campaign for Article 26.”

### **Building alliances**

Right after the Amendments were tabled, the Consortium (Oxfam in Uganda, PELUM, ESAFF, RFA) started building up their campaign. One of the first things to do was to understand what the Amendments actually meant. They mobilised lawyers and legal experts from the Uganda Law Society, Lawyers without Borders and others to help them to understand the Amendments and their consequences.

While exploring the consequences of the Amendments, the Consortium started mobilizing the support. Building the alliance was easy and highly effective. Before, the various organisations working on land convened yearly for the Joint Sector Review, and for the Land Awareness week, so they were well acquainted. The R2F Consortium consisted of four organisations each with specific qualities and capacities: Food Rights Alliance was strong at influencing national players, PELUM had members spread all over Uganda reaching at grassroots’ level, ESAFF had their members spread over Uganda as well, and Oxfam was strong at convening and facilitating.

Not long after the Amendments were tabled in Parliament, the R2F consortium and many other CSOs shared their position paper and built a platform for exchanging information. Before long more than 400 organisations joined this platform. From the outset, the CSOs agreed it would be a ‘faceless’ campaign. The Oxfam staff member explains, “Land in Uganda is a very sensitive issue that touches everybody. We planned a campaign, and we agreed as actors not to carry logos to mitigate the risks. Civic space was at that moment very limited, and so this is how we dealt with it: No logos.”

After building the Alliance, the campaign followed three different pathways: A public campaign to reach out to the millions of farmers and citizens; direct influencing of members of Parliament and direct influencing of the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban development.

### **Public campaigning**

The R2F consortium and their allies mobilised thousands of citizens at both national and district level. Through radio talk shows, both at national and local level, people were informed about the consequences of the Amendments. Brochures and local campaigns were organised and citizens were asked to call upon their members of Parliament to reject the Amendments. Religious and traditional leaders – both have a large constituency in Uganda – were approached to use their influence as well. “The most effective strategy”, says a staff member of one of the allies, “was mobilizing the citizens with a simple but effective message that connected people’s land and the power in their vote: ‘Your land is your vote’ or ‘No land, no vote.’”

### **Direct influencing of Members of Parliament**

Partners held breakfast meetings with Members of Parliament to provide them with information on the Amendments. These breakfast meetings were organised along religious and tribal lines. One of the partners explains: “We realised that MPs come from different parties and would, if you approach them along the Party lines, give opposing ideas. So, instead of along political lines, we took the path of mobilizing around regions, tribes and religious groups. This worked for us.” The breakfast meetings worked rather well, and quite some Members of Parliament were convinced that the Amendments would not help them – many of them being land owners themselves. One of the MPs explains: “I give credit to the civil society organisations for the continuous empowerment and sensitization of the members of parliament. The Oxfam CSOs equipped us with proper knowledge that enriched our debates against the

amendment of article 26 on the floor of government. The dialogue meetings were strategic because they kept us the frontline fighters well equipped with thematic knowledge about implications of the amendment of article 26 and we in turn also empowered our voters.” The alliance also sent an open letter to the Members of Parliament. This letter is still hanging in the premises of Parliament.

**Influencing the Ministry**

Influencing the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development (MOLHUD) was another important thread of activities. “As an organisation we had a formal MoU with the Ministry. That gave us leverage for activities including land rights, inception meetings. We did joint land visits...” says a staff member of one of the partners. He continues: “This is very rewarding for us. In our advocacy work we believe in evidence based advocacy and that appeals to MOLHUD. We provided technical contributions on the Article 26 campaign. Even though we had different positions on Art 26 (Ministry was pro amendment), we were pushing them as partners, we still had windows of moving together, we both presented our view, and had mutual understanding. They did not throw us out, but held in first instance the position of the government. As individuals they felt that what we wanted was fair. So in the end they adopted our position as well.”

The Ministry acknowledges the added value of working with the CSOs. One of the staff at the Ministry stresses: “As a ministry we do not have the capacity to reach everywhere in the country. However, this consultative approach was deemed effective because as the Lands Ministry we were able to meet many stakeholders including CSOs, private sector and Local Governments”. And he adds: “I think the major outcome of this programme is that it opened space to discuss the implications of amending Article 26. The end product was that Article 26 remained not amended but many discussions were initiated. The key outcome of the discussions was the agreement that the Constitution should not be changed to amend Article 26 but rather make amendments in the old Land Acquisition Act of 1965.”

**But what made their influence so effective?**

Combining the public campaigns with the work of partners at national, district and community level and the direct influencing of the Members of Parliament is seen by the alliance as a successful approach. “The public campaigning was very effective. The same message was heard at national and local radio stations. Everybody was aware of the land issues. Wherever the MPs went, they heard NO.”, as one of the partners explains.

**Momentum underneath**

Most people interviewed feel that without the R2F programme, the Amendments would have likely been accepted. One interviewee says: “If the programme had not been not there, the Amendments would have succeeded, I am sure since other amendments at that time succeeded. Land was actually at that time all that we

were left with. There was momentum underneath. What was needed was Leadership and information, to sensitise people. And that is where Oxfam came in, with resources.”

**Unintended outcomes**

The proposed Amendments of Article 26 brought also another outcome to the surface. “An effective element of the intervention is that R2F partners have been able to show the gaps in the existing land acquisition legal frameworks that only acknowledged Mailo, Leasehold and Freehold and ignored customary certificates. We now regard customary certificates as title deeds and whoever possesses it, is duly eligible for compensation.” (a representative of MoLHUD)

The communities came to understand the value of their land and also the importance of registering land especially under the customary land tenure system. “During the campaigns, many people acquired certificates of customary ownership. Our campaign advocacy stressed that registering land was one way to protect the people’s land” (R2F Ally).

The proposed amendments to Article 26 were rejected in 2018. That does not mean, however, that the amendments may not reappear in other bills and acts. There are still forces in the government that would like to see the amendments return one way or another. And the elections will have their effect as well. Many Members of Parliament may not return to Parliament after the elections. Various actors express their worries on this.

Oxfam in Uganda and their partners are confident that, whenever the Bill resurfaces, people will be ready to oppose it: “We worked with communities, they are aware, they know the methods we used. We are confident that when the time comes the communities will rise without or with us. And we have allies in the media” (R2F partner).

**Reflection**

**Contribution assessment**

R2F’s contribution to the outcome is considered strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. There is sufficient evidence on outputs, supporting underlying outcomes and R2F’s contribution to changes in practices of communities and the MPs and as such to the outcome.

On top of that, the interviewees see the R2F’s contribution as necessary: Without the R2F interventions, most interviewees think the amendments would have been accepted. The R2F programme was probably sufficient to establish the outcome in close collaboration with the ActionAid group of CSOs. It was interesting to notice that almost all NGOs and CSOs interviewed had a deep sense of ownership over the interventions and the overall R2F.

*Table 6. Contribution Assessment*

Contribution assessment	Rejection	Amendments	Article 26
Evidence (weak/medium/strong)			

Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Strong
<b>Perceptions interviewees</b>	
Necessary: Was R2F necessary for outcome? (Without R2F no outcome)	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of R2F only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome)	Probably icw ActionAid
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

### On effectiveness

The R2F consortium has been very effective in building alliances that stretch far beyond their own group of partners. With that group of organisations they first studied the legal consequences of the Amendments so they were well informed and could speak with one voice, with one message. After that they reached far into the communities and to make them aware of their land rights and the proposed amendments of Article 26. The citizens and farmers at their turn influenced their MPs. A strategy that was not highlighted in the internal evaluation was the direct influencing of MPs through organising breakfast meetings to inform them on the consequences of the amendments. Since many MPs also own land, many of them took sides with the CSOs.

A third thread of work was the direct influencing and collaboration with the Ministry of Land, Housing and Infrastructure. Also the Ministry took sides with the CSOs.

As stated in other contribution stories, the direct influencing of governments, MPs is not explicitly mentioned in the R2F Uganda ToC.

The combination of the public campaign, awareness raising of farmers with the direct influencing of MPs is claimed as very effective by the interviewees. Elements that enforced the campaigning and direct influencing included the 'faceless' campaigning without logos. Another aspect is the alignment of CSOs, speaking with one voice, bringing a shared message.

### On relevance

All interviewees rate the R2F work on Art 26 as highly relevant. The general line of thinking is that land rights are – next to access to good seed - the most important issue in Uganda: without land no food security. Beyond that, one of the partners exclaimed that "Land is not only part of production, but also of culture, it is a sense of belonging, of identity" (R2F partner).

### On sustainability

The proposed amendments were rejected. Many fear, however, that the amendments may reappear in other bills and acts. So the 'outcome' of the rejection of amendments is not secure yet. CSOs, citizens and communities of farmers have been strengthened and

empowered on land rights. And they will probably stand up when the amendments may reappear.

In some districts a start has been made with registration of customary land, as a result of the programme, and also these results will sustain. Besides, several other land-related laws were redrafted as well as a consequence of the work against the amendment of Art 26, laws that protect the land rights of citizens and farmers.

### On capacity development

There was quite a range of capacity development efforts through the R2F (see the Internal Evaluation Contribution Story and cross cutting narrative on capacity development Internal evaluation, Annex 3). One that was mentioned often was the capacity development on digital campaigning. Especially in a country with 77% of its population being under 25 years of age, and almost half of the population with access to the Internet, this is a very potential way of influencing.

Through working together the CSOs exchanged knowledge and capacities. Inviting experts further strengthened the alliance capacities. In addition to partners, also third party capacities were strengthened: Members of Parliament, staff of the MoLHUD, citizens and farmers.

#### 1.4 Uganda R2F – Collective System Analysis

How do the R2F programme and its outcomes in the end contribute to the impact statement 'Vulnerable women, men and children exit poverty and realise their R2F and hence stabilise their livelihood'? Is the programme working on the root causes of the problem and targeting the right actors issues?

Based on interviews and desk study, a Collective System Analysis was made by the consultant to identify root causes that hinder the realisation of Right to Food, as well as opportunities.<sup>19</sup> In a matrix (see below) root causes and opportunities are combined with the areas where the interventions took place. Was the programme targeting root causes and opportunities?

When embarking on the R2F programme, Oxfam and its partners made an elaborate analysis of the problem and did a stakeholder and power analysis (see A-04843-02 Annex D of the Project Proposal). Land use and tenure insecurity, together with lack of access to good seeds and extension services were mentioned as main problems of smallholder farmers, combined with bad governance (Who is Growing report, Oxfam In Uganda). R2F partners also set up a Manifesto for small-scale farmers in Uganda in which they expressed the main issues for smallholders.

Influencing the government policies and practices was the main entrance for the R2F. Either through direct influencing and working together with the Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development, arranging

<sup>19</sup> Originally a workshop to conduct a Collective System Analysis was planned, but due to COVID it was not possible to gather different

stakeholders around the table. It was decided then to ask interviewees on root causes and opportunities.



## R2F Uganda: Root causes, opportunities, interventions

Vulnerable women, men and children exit poverty and realise their R2F and hence stabilise their livelihood

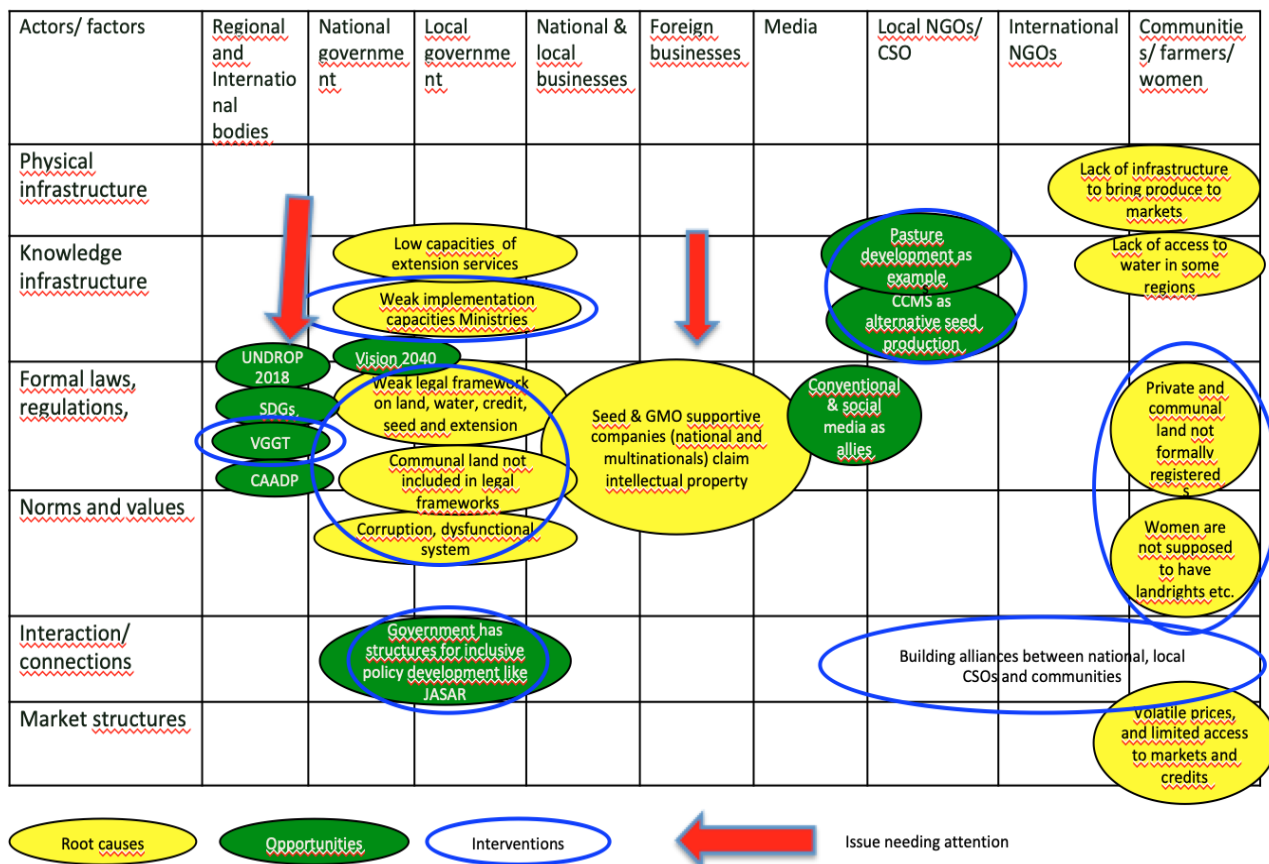


Figure 2. Collective System Analysis Matrix

meetings with MPs, and indirectly through mobilising farmers and the general public.

Creating a ‘roaring dragon’ through building alliances is a core outcome of the programme. Through building alliances the R2F enabled interactions among the different CSO and as such they acted as countervailing power of the government and its policies. Besides the partner CSOs worked with the staff of Ministries and

MPs and created increased interaction and thus increased understanding of each other’s points of view.

Although the changes in public policies the programme is working on are considered relevant, there is a risk that the short lives of the outcomes may hinder the contribution to increased social and economic justice. Policy blocking and development is the first step in shaping an enabling environment for small holders and farmers. However, the actual improvement of smallholders’ livelihoods also requires the implementation of favourable policies into good practices. This is the next step that needs attention.

There is no direct influencing of the private sector within the sub-theme. In Uganda the private sector is seen by interviewees as having similar interests as the government, and difficult to approach and therefore not much attention was paid to influencing the private sector actors directly. R2F reduced the risk of private sector

actors violating smallholder farmers’ rights to land and seed, in a more indirect way: via public policies that regulate their behaviour, as elaborated above. It is unclear what roles multinationals like Monsanto and Bayer are playing in Uganda, including what role they have in the GMO debate. Oxfam and partners consider targeting the private sector as an omission as well (validation session) and have written a Private Sector strategy in 2018. This has not resulted yet in more attention for the Private Sector actors under R2F, although the runner-up program, FAIR4ALL Uganda, will collaborate with private sector actors on alternative business models in agriculture, will hold private sector actors to account, and will work on redressing mechanisms for large scale land-based investments.

One of the opportunities that emerges from the system analysis is the role of international and multi- and bilateral institutions. Although the R2F project worked with regional institutions, they could have made more use of other multi- and bilateral institutions.

### In conclusion

Based on the interviews and other data, the external evaluation team concludes that the R2F worked on many

of the root causes and opportunities and targeted the right issues and actors. Issues and actors that deserve additional attention include moving from policies into practices, targeting the private sector (also in this sub-theme), and collaboration with international and regional institutions.

### 1.5 Key observations R2F Uganda

#### On contribution

The contribution of the R2F programme to the outcomes is assessed by the external evaluation team as medium/strong. In general the interventions were necessary but not sufficient: also other actors contributed, as is common in advocacy outcomes. The collecting and sharing of evidence of outputs, and especially of contribution needs attention.

#### On effectiveness

The R2F partners were highly effective in building alliances, partly based on existing connections already through the annual Joint Sector Review and the Land Awareness week. They were also highly effective in engaging experts on the themes and ensuring their influencing strategy was based on solid grounds. The fact that partners were member organisations with connections to the regional, national, sub-national and grass root level made that messages could be spread easily.

The effectiveness of influencing MPs seems highly dependent on the theme of influencing: Where the influencing of MPs on land/ amendments of Article 26 went very well, the influencing of MPs on the GMO Bill was not very effective. This is partly due to the mobilisation of citizens and farmers: While the mobilisation on the land issue was massive, the mobilisation on the GMO bill was very moderate.

#### On sustainability

Sustainability of the movement that was created, within and outside the alliances, and within the farmers and citizens is considered strong. Sustainability of policy changes is not always evident. It is questionable whether the reported policy outcomes 'Rejection of the Amendments of Article 26' and 'Rejection of the GMO bill' will eventually last. This is dependent on political developments. In that respect the sustainability of the alliances created is vital to come into action when required.

#### On relevance

The topics and actors that were targeted are considered relevant for smallholders. What is missing, also in the sub-theme of Governance, is the targeting of private sector actors, including the formal seed sector and companies that have a stake in GMO issues.

#### On increased social and economic justice

The strengthened CSOs and their alliances have influenced policy outcomes, and with that they have shown that the power balance shifted, both of which are preconditions for social and economic justice. However, some of the policy changes may be short lived. This may limit the contribution to the long-term outcome and impact of the R2F programme.

Other issues deserving additional attention include targeting the private sector (also in this sub-theme), and collaboration with international and regional institutions.

#### On capacity development

Partners acknowledged that their strengthened capacities contributed to achieving results. As a special issue the external evaluation team would like to mention the recognition of their capacity development by Members of Parliament and staff of the Ministries.

#### Reflection on the ToC

Based on the internal evaluation and the additional research by the external evaluation team the following observations on the Theory of Change of R2F Uganda can be made:

- > The R2F consortium in Uganda has proven to be very strong in building alliances and in reaching out to other CSOs both at national and sub-national level.
- > The R2F consortium in Uganda has contributed to a number of changes in public policies including the rejection of the GMO Bill, the rejection of the Amendments of Article 26 and related land laws, and consequently practices of farmers to register their customary land, and the passing and adaptation of the National Seed Policy and Strategy.
- > Issues that deserve follow up and attention include turning the public policies into practices, and the private policies and practices. Although the sub-theme was 'Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers' also here private actors play a role, especially in the seed and GMO case.

#### Pathways of change

The R2F Uganda Theory of Change shows two pathways of change that contribute to the two targeted outcomes: The pathway of alliance building, media and influencing citizens, and the pathway of champions in the public and private sector developing alternative models.

The pathway of alliance building, media and influencing citizens has been very effective as illustrated in the different stories.

The other pathway remains under-explored. It was more the R2F actors that proposed alternative models in the case of the CCMS and the Pasture Development than the so-called 'champions'.

Effective strategies for influencing used by the R2F programme include the 'faceless' public campaigning (Art 26), the direct influencing of Members of Parliament (Art 26, NSP and to a lesser extent GMO) and the direct influencing of staff of Ministries (NSP and Art

26). Using evidence-based approaches, speaking with one voice and the use of digital campaigning contributed to effectiveness. Strengthened MPs and government staff, partnering with legal experts, and the influencing strategy of MP's using religious and tribe lines instead of political party lines were other very effective strategies.

Interestingly enough, in the Theory of Change direct influencing of MPs and staff of the Ministries is not mentioned while it has been a very effective and important strategy.

Also developing the capacities of MPs and staff of Ministries, and collaboration with Ministries are important influencing strategies that are not mentioned in the Theory of Change.

For learning purposes it is helpful to make the Theory of Change more explicit and highlight all strategies for influencing.

## 2. Myanmar Contribution stories

### Introduction

In 2016, the newly elected civilian NLD government took their seat in Myanmar. Oxfam's Right to Food (R2F) programme was designed with the expectation that the new government would start a progressive reform process that would support improvements on the R2F issues (land, seeds, forests and investment).

The overall goal of the R2F project in Myanmar was to realise the right to food sovereignty of smallholder farmers, landless and forest dwelling women and men in 90 villages in Kachin, Northern and Southern Shan states and regions in Myanmar. The idea was that the union and state level governments and the private sector would adopt and implement fairer and more responsible laws and policies in land, forest, seed and private investment to facilitate this right to food sovereignty. For such fair and responsible policies to be adopted and implemented, two pathways of change were used: 1) Strengthening the influencing capacities of national and local CSOs and their alliances and 2) Influencing government and private sector actors to change and implement policy frameworks and governance systems.

At the start of the R2F's second phase, while there had been some limited progress, civic space for communities and civil society organisations to influence the national government and companies had shrunk. Therefore, the project put in the second phase an increased emphasis on building capacity of local organisations for influencing sub-national government actors.

In addition to the shrinking civic space, China had launched the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) that resulted in the China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) with investments in Northern Shan and Kachin. In these states a growing number of less accountable Asian (mainly Chinese) investors, and military backed companies was noted. Most of these companies proved not open to advocacy efforts. The project therefore dropped its focus on private sector policies, while still supporting communities in negotiations with companies about private sector practices or in appeals to authorities to change private sector practices.

The R2F programme in Myanmar developed, based on the overall R2F Theory of Change, a contextualised ToC, and adapted this ToC in phase 2 (see ToC above).

The R2F project in Myanmar was mainly implemented by Metta Development Foundation. Metta is a large national NGO in Myanmar whose work focuses on both development and humanitarian programming.

### Selection of sets of outcomes for the evaluation

R2F Myanmar and the internal evaluation team delivered contribution analyses on 6 sets of outcomes divided over two outcome areas:

#### *Improved policies*

- > Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) recognises smallholder farmers' role and CSO participation
- > Myanmar Investment Law rules require transparency and inclusion
- > The Farmland and Vacant Fallow and Virgin Land (VFL) law: willingness to engage with CSO

#### *Strengthened alliances and CSOs*

- > Building alliances at national union and state level
- > Strengthened CSOs and alliances
- > Citizens raising their voice to claim their rights

Due to a lack of capacity, Oxfam was not able to conduct a contribution analysis of all outcomes that were harvested on this sub-theme in Myanmar. The selection from the overall database to the outcomes to be elaborated in the contribution story for each project was done by staff from the Strategic Partnership, based on two criteria. First, to ensure relevance and opportunities for learning, the outcomes had to be higher-level outcomes. Secondly, the set of outcomes to be included in the contribution story had to be diverse and represent the main areas of work of the project.

The external team selected two contribution stories and reviewed the claimed contributions of the programme, and researched effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, capacity development and system change from an external point of view.

The following two outcomes were selected based on criteria like the quality of the outcomes, level of the outcomes, complexity, balanced representation of the various pathways and topics (land & forestry, food sovereignty, seeds and investment law):

- > Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) recognises smallholder farmers' role and CSO participation (2018)
- > Building alliances in Kachin state to influence Tissue Banana Plantations.

These two contribution stories relate to at least 10 of the total 48 outcomes of the sub-theme that were reported by R2F Myanmar.

## 2.1 Story 1

## Agricultural Development Strategy

*Outcome: ‘The Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) recognises smallholder farmers’ role and CSO participation (2018)’.*

In their contribution narrative Oxfam Novib shows how the R2F programme contributed to the outcome: “The improved ADS, with contributions of civil society incorporated, demonstrates that a combination of alliance building, capacity strengthening and citizens raising their voice, can indeed lead to government policy changes. Early efforts of alliance building with FSWG, heavily involved in the ADS consultation process, proved to be of importance here, even though the focus of the project later on shifted to more local alliance building. Both local CSOs and local communities were supported through the programme in relation to the ADS. For example, capacity building of eight CSOs in Northern Shan focused on supporting their engagement in the sub-national consultations around the ADS. This in turn allowed citizens to raise their voice around issues they face during the consultations.”

### The Story revisited

Based on the internal evaluations, desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story.

“I remember it very clearly”, an Oxfam staff member says, “the Food Security Working Group – a group of CSOs – convened a meeting in spring 2017, with Metta, our partner, as chair. The Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) was there as well, and we discussed how a real consultation should look like. We mapped out the process and what needed to be done. The consultant recruited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) for the ADS, was crucial in this process. We got really excited about the consultative process in all the states and regions in Myanmar. Our goal was really to give civil society a voice.”

Since early 2016, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB had been working for the Government of Myanmar on a proposal for a Global Agriculture and Food Security programme (GAFSP), worth 27 million US dollars. One of the requirements of this programme was the development of a country-based Agricultural Development Strategy and to hold nation-wide consultations. In the guidelines for the GAFSP it is stated that “participation must be inclusive/representative, is well planned and more than a one off activity, and is meaningful and transparent.”<sup>20</sup>

In reality the Myanmar GAFSP proposal – to be submitted in January 2017<sup>21</sup> – and the draft ADS were both written in English, and had gone through a consultation process that was limited to a small number of national actors.

Knowing that the ADS was still in draft and could be a motor for inclusive development, Oxfam in Myanmar sent their comments on the proposal and especially on the consultation process to the FAO and the MOALI.<sup>22</sup> “We recommend that MOALI takes clear steps to strengthen the quality of participation of Myanmar national NGOs and CBOs in the process of developing and implementing both the GAFSP proposal and ADS.”

In December 2016, the FAO and MOALI agreed with Oxfam’s comments and invited a broad range of national NGOs and CSOs for an additional round of consultations, followed by another ‘formal’ consultative meeting in January 2017.

However, the Food Security Working Group (FSWG), Metta, Oxfam, LIFT and others felt the process needed further improvement and roll out to the sub-national level and called for that crucial meeting in spring 2017, to discuss what *real* consultation would look like. They then designed their own consultative process in 14 States/Regions and three Municipalities of Myanmar to provide feedback on the third draft of the ADS. The MOALI advisor recalls, “The Deputy minister of MOALI was there as well, it was a two day meeting, in which I explained the process clearly. The government, CSO people, all were there. And they had to compromise. They had different ideas of how the process should be, so I had to create consensus. It was unprecedented. There had been no such process in Myanmar since the 1950s.”

It was agreed that the Ministry would organise the formal consultations in the States, while NGOs and CSOs would ensure proper involvement of NGOs and CSOs. In Kachin and Shan states (and two other states), Metta, Oxfam’s partner, organised pre-consultations with local NGOs and CSOs and brought the input from the pre-consultations to the formal governmental consultations.

After the public consultations,<sup>23</sup> the fourth draft version of the ADS was written, and there were four people that reviewed the draft, including a peer reviewer from Oxfam Novib. One of the Oxfam staff remembers: “I happened to be at a meeting of the Asian Development Bank on the World Food Day event in October 2017. They were leading the peer review process of ADS. I made the remark to the chair that it would be good if an NGO could be included in the peer review of the final draft. And she readily agreed. So we asked my colleague in The Hague as a peer reviewer.”

The reviewer acknowledged the draft’s recognition of the role of smallholder farmers, the non-crop, non-rice centric focus, the emphasis on participation of civil society and monitoring and evaluation, and mentioned some issues for strengthening as well (gender, climate resilience, smallholders, institutional set-up).<sup>24</sup> She

<sup>20</sup> GAFSP “COUNTRY GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC SECTOR WINDOW PROPOSALS” issued on August 30, 2016, Annex 3.

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.gafspfund.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2.%20Myanmar\\_Coverletter%20with%20signature%20from%20MoF%20and%20MoAg.pdf](https://www.gafspfund.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2.%20Myanmar_Coverletter%20with%20signature%20from%20MoF%20and%20MoAg.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Comments on Draft Myanmar Global Agriculture and Food

Security programme (GAFSP) Project Proposal (dated 9/11/2016)

<sup>23</sup> ADS Team Response to Comments on ADS Draft No. 3 of December 2016

<sup>24</sup> ADS presentation for INGO platform in Myanmar2, PPT, Madelon Meijer

shared her findings with the INGO platform. The INGO platform offered their support to the government for implementation through a position paper (February 2018).<sup>25</sup>

Based on the comments of the peers, the final ADS draft was presented to the Councillor and MOALI and finally agreed upon by the Cabinet in June 2018.

Now in 2020, the Oxfam CSO partners in Southern and Northern Shan look back in disappointment. During a Zoom session one of the staff members in Southern Shan explains: “How can you develop an Agricultural Development Strategy for smallholders, if you do not consult the real smallholders? There was not enough time to include the real smallholders. Yes, there is a chapter on smallholders. But our smallholders differ very much from the smallholders mentioned in the ADS. Those mentioned in the ADS are medium and large farmers. In the end the CSOs did not have much influence on the ADS. In my opinion, the whole process and decision was already set” Another CSO representative in Northern Shan agrees. “We took the recommendations on record, but in the end our comments were hardly taken up”.

Others see the glass half full. Oxfam staff explains: “For me the real outcome was that civil society had their voices heard, that they strengthened their capacities to do advocacy. Through the R2F programme, we worked for the first time together on an issue, the ADS. Based on R2F, we started building an alliance and worked together ever since, e.g. on the VFV land law. That is an important outcome for me.”

According to the Shan CSOs there may have been a raised voice, but the government’s ears were not good enough to hear.

After the ADS passed parliament, the implementation of the Strategy was slow. The former MOALI advisor mentions: “The EU is helping but it is a ‘donor thing’ now, 6-7% of the strategy is implemented by development partners. The Department of Agriculture (of MOALI) itself is not very active in implementing the ADS. In the election manifesto they made the promise to implement. But I do not know. I worry about that.”

Oxfam in Myanmar is no longer involved in the implementation – among other things because they lost their entrance to the Ministry when the advisor left and it wasn’t clear and transparent for INGOs and CSOs how to influence the government. Also the leading CSO network in the ADS process, the Food Security Working Group (FSWG), was no longer active.

Oxfam’s partner at the Head Office is very clear: “Our objective is to support smallholder farmers in Kachin and Shan, and raise the community voices. The ADS for us does not refer sufficiently to our farmers, so for us there is no urge to contribute to implementation.”

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

The contribution of the programme to the outcome is considered medium/strong. There is good evidence of

outputs and some evidence on contribution. The internal evaluation story has been substantiated.

The R2F programme definitely contributed in making the process more inclusive (*necessary*), but was *not sufficient*. As is usually the case when working in alliances, there were many others that contributed to the outcome including LIFT, FAO, ADB, and INGOs like ICCO, USAID, and the FSWG.

When reading the story carefully two outcomes can be detected, one on the contents of the Strategy and one on the process to make the Strategy inclusive:

- > Process outcome: In 2017, the government made the consultation round for the ADS truly consultative and recognised smallholder farmers’ role and CSO participation.
- > Policy outcome: On June 7, 2018, the Myanmar Government passed the improved Agricultural Development Strategy, including gender and smallholder farmers’ rights.

Table 7. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment	
Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong (see footnotes)
Evidence contribution	Medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the R2F programme necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without Oxfam no outcome</i> )	Yes
Sufficient: Was R2F sufficient for outcome? ( <i>Outcome is result of programme only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome</i> )	No
Overall assessment	Medium / strong

### On effectiveness

Working through the international (multilateral) community (FAO, ADB and LIFT) has proven to be an effective strategy for civil society to be included in the ADS process and to get a seat around the table. Another important actor/ champion was the MOALI advisor. He functioned as ambassador for the sub-national state consultations. The ADS was approved, and the process was more consultative than had been the case since the 1950s, with the words of some of the interviewees it was ‘unprecedented’.

The outcomes though, were also contested: The interviewees have divergent views on the quality of the process and contents of the ADS. Oxfam’s partner is disappointed with the outcome and no longer wants to pursue implementation.

In terms of the Theory of Change: The national and local CSOs, after building alliances, engaged with national and local government entities to influence the Union Government’s national policy. The Union government provided space in the process, and in the contents, but in the eyes of the R2F partners’ eyes the space was not sufficient.

<sup>25</sup> INGO common position on the ADS 2-2018

### On relevance

Oxfam’s partners (METTA) have expressed their doubts on the relevance of the final text of the ADS for realising food sovereignty of their smallholder farmers in Shan.

Strengthening the capacities of CSOs and building an alliance seems highly relevant. Especially in the case of Kachin and Northern Shan where main investment programmes may affect smallholders’ livelihoods, these capacities are deemed very relevant and may help the thinking about agricultural development in the states.

### On sustainability

The efforts put into the paper strategy itself have not led to a durable and relevant strategy. With regard to the strengthened capacities of CSO and their advocacy skills, however, the CSOs interviewed stated that they definitely will continue their work. Adding to the sustainability is the fact that the government has gained experience in conducting consultative processes. After the ADS consultation there were consultative processes for climate change, water strategy, and a few others.

### On capacity development

Strengthening influencing capacities were highly helpful during the ADS process for partners. Some of the staff members of CSOs had no background or experience in advocacy. Others do not remember formal capacity development clearly and experienced the interventions as thematic training on land rights. Capacity development of third parties within the R2F was mainly directed at communities. This was part of the R2F interventions. This type of capacity development is considered very important by the partners since it helps them to deal with the investments that will flood their states in the coming few years under the CMEC.

## 2.2 Contribution Story 2

# Building alliances in Kachin to combat Tissue Banana plantations

*Outcome: In Kachin, the Land Security and Environmental Conservation Group (LSECNG), a 14-member alliance, was established in 2016 that worked a.o. to combat the Tissue Banana Plantations in Kachin.*

The internal evaluation team shows in the contribution narrative that civic space in Myanmar is limited and the private sector is generally not open to influencing. In addition, the land reform movement in Myanmar consists of divided CSOs and networks, who distrust each other due to ethnic, military and political conflicts, especially in Kachin, and Northern and Southern Shan. At the beginning of the project the CSOs often lacked sustainable collaboration or common ground.

Therefore, the main focus of the R2F project in Myanmar was alliance building. Finding a common ground and building long-term collaboration was seen as a stepping-stone to later on engage with and influence the government. Participating in alliances is a way for CSOs to strengthen their capacities, both by engaging in alliance activities as well as through training conducted through alliance networks. This capacity development was extended to local communities, allowing for more citizens to raise their voice. Ultimately, all these steps are expected to lead to a more sustainable strategy for influencing government policies.

### The Contribution Story revisited

*For this set of outcomes, it was decided to focus on the alliance building in Kachin to combat tissue banana plantations to serve as an example. Based on the internal evaluations, desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story.*

When a reporter of Frontier Myanmar travels in January 2019 from the Myitkyina- Kanpikete highway further into Waingmaw Township, all he sees is an unbroken vista of bright green banana plants. Most of these banana plantations are illegal, established without the permission of the state government or the communities and mostly with Chinese money (‘Kachin’s plantation curse’, in Frontier Myanmar, 17 January 2019).<sup>26</sup>

The Kachin-based CSO coalition ‘the Land Security and Environmental Conservation Group’ identified more than 150,000 acres covered by banana plantations in Waingmaw Township alone. The plantations are not only a source of land conflict, but also cause environmental degradation. These ‘tissue culture’ bananas began their lives in laboratories. They bring quick profits but need a lot of pesticides and fungicides.

“The banana plantations started in 1994 after the peace accord. But when the NLD came into power in 2016, they opened the door for foreign investment and the number of plantations increased at a high pace”, a Kachin partner staff member tells us during a Zoom interview. “The local people and communities felt the effects of land grabbing and pollution, and they reached out to local CSOs that were active in environmental and human rights issues. So in 2016, we, around 14-15 local CSOs, started to come together to discuss what we could do collectively on this issue.”

Before, the CSOs all worked on their own, due to distrust and split through ethnic and political differences, but the urgency of the banana plantations and the requests of the

<sup>26</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/kachins-plantation-curse> on 30 December 2020

communities made the CSOs realise they had to work together. “We also learned through time that the Kachin state government and the MPs were not very responsive when we approached them individually. So we thought it best to start working as an alliance. In 2016, we were also followed and questioned by a special police branch. This was another reason for us to work collectively”, memorises the Kachin Partner staff member.

The CSOs took quite some time to prepare for the Alliance. Between 2016 and June 2017, they had thorough and lengthy discussions on a shared vision, financial and time commitments. A member of the Alliance remembers: “We had some clear principles. One of them was that as an alliance we would share costs. If an organisation did not have a large budget, they would contribute by giving more time instead.”

Finally, in June 2017, the alliance was formally established with the name ‘Land Security and Environmental Conservation Group’ (LSENGG), with 11 member CSOs.<sup>27</sup> Two of the members, Kachin Conservation Working Group (KCWG) and Metta, provided funds for activities. Metta in turn was funded by the R2F programme.

The main purposes of the alliance were to defend the land rights of local people and especially the customary land rights, and to protect the environment.<sup>28</sup> “We focus on influencing the government, and ensure the government is enforcing policies and guidelines. We monitor violations by companies, record them and collect evidence and provide the information to the government so that the companies will start doing business properly”, a Kachin partner staff member explains.

After the alliance was built, one of their main activities was to conduct research into the legality of the Tissue Banana plantations. The companies that were approached were not very interested in answering questions. An Oxfam private sector advisor says: “I had experience with private (Chinese) companies in Laos, but in Myanmar it is a bit different: In Laos the companies are registered, and more visible, but in Myanmar the companies (either with a military background and/or Chinese companies) hide behind local businesses and others. So therefore we thought it better to support civil society, and to work on government regulations instead.”

“We started our research at the end of 2017. We had chosen to do a participatory action research so we approached the communities, did a scoping of the area, developed questionnaires, and had a lot of meetings with legal experts for the legal analysis, and had technical assistance to measure the plantation areas and the forest cover”, a staff member of Oxfam’s partner in Kachin explains.

The research showed that 59% of the land transactions for the banana plantations were involuntary transactions. On top of that, the alliance could indicate the vastness of the banana plantations and identified nearly 150,000 acres covered by tissue banana plantations in Waingmaw Township alone.<sup>29</sup>

The alliance held a launching event in Kachin in February 2019 to share their findings, followed by a national event in Nay Pyi Taw in June 2019. Government officials and MPs, as well as CSOs were invited. The Oxfam private sector advisor sees this as significant. “Influencing the Union government at the National conference was a milestone. Within the conference we already had some oral commitments from the government to check on our facts, the illegality of the banana plantations.”<sup>30</sup>

The government formed a National Committee on Banana Plantations to further examine the issue. Partner staff in Kachin is not sure whether the research contributed, but says it could have been one of the reasons. “After the launching event this Committee came into focus, and carried out field visits. Now the Committee has issued a moratorium to stop the expansion of banana plantations. And in January 2020 a draft was produced of the Standard Operating Procedures for banana plantations. It is said that this SOP will be finalised by February 2021.”

Looking back at the last few years, one of the members of the alliance tries to summarise the success of the Alliance. “I think our alliance is successful since it was based on one issue, the tissue banana plantations. This issue was huge, horrible and urgent, and it made us work collectively.”

A staff member of Metta adds: “In my opinion we were successful because our members were like-minded organisations, and all of them they are active on land issues and environmental protection, and our ways of working are quite similar.”

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

The overall contribution of the R2F programme to the establishment of the alliance is assessed as medium. In the eyes of the alliance members the R2F was neither necessary nor sufficient.

Nevertheless the R2F programme was very important to the alliance, and with the R2F resources many more activities could be conducted and it gave the alliance an impetus. But in the end, the members are convinced that the alliance would have been able to function also without the R2F.

<sup>27</sup> Later two additional members joined the LSENGG)

<sup>28</sup> Actually the coalition had 5 objectives: 1. To protect natural resources and promote ecosystems; 2. To strengthen land related policies; 3. to protect indigenous people rights, livelihoods and dignity; 4. To promote traditional and customary practices of local people; 5. To promote food sovereignty. Interview Metta.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Green economy paradox. Land Security and Environmental Conservation Networking Group (LSENGG) Research Report 2018-2019. Informal English translation.

<sup>30</sup> The Myanmar times 3 June 2019 reports on the event: “We will tour the banana plantations in Kachin within a few days,” MP U Aung Kyi Nyunt, chair of the hluttaw’s Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Development Committee.

Table 8. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment	
Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the R2F programme necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without Oxfam no outcome</i> )	Yes/No
Sufficient: Was R2F sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of programme only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome)	No
Overall assessment	Medium

### On effectiveness

Although the alliance moved like a turtle, it did so with the precision of a tiger and the members understood the added value of working in alliance very well. Several people call the alliance ‘exceptional’ or ‘extraordinary’. The time was needed to build trust.

Could the alliance have followed another (better) strategy to establish the alliance? A number of interviewees call the slow approach of the preparatory phase key for the alliance building. And a number of interviewees remarked that working on an urgent and demand-based topic was very helpful in building the alliance.

The alliance focused on influencing the government - both state and union governments - and that strategy worked rather well. The government came into action, and set up an SOP and a moratorium for banana plantations. The next step for the alliance is to monitor the implementation and enforcement of these instruments.

Did the land rights of smallholder farmers in Kachin improve? At least their rights did not further deteriorate and there is attention and action for their right to land.

### On relevance of building alliances

The interviewees see building an alliance as very relevant for influencing and it feels safer for the members. With the Chinese Myanmar Economic Corridor (as a result of the Belt and Road Initiative) Kachin has a lot of new investment coming into the state. With the large interest of the corporate (Chinese) sector, the CSOs need a heavier countervailing power. With building the alliance they have gained experience in their influencing work.

### On sustainability

The members of the alliance do not doubt that their alliance will continue long after R2F. They claim that the alliance was built for dealing with land issues and that they will continue to implement the recommendations of their research.

### On capacity development

Alliance members and staff in Kachin received training on GIS mapping and Participatory Action Research to prepare them for the research, and a Digital Security training on request of one of the members. The Alliance also invited an expert on the farmland law to understand the law better. The PAR was partly focussing on alliance building

Whenever the Alliance has their quarterly meeting they reserve a two-hour session for peer exchanges to learn from each other. They claim that they learn more from each other than from outside. The Alliance trained communities on Free, Prior and Informed Consent<sup>31</sup> on Participatory Action Research, and on land rights, and just before COVID struck they had planned to provide women empowerment and leadership training to village women.

## 2.3 Collective System Analysis - Myanmar R2F

Based on interviews and desk study, a Collective System Analysis was made by the consultant<sup>32</sup> to identify root causes that hinder the realisation of Right to Food, as well as opportunities. In a matrix (see below) root causes and opportunities are combined with the areas where the interventions took place.

From the Collective system analyses the following *issues* appeared (see also figure 3.):

- > Lack of political will and capacities of the government - Interviewees refer to the weak implementation capacities of the government, a lack of vision on inclusive agricultural transformation and lack of political will.
- > Lack of interaction and lack of trust - Building an alliance for influencing is seen by the interviewees as very relevant to counteract on the lack of interaction between CSOs and the lack of trust.

<sup>31</sup> FPIC is a specific right that pertains to indigenous peoples and is recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

<sup>32</sup> Originally a workshop to conduct a Collective System Analysis was planned, but due to COVID it was not possible to gather different stakeholders around the table. It was decided then to ask interviewees on root causes and opportunities.



# R2F Myanmar Root causes, opportunities and interventions

*Smallholder farmers, forest dwellers and communities realise their right to food sovereignty*

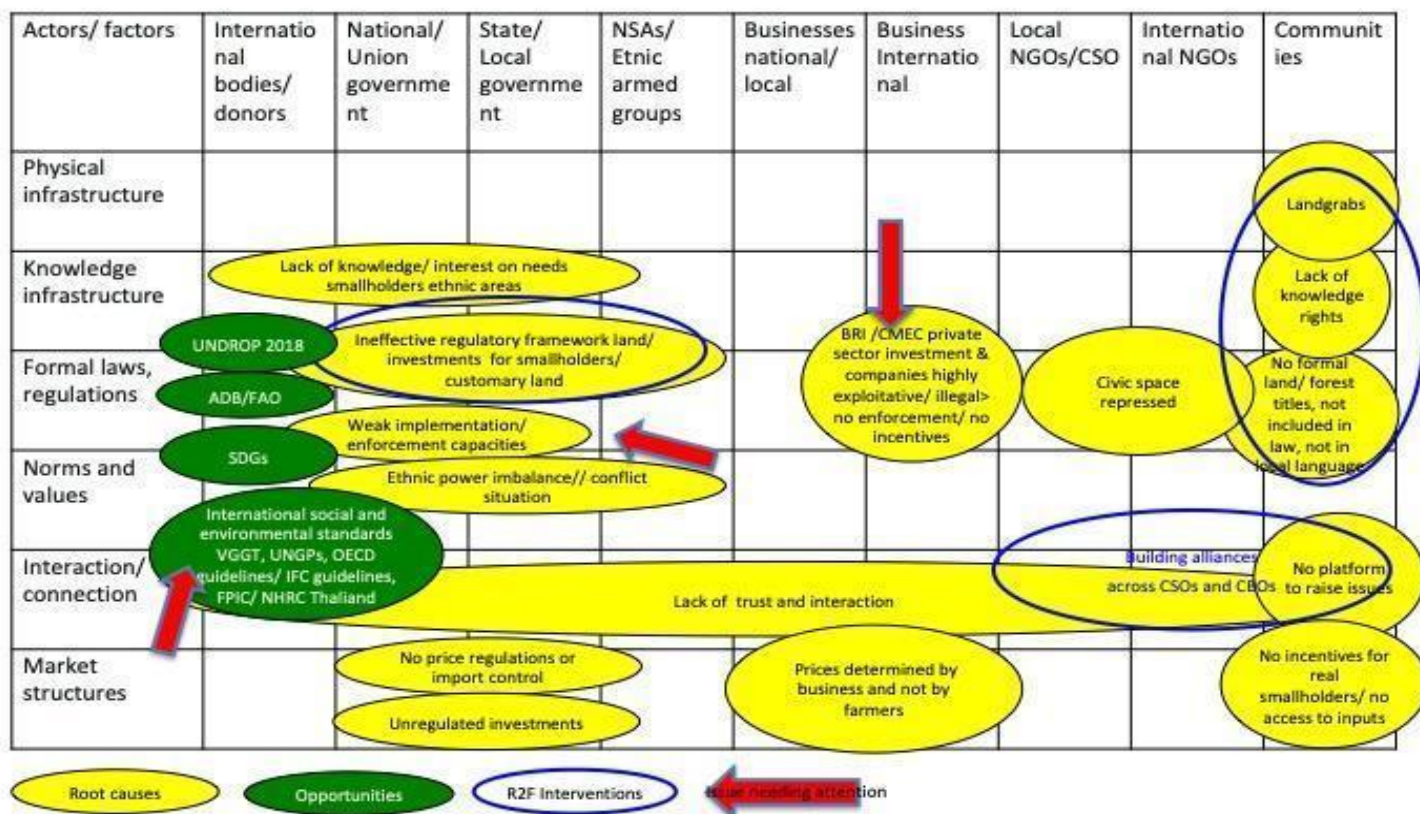


Figure 3. Collective System Analysis matrix

- > The private sector as pink elephant - The R2F focuses very much on influencing the government and their policies; while at the same time major foreign investment combined with an influx of Chinese companies is on going. The R2F programme concluded that most of the companies active in Myanmar are not open to advocacy regarding policy change.

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM'S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

- > When trying to influence the private sectors and governments, (I)NGOs cannot ignore China's role in the world and not gear their influencing work at Chinese governments and companies as well. Working with a strategic advisor on Chinese Businesses is a first step taken by Oxfam in Myanmar.
- > Working with the international community, multi- and bilateral donors - As the ADS work shows, multilateral (and to a lesser extent bilateral) institutions have access to the Government of

Myanmar and the FAO and ADB provided an entrance to influence the government. Although these institutions may have different views on development, influencing them could be a worthwhile pathway.

- > Linking with Dutch investors - An Oxfam UK discussion paper<sup>33</sup> shows how investment from the Netherlands is included in the top 10 of investors in Myanmar.
- > Developing alternative solutions and models for smallholder farmers
- > In the overall R2F Theory of Change, an important pathway of change is working on alternative development solutions and working with ambassadors of change in the private and government sector. This pathway is underexplored in R2F Myanmar.

### In conclusion

<sup>33</sup> WHOSE CROPS, AT WHAT PRICE? Agricultural investment in Myanmar. Oxfam Discussion paper, February 2017

In the eyes of the interviewees and the external evaluation team, the R2F worked on many of the root causes and opportunities and targeted the right issues and actors. Issues and actors that deserve additional attention include influencing the Chinese companies, influencing the national government through the international community, and working on alternative development solutions.

## 2.4 Key observations R2F Myanmar

### On contribution by the R2F to the outcomes

The contribution of R2F to the two sets of outcomes is assessed by the external evaluation team as medium-medium/strong. The interventions were in one case not necessary and in both cases not sufficient. Many others, including multi- and bilateral actors, played their role. Working in lobbying and advocacy and in alliances usually entails that outcomes are shared outcomes, and thus the work of R2F alone is hardly ever sufficient.

### On effectiveness

One of the main insights and lessons in Myanmar context is that the importance of the work of R2F lies with strengthening the capacities of the CSOs and its alliances. All interviewed partners feel they have strengthened their capacities through the project. Learning from each other at (sub-)national level, and learning by doing is mentioned as key strategies for mutual capacity development.

Voices need ears - Strengthened CSOs and building alliances does not always lead to relevant policy changes yet. And as the ADS case shows, its implementation takes an even longer breath. The union government had its own strategic agenda: access to multilateral funds. The Government needs to be willing to listen and have ears. Nevertheless some first small fragile steps are made. The work on the Banana Plantations received a bit more ear from the union and Kachin government.

Private sector influencing - Although still mentioned in the Theory of Change in Phase 2, private sector actors, especially Chinese companies and investors are not directly targeted except for claims by farmers and communities. It is a pity that this strand of work – working on the roots of the problem – has been abandoned. As other cases have shown, also Chinese companies can be held accountable for their deeds.<sup>34</sup>

### On sustainability

The roaring dragon is perceived as sustainable. The members of the alliances do not doubt that they will continue long after R2F.

### On relevance

The topics and actors that were targeted are considered relevant for smallholders. However, the contents of policies are not always considered relevant for smallholders, as was the case with the ADS. What is missing, also in the sub-theme of Governance, is the direct targeting of private sector actors, including the domestic and Chinese companies that grab and pollute the land. Strengthening the capacities of partners, CSOs and communities is highly relevant in the view of CMEC.

### On increased social and economic justice

First steps have been taken towards increased social and economic justice e.g. with the Tissue Banana plantations, its pollution and illegality, and first steps have been taken in inclusive processes like the ADS. However, with the ‘coup d’etat’ by the military late January 2021 probably another step back has been taken.

### On capacity development

The partners and members of the alliance feel strengthened. Strengthening CSOs and alliances is seen as relevant, especially for carrying threats together and in view of the developments related to the China Myanmar Economic Corridor/ Belt Road Initiative and investments from China.

### Reflections on the ToC

Results of the R2F can be mainly seen in the lower part of the Theory of Change, the alliance building and strengthened capacities. In the overall R2F Theory of Change, strengthened CSOs are a target outcome. In the R2F Myanmar Theory of Change strengthened CSOs are presented as intermediate outcomes and as a means to influence government and private sector policies and practices. The discussion whether strengthened CSOs are a means or an end, is a recurrent discussion within the SP. See also the Conclusions in the Sub-thematic analysis.

Communities and CSOs did engage with local and Union governments, and very first steps by the State and former Union governments have been set, though not always to the satisfaction of the CSOs.

Using the influencing power of international institutions and bilateral donors could be a relevant addition to the ToC. In Myanmar the government listens to the international donor community and international institutions like the FAO and the ADB. This could also be a window of opportunity for influencing the private sector.<sup>35 36</sup>

Developing alternative solutions and models for smallholder farmers - In the overall R2F Theory of Change, an important pathway of change is working on alternative development solutions and working with ambassadors of change in the private and government

<sup>34</sup> Oxfam International published in 2017 a highly relevant discussion paper with relevant recommendations for direct private sector influencing (Oxfam International, 2017, Whose Crops, At What Price? Agricultural investment in Myanmar).

<sup>35</sup> Also the Netherlands has stakes in Myanmar, ranking nr 8 (2016) in the list of foreign investors with \$755.000 (approved FDI).

<sup>36</sup> Oxfam International, 2017, Whose Crops, At What Price? Agricultural investment in Myanmar

sector. This pathway seems yet underexplored in Myanmar.

The two lower assumptions on CSOs have proven valid: a) CSO Coalition members will be able to dissolve differences and work towards a common platform and understanding; b) CSOs and community are equipped with relevant capacity strengthening to influence to government and private sectors as well as space is created to apply those knowledge and capacity. This is quite exceptional in Myanmar. However, with the military taking over power, the space to apply the knowledge and capacities needs to be re-conquered.

The three other assumptions about government and private actors still need to be validated. These assumptions are as follows: a) Private sectors are persuaded to open the discussion and dialogue with CSOs and communities, b) State/national Government Actors show their willingness to changing their ways of working and overcoming entrenched interests, and c) Government will recognize local people voice and allow them to raise contentious issues on right to food sovereignty.

### 3. Global Contribution stories

#### Introduction

Within the sampled sub-theme ‘Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers’, the R2F Global programme deals with two main topics: land rights and seed rights. The Global Contribution stories that were written by the internal evaluation team mainly focus on land (in line with the relative investment of resources). The R2F Global Programme on Land rights works mainly through three programmes/campaigns: the ‘Global Land Programme (GLP)’, the GROW campaign, and the Land Rights Now (LRN) campaign.

The R2F Global Programme follows the overall R2F Theory of Change and applies a combination of intervention strategies/pathways:

- > Strengthening capacities of CSOs and their alliances to engage with and influence decision-makers and claim their rights, provided that CSOs actually have (civic) space to act on their enhanced knowledge.
- > Influencing public and private sector (i.e. governments, private and financial sector, certification schemes) to promote more sustainable and inclusive policies and practices, through a variety of insider and outsider tactics including research, direct advocacy, dialogue (including convening or participating in multi-stakeholder initiatives); or accessing complain mechanisms; and then ally with champions to leverage systemic change.
- > Influencing the public and private sector by engaging citizens in public campaigns, and facilitating CSO networks to mobilise them, using outsider approaches.

#### Selection of outcome sets for the evaluation

The external evaluation builds upon the contribution story and outcomes collected by the internal evaluation team. The external team selected a limited number of outcome sets and reviewed the claimed contributions of the programme, and researched effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, capacity development and system change from an external point of view.

Three sets of outcomes were selected out of the 13 that were written by the internal evaluation team, representing 8 of the total 74 global outcomes under the sub-theme ‘Access to and governance of systems that support resilient livelihoods of smallholder food producers’.

Outcomes selected:

- > Land in the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, 2016; 1 outcome
- > FMO withdrew from the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project in Honduras, 2016-2019; 4 outcomes
- > Holding companies in Coca Cola value chain to account for land grabs in its sugar value chain (2010-2019); 3 outcomes

#### 3.1 Contribution Story 1

### Land right indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals

*Outcome: Within the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the UN Statistical Commission (March 2016) and the UN General Assembly (September 2016) agreed for the first time on three global indicators on land rights, including women’s land rights, diverse tenure systems, and perceptions.*<sup>37</sup>

Since 2015 the Right to Food programme has tried to create consensus and support for a common set of land rights indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>38</sup> The seventeen SDGs were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 - together with a set of targets for each goal. However, the targets still required translation into clear indicators to monitor progress. Including land rights in targets and indicators is important since it provides insights in progress in ending poverty (SDG 1) and gender inequality (SDG 5).

<sup>37</sup> The three land-rights indicators have been also upgraded from Tier III to Tier II in 2018.

<sup>38</sup> The work on indicators was a follow-up of the successful inclusion of 3 land right targets in the SDGs, approved in 2015. Oxfam Novib played an important role in getting these targets accepted as well.

### Three global indicators on land rights<sup>39</sup>

**Indicator 1.4.2:** Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognised documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure

**Indicator 5.a.1:** (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

**Indicator 5.a.2:** Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

In the contribution story, Oxfam Novib claims to have mobilised a large coalition of civil society organisations known as the ‘land community’ to deliver a shared message and to speak with one voice. Through this voice they influenced the UN organisations (UN Habitat, FAO) responsible for drafting the indicators and a range of governments that made the ultimate decisions to include the indicators in the final list.

Based on desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story:

### The Contribution Story revisited

*“I think we have a 75% win. We have land rights indicators in the SDGs. And I am 75% happy about it”, an Oxfam Novib land rights officer writes in his internal message to the CEO of Oxfam International. It was March 2016 and the UN Statistical Commission had just endorsed the first set of global indicators including three indicators on land rights. Half a year later, in September 2016, the UN General Assembly agreed to adopt the endorsement by the Statistical Commission.*

Getting the land rights indicators on the SDG list of indicators was a roller-coaster. In March 2015, the so-called ‘land community’, a collection of ten major civil society organisations working on land and land rights, including Oxfam Novib and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) formulated their shared recommendations for the Inter-Agency Expert Group on land right indicators.<sup>2</sup> At first, the process was smooth. The approach was to get a simple and straightforward proposal for land right indicators and so they did. The group proposed two main sets of indicators, and spread that message to various UN custodian agencies, and used it for influencing the national governments that are the ultimate decision makers.

Oxfam Novib took the lead in facilitating part of the process and followed an inclusive approach, making use of the skills of the other organisations. “We are a tiny organisation, and the world around the SDGs is a beast”, says one of the interviewees belonging to the land community. Another member of the land community adds: “So we had to be smart. Oxfam Novib has experience in advocacy and has a foot on the ground in various countries. They know exactly how to frame issues, and when and where to go. They had an excellent understanding of how the SDG corridors work.”

But not all interviewees acknowledged a leading role of Oxfam Novib. A government official says: “Oxfam Novib staff was very good at connecting people, and maybe led the CSOs but I cannot say they were instrumental in getting the indicators on the list. I would say it is more a broad Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) story than an Oxfam story.” In one of its briefs GLII writes how they included the land indicators in the SDG indicator list.<sup>40</sup> The former chair of GLII adds: “Basically, when we started in 2014 with 15 organisations, Oxfam Novib was one of them. Oxfam Novib was very vocal, and they did not miss a single meeting. They had a substantial contribution. But the final work and submission was done by GLII, though through collective effort. But naturally Oxfam Novib did a lot of advocacy outside of GLII as well.”

In the eyes of Oxfam Novib, the role of GLII was more to convene technical dialogues, while Oxfam Novib went out for lobbying. Mails between the two organisations show how they informed each other.

In the process, the ‘land community’ grew from ten CSOs into an alliance of around 70 civil society organisations. They were supported by influential individuals and organisations including Jeffrey Sachs – one of the world’s leading experts on poverty reduction – and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, UNEP, IUCN, the UN Women and the IP Major Group in NY, and some – governments, like Switzerland, the UK, Italy and South Africa.

Then, in the summer of 2015, it seemed that the land tenure indicator (under SDG 1 Ending poverty) was suddenly removed from the priority list.<sup>41</sup> Land tenure only appeared in a simplified version under SDG 5 (gender inequality). The land community was deeply concerned: Was all the work for nothing?

Realising it was a crucial moment to act, the land community made overtime. Starting from the Global Donor Platform on Rural Development, the alliance tried to influence the World Bank, governments like The Netherlands, UN-Habitat, and dozens of civil society

<sup>39</sup> Currently the indicators are so-called Tier II indicators, meaning the indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data is not regularly produced by countries. The indicators are expected to shift to Tier I in 2021. Tier I: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 percent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant. See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/> data retrieved 13 January 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Global land indicators initiative brief, Towards common frameworks for strengthening land governance monitoring – linking country, regional and global processes, dated 28 Jan 2019. Retrieved 10 August 2020 from <https://gltn.net/download/global-land-indicators-initiative-glii/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVZ3JlBUQ4QlFWYjQ/view?pli=1>

organisations. Oxfam Novib coordinated the inputs of civil society, and liaised with UN agencies and the World Bank. In October 2015 this resulted in the brief *Land rights: An essential Global Indicator for the Post-2015 SDGs*, on the land tenure indicator, signed by 16 organisations, including the GLTN and endorsed by another 30 organisations.

A member of the land community recalls: “Oxfam Novib was on top of that technical (indicator) work, and in actual drafting documents. In the end, it is the person that steps forward. They were proactive. They were trusted. The World Bank is technical too, but they are not always trusted, Oxfam Novib has expertise and is trusted. And others were quite happy that Oxfam Novib was playing that role.”

The organisations flooded the Inter-Agency Expert Group with synchronised input. Oxfam Novib and Oxfam International were very active on social media, and also operating on high-level interaction with officials from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “As a result 700 organisations were backing us in the end”, a member of the land community comments.

The land community proposal was back on the table of Member States as one of the final two options. In the end, Member States approved a slightly different version championed by IFAD and the Global Donor Platform on Rural Development. The chair of GLII concludes: “What we achieved is amazing, we felt relieved, it was such a big milestone, but it only was the start of the journey.”

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

The contribution of the R2F programme to the outcome is considered strong and the story of the internal evaluation has been positively substantiated. The R2F built upon the work of the already existing ‘Land Community’.

Evidence of the output and contribution by R2F to the presented outcomes can be mainly found in the technical notes<sup>42</sup> and its wording and focus. Furthermore there is plenty of evidence in the archived emails between the various organisations that Oxfam contributed to getting the indicators on the list, including mails in which they show how they influenced UN agencies and the Global Donor Platform on Rural Development.

Table 9. Contribution Assessment

Land right indicators in SDG	
Evidence	
Output	Strong
Contribution	Strong
Perceptions	

<sup>42</sup> *Land rights indicators in the Post-2015 SDGs. Recommendations for Inter-Agency Expert group & Other Policymakers*, 10 March 2015, signed by 10 international organisations and endorsed by another 19 regional and international NGOs, and 2) *Land rights: An*

Necessary Was R2F necessary for outcome? (Without R2F no outcome)	Yes/no
Sufficient Was R2F sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of R2F only)	No
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Strong</b>

Whether the contribution of R2F was necessary is debated as shown in the story. All interviewees agree though that the R2F played an important role in building the alliance. The contribution of R2F was not considered sufficient since so many other actors played a role (see story), which is common in policy advocacy. They indicate it really was a team effort. A staff member of Oxfam Novib comments: “The purpose in alliance work is somehow not to be visible. The success comes from not sticking out.”

### On effectiveness

The R2F programme that started in 2015, built on the work of the already existing ‘Land Community’. They gathered and made sure they spoke with one voice and one message. In the end there was an alliance of 700 organisations working together to get the land right indicators in the SDGs.

Strengths of the approach mentioned include the fact that organisations made use of each other’s strengths and skills, they spoke with one voice and one message, and some actors like Oxfam Novib knew whom to target.

In terms of the Theory of Change pathways, the alliance building pathway was followed without necessarily strengthening the capacities of the various organisations: They all did what they were good at and added value to each other’s work.

### On relevance

One of the assumptions of getting the land right indicators on the SDG list was that governments and duty bearers (and eventually private actors) would be encouraged to deliver data on land rights and shape their policies and practices. Formally this has hardly happened yet and the indicators are still Tier 2 indicators, meaning that reporting is not compulsory yet. No formal reporting takes place on indicator 1.4.2, while partial information is available on indicators 5a1 and 5a2.<sup>43</sup> It is a long-term adventure, and seems rather bureaucratic.

In the meantime another initiative ‘the Land and SDG Momentum Group’ (including Landesa, ILC and Oxfam Novib) encourages countries to voluntarily report on all land related targets. Showing that reporting on land rights is possible and feasible.

*essential Global Indicator for the Post-2015 SDGs*, 22 October 2015, signed by 16 organisations and endorsed by another 30 organisations.

<sup>43</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

## On sustainability

After 2016, Global Land Indicator Initiative, and its members, including Oxfam, continued to support the uptake of indicators by governments. The land right indicators survived the 2020 Comprehensive Review<sup>44</sup> by the IAEG-SDG. Civil society organisations fear that the indicators may be taken off the list when it takes too long to get to Tier 1. In that case, sustainability of the outcome would be insecure.

### 3.2 Contribution Story 2

## FMO adopts new sustainability policy and publishes Human Rights Progress Report

### Introduction

The contribution narrative produced by Oxfam Novib focused on a number of outcomes including the FMO adopting a new sustainability policy and publishing its first Human Rights Progress Report. The evaluation focused on the process following the withdrawal of FMO from the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric project in Honduras. This was done with the understanding that although withdrawing from financing a project is an important outcome, changing policies and practices for the future is the change R2F eventually pursues.

This story is about three central outcomes mentioned in the internal evaluation report:

- > In 2017, FMO adopted its new sustainability policy, including a policy statement on Land Governance, and taking responsibility for respecting human rights in its value chain
- > In December 2018, FMO published its first Human Rights Progress Report.
- > By the end of 2018, FMO and Large Scale Land Based Investments Businesses expressed their willingness to test the Community Engagement tool.

Influencing investors is an important area of work, since decisions on land governance and the implementation thereof, are led not only by governments, but substantially and increasingly by the private and financial sector through (direct or indirect) land-based investments, or – in the case of development banks – also through support to land reforms. The R2F programme wants to ensure that investors uphold the highest standards on respecting land rights, and ensure transparency on their investments, creating

opportunities for local CSOs to hold intermediaries and companies to account for meeting these standards. Since the FMO is a development bank, their changes in policies and practices are expected to have a ripple effect on policies and practices of other actors. The internal contribution narrative shows how the R2F contributed to the three outcomes, mainly through direct influencing of FMO, providing feedback (solicited and unsolicited) and by joining the quarterly meetings between CSOs and FMO.

### The contribution story revisited

Based on the contribution narrative, desk reviews and interviews with a limited number of internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story:

Following the aftermath of the withdrawal from the Agua Zarca project in May 2016, and presumably realizing internal changes were needed; FMO conducted an extensive open consultation asking NGOs worldwide to provide inputs on how its sustainability policy should develop.

In preparation of this open consultation FMO invited Oxfam Novib, SOMO and Both Ends to discuss their approach during a meeting in August 2016. Over the years, the three NGOs had been pushing FMO to change policies and adhere to environmental and human rights standards. The three NGOs sent FMO a clear reply containing three principles and recommendations ‘to ensure that FMO’s operations reflect the highest environmental and human rights standards.’<sup>45</sup> The principles included *Inclusiveness* (open to all interested CSOs, especially those in recipient countries), *Responsiveness* (answering questions) and *Predictability* (a consistent and predictable process for consultations).

FMO accepted the recommendations,<sup>46</sup> and set up an open consultation process. In their invitation they wrote: “FMO aims for inclusiveness in this process. The online consultation process and the meeting sessions will be open to all interested stakeholders. FMO commits to being responsive by providing feedback to all comments submitted. By describing the process with clear timelines and set dates, we aim for a predictable process, without sacrificing efficiency and pragmatism. FMO aims to use this process as a pilot that will lead to a set of principles for engagement.”<sup>47</sup>

In total 68 organisations worldwide provided their inputs and views on the draft Sustainability Policy in October-November of 2016. Oxfam Novib presented their feedback in a formal reaction,<sup>48</sup> containing recommendations on among others a) adhering to

<sup>44</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

<sup>45</sup> 160802\_Letter FMO Improving Civil Society Engagement\_track changes

<sup>46</sup> 160915\_Consultation Process Sustainability Policy

<sup>47</sup> 160915\_Consultation Process Sustainability Policy

<sup>48</sup> 161115\_Oxfam Novib submission for FMO sustainability policy revision - Final

the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), b) respecting human rights and adopt relevant environmental, social and governance standards, c) recognizing systematic discrimination against women, and d) helping to create public tax transparency.

In 2017 FMO adopted its new sustainability policy including statements on Land Governance and Human Rights.

In their first progress report on Human Rights, FMO summarises their policy as follows: “FMO’s commitments to human rights and other environmental and social issues are anchored in the FMO Sustainability Policy. Updated following extensive consultation with a wide range of NGOs and other stakeholders, the current version of our Sustainability Policy was adopted by FMO’s Management Board in December 2016. Over the following months, we also published a series of more detailed position statements on specific issues, including our Human Rights Position Statement.”

Early 2018 Oxfam Novib, SOMO and Both Ends started to participate in quarterly meetings with FMO to further support their policy development.

“For us this fits in our overall work. We had been involved with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to let them apply higher standards for investments, especially the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) standards,” says a policy advisor of Oxfam Novib. In June 2016 the three organisations had already formulated their goals for working with FMO: “For all FMO policies make it clear that we want to raise the bar of international standards. FMO is an important player in the DFI landscape and therefore has a role to play, like other DFIs (including IFC, EIB, and other EDFIs), in raising international standards to ensure that their projects benefit and do not harm local communities and the environment.”<sup>49</sup>

“I guess FMO initiated the quarterly meetings so they have a more coherent input from NGOs, instead of bits and pieces”, says the new policy advisor Oxfam Novib. “It is a bit of pushing and pulling, trying to identify where there is space for influencing and where not. And I do see changes within FMO. They are becoming more transparent in their investment projects, but unfortunately not in investments in other Financial Institutions. They act as if they are prime in following all kinds of standards, but in my view they could perform much better than what they do now. In the end we want them to be the IFC of the Netherlands and the EU.”

In December 2018 FMO published its first Human Rights Progress report. The three NGOs pushed this first Progress report as well. “I thought it was really exciting, the FMO publishing their first progress report on Human Rights. They had taken a big step, we were very optimistic, and it felt like progress. Even though it was not exactly what we wanted, we were still moving forwards. I am happy when I see FMO moving”, the SOMO advisor explains.

The question is whether FMO is changing fundamentally, and influencing other Financial

Institutions. “I see them changing, they have these policies, they have so many more staff for human and environmental rights issues, they changed their governance structure. But I keep asking myself ‘Is this enough?’ In the end I believe that the development model FMO uses, does not contribute to the position of marginalised people”, the Both Ends policy advisor sighs.

The Oxfam Novib advisor puts it in different terms: “They try to do no harm, but eventually you want them to do good.” The other Oxfam Novib policy advisor adds “With their investment projects there are these policies and guidelines, but to what extent are they really being implemented? Is the glass half full or half empty? We asked them many times for examples of implementation, but it never materialised.”

The SOMO advisor ponders: “Engaging communities, to understand what they want, their path to economic development, does not go through the private sector. The private sector is not the engine of development. It takes a lot of work, to engage communities to understand what their priorities are, to see how investments cover their interest. The private sector is not going to save us, I’m afraid.”

Although late 2018, FMO and Large Scale Land Based Investments Businesses expressed their willingness to test the Community Engagement tool that was developed, the testing never took place. It was Oxfam itself that decided to withdraw the testing since it could possibly compromise their other influencing strategies.

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

R2F’s contribution to the outcome is considered strong and Oxfam’s contribution narrative has been positively substantiated. There is sufficient evidence on outputs and contribution, thanks to the archiving work of the Oxfam Novib advisor.

The work of R2F is deemed necessary, but not sufficient to account on its own for the outcome. Both Ends and other NGOs also contributed. The Oxfam Novib advisor adds: “The added value of Oxfam Novib could lie in the fact that FMO is really well-networked and has a lot of trust in political and Ministerial circles where the belief in private sector development is very high. To show the negative side of and alternatives to this model, a strong counter-voice is needed. Compared to Both ENDS and SOMO, Oxfam Novib has more access to the media and to decision-makers. To tackle issues related to FMO, building joint political clout is important. Another added value could be that other parts of Oxfam also work on IFC and other IFIs, so that we add to the joint advocacy to ensure development banks strive for the highest possible standards and feel pushed to follow the frontrunners.”

*Table 10. Contribution Assessment*

<sup>49</sup> FMO demands In OXNO, SOMO, BE minutes of meeting. 21 juni 2016

Influencing FMO policies and practices	
<b>Evidence</b>	
Output	Strong
Contribution	Strong
<b>Perceptions</b>	
Necessary: Was R2F necessary for outcome? (Without Oxfam no outcome)	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of R2F only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome)	No
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Strong</b>

### Effectiveness

Oxfam Novib, Both Ends and SOMO were already sitting around the table with FMO before the Agua Zarca case. However, probably because of the Agua Zarca case, FMO gave even more space to the three NGOs, and institutionalised their advice. With that they had real policy influence on FMO. At the level of FMO, policies changed indeed. Practices and implementation need to follow.

Oxfam Novib and their fellow NGOs are using FMO as champion/example (insider approach) in the hope other Dutch and international investors will improve their policies as well. Although FMO is really taking steps, it is at the moment unlikely that other institutions are following.

### Relevance

The work conducted by Oxfam Novib, SOMO and Both Ends is relevant for policy changes. There are questions, however, whether working with FMO will in the end benefit local communities. The development models of the NGOs and the bank do not seem to converge, as SOMO indicated. Oxfam Novib indicates that it wants to move from ‘doing no harm’ to ‘doing good’.

### Sustainability

FMO has changed their policies, and they may last. The translation into practices needs to follow. A first step is the publication of their HR progress report.

### 3.3 Contribution Story 3

## Holding companies to account for land grabs in the global sugar value chain

*Outcome: March 22, 2018 The Thai company KSL – supplier of sugar in the Coca Cola and PepsiCo sugar value chain – signed an agreement that the 300 ha of land belonging to three villages in Srae Ambel district, Koh Kong province, Cambodia would be returned to the families.*

This story tells how the Behind the Brand (BtB) global campaign eventually contributed to the return of land to 200 families. In 2006 Koh Kong Plantation Co Ltd (KPT) and Koh Kong Sugar Industry Co Ltd (KSI), (both in majority owned by KSL, a Thai company) obtained two land concessions from the Cambodian Government. The companies allegedly bulldozed the land without informing, consulting or compensating local families. For years, the 200 affected families continued to seek justice, and demanded compensation and the return of their land. In 2010 the families filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT). And in 2013 they filed a lawsuit in the U.K. High Court commercial division against Tate & Lyle, a UK-based trader, who started to import sugar through KSL from Cambodia to supply companies including The Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo. In July 2018 the families got their land returned, but are still waiting for compensation.

### The Story revisited<sup>50</sup>

Based on the internal contribution narrative, desk review and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluation team comes with the following story:

On the 25th of December 2019, more than 100 villagers, representing 200 families in Srae Ambel district, Koh Kong province traveled to Phnom Penh and gathered in front of the Ministry of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction. They settled themselves on the pavement in front of the Ministry and urged the minister to intervene as they claimed London-based sugar buyer company Tate & Lyle Sugars had promised to compensate them in cash.

Although the families received land back in 2018, they were still waiting for cash compensation. For 12 years they were not able to work their land. “Our people are suffering. Our children had to quit their studies and they had to migrate to Thailand and Phnom Penh because our families have large debts with the bank”, said Teng Kao,

<sup>50</sup> This story is partly based on the recent Oxfam US evaluation of the same case (Case Study Evaluation. Sugar and Land Conflict in Koh Kong Province, Cambodia. December 2019, Internal document/

Oxfam US), desk review and interviews with internal and external actors.



a representative of the 200 families, to VOD, a local independent media outlet in Cambodia.<sup>51</sup>

The Minister turned down the request to intervene, but Teng Kao was determined to continue. “We will find the means to protest more. We will hold a press conference to show the world and to put pressure on the Tate & Lyle Company, because the company promised to compensate us.”

### ‘They shot our animals’

Teng Kao and the families marched a long way to search for justice. It was on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 that, without prior warning, their land was cleared to make place for a sugar plantation and refinery. “When the company came in May 2006, they bulldozed without consultation or any environmental impact assessment,” said Teng Kao, who lost nearly 10 hectares to the plantations. “They bulldozed the fields and streams. They shot our animals.”<sup>52</sup>

The families immediately organised protests against the land acquisition, claiming it was executed with no prior consultation or consent of families that had been using the land for farming and livestock grazing since at least 1999, and in some cases, as far back as 1979.

They mobilised others to sign a petition and literally walked 150 km to Phnom Penh to seek support from national and international authorities to get their land back and to access compensation for their material losses. They voiced their needs in the media and at (inter-) national fora.

### Everything but arms and the Land Concessions policy of the Cambodian Government

In 2001, the European Union established the ‘Everything But Arms’ (EBA) trade scheme. This scheme provides duty-free access to EU markets to Least Developed Countries including Cambodia. In Cambodia, the scheme led to a rapid surge in sugar exports: while in 2006 there was hardly any sugar exports from the country, this number increased to 10,000 tons in 2010 and 64,917 tons in 2013, all exported to European markets.

The Cambodian government facilitated this surge by making land acquisition easier for private sector actors through a policy of Economic Land Concessions Sub-decree (ELCs).

In 2007 the families sought the support of Cambodian CSOs, including the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO), Equitable Cambodia (EC) former Bridge Across Border Organization and the Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC). These organisations helped the families to document their land and loss of crops. Based on this data and with CLEC’s legal support, the 200 families filed civil and criminal complaints against the companies

in Koh Kong Provincial Court, asking for the cancellation of the land concessions and stopping land clearance. Five years later it was ruled that the court did not have jurisdiction over land disputes.

### Justice abroad

In the years after filing that first court case, the families – supported by CLEC and other CSOs – sought their justice abroad. Two court cases stand out: In 2010 the families filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT). And in 2013 they filed a lawsuit in the U.K. High Court commercial division against Tate & Lyle. The families and their lawyers argued that, since the affected families had the right and ownership of the land, they have the right to the sugar produced from the land, and that the companies, by owning and processing the sugar, were responsible for the loss and damages of the villagers.<sup>53</sup>

CLEC was Oxfam Novib’s partner between 2010-2013, and again from 2015-2019 through the R2F programme with matching funds from Oxfam GB and Oxfam US. A staff member of Oxfam in Cambodia: “We saw how important CLEC’s role was in representing the families, to bring the case to the court in Cambodia and in the UK. They are very good at providing legal support, but we supported them in setting up a clear influencing strategy, and we supported financially to keep on working with the families.”

CLEC is said to be instrumental in supporting the families, filing court cases, representing the family in the court and seeking attention for the case also from the side of the European Union. A CLEC staff member: “We also filed the case at the EU. Sugar from the land was for export to the EU, and we requested them to stall the import from Cambodia, urging them to buy clean sugar. We did that with other CSOs through the blood sugar campaign (and through the clean sugar campaign, MA) and held meetings with EU delegations and the parliament, also with help from many universities in Germany.”

### Behind the Brands

And even Tate & Lyle applaud CLEC for their work. In the words of a staff member of the company: “They did a very important job, representing the villages, their contribution has been material. Through my work with communities, I am very aware that villagers need somebody to help organise them. CLEC advised them, led them, organised them, brought their case into the known, and made significant interventions that resulted in land return and compensation.”

### More land grabbing

The KSL-case was not the only case of land grabbing in Cambodia. Between 2006-2012 more than 2.6 million hectares was granted to private companies. In

<sup>51</sup> <https://vodenglish.news/villagers-accuse-uk-firm-of-failing-to-pay-compensation-in-sugar-dispute/> retrieved on 23 July 2020

<sup>52</sup> Cambodia’s sugar rush leaves farmers feeling bitter at ‘land grab’ Kate Hodal Tue 9 Jul 2013 the Guardian, retrieved from

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/09/cambodia-sugar-land-grab-claims>, 23 July 2020.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/tate-lyle-particular-of-claim-28-mar-2013.pdf>

September 2013, the organisations IDI and Equitable Cambodia put pressure on the EBA through the Clean Sugar Campaign and published *Bittersweet Harvest*, an assessment of the impact of EBA in Cambodia.<sup>54</sup> The publication states that, in the absence of effective human rights safeguards, Cambodia’s policy of granting large-scale land concessions to private investors and the EU’s policy of granting preferential tariffs to spur such investment in least developed countries both carry risks of devastating human rights impacts.

In October 2013, Oxfam (the confederation) started pushing the international beverage companies using sugar, including The Coca Cola Company and PepsiCo, through the Behind the Brands global campaign. As part of this campaign, Oxfam highlighted the Koh Kong land dispute<sup>55</sup> as one of the cases of land grabs in Coca-Cola and Pepsi’s supply chain, given that they source sugar from Tate & Lyle. As a result, both companies committed to a ‘zero tolerance for land grabs’ policy throughout their supply chains, and, in the case of Coca-Cola, also committed to help pursue a better outcome for the affected communities in Koh Kong and engaging with Tate & Lyle, or in their words, to “take action and use our influence on the final outcome of these disputes.”<sup>56</sup> As part of the Behind the Brands campaign, Coca-Cola representatives visited Cambodia.

From that time onwards Oxfam US and Oxfam in Cambodia followed a strategy of direct and indirect influencing of the beverage and sugar companies related to this case. For the beverage companies Oxfam (the confederation) developed a scorecard to monitor progress and Oxfam US would occasionally contact the beverage companies and Tate & Lyle. Several interviewees mention (in)formal influencing within the sugar chain, with Coca-Cola contacting T&L, and T&L with KSL. A Tate & Lyle staff member: “It is hard to know what role our pressure (on KSL) played. There were certainly other pressures in play. Obviously there was pressure locally, and internationally from the EU, who threatened with their EBA status. That played a significant role. We had regular meetings in Cambodia, Thailand and in London, with various parties, including the Cambodian Government, and most recent a visit in May 2019, leveraging KSL to pay compensation. We continued to put pressure.”

The Coca Cola Company states in a written interview that: “The Company has been engaged in a dialogue with suppliers following the allegations. Our land rights policy provides that our suppliers have a responsibility and obligation to know and understand what happened to those individuals who were using land they acquired, and to ensure that those communities provide Free, Prior and Informed Consent in exchange for appropriate compensation. Land acquired through government auspices is not exempt from these requirements. We continually work with our suppliers to help ensure respect for and prevention of violations of land rights across the Coca-Cola supply chain.” On the question how

they contributed to the case exactly, Coca-Cola wishes not to comment.

In a written interview KSL describes how they were influenced by two court cases: the NHRCT court case (2010) and the Tate & Lyle court case (2013). ‘In 2014, NHRCT concluded that “Regarding the petition of human right violation, although Khon Kaen Sugar Industry PLC did not commit the human right violation, the company should be partly responsible because the company was the transferee of the concession and utilised the concession which was concerned of the human right violation. NHRCT, therefore, deems it appropriate to make recommendations to form policy or to solve the problem for the company ...”. “As such, the company later chose to use the allocation of land as a remedy accordingly... “

And he continues on the T&L Courtcase “With an attempt to help T&L settle the case, KPT and KSI agreed to allocate 300 hectares to the 200 families pending the Government’s approval, while Tate & Lyle would make the monetary compensation.” The government’s role here is important since they provided the concession in the first place.

At the same time KSL admits that Tate & Lyle, and the TCCC encouraged KSL to jointly solve the dispute with the 200 families.

### Meeting in Bangkok

According to various sources there has been a meeting in 2015 in Bangkok with representatives of the 200 families, CLEC and the companies KPT-KSI and Tate & Lyle, to negotiate the agreement. The agreement supposedly was that KSL would provide land compensation to the families and Tate & Lyle cash compensation. However, to this date the agreement is not finalised, since the draft created disagreements between the companies and CLEC and went back and forth.

Finally in March 2018 the families reached an agreement with the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and KPT-KSI/KSL. This was in the context of the government’s decision to prioritise the resolution of several on-going land conflicts. The agreement included the return of land (between 1.5 up to 3 hectares per family) and cash (between \$2,000-\$3,000 per family). 176 families that had brought the case to court (24 families accepted compensation at earlier state) only received land. The expected cash compensation from Tate & Lyle was not awarded.

At present, the cash compensation for the 176 families is still pending. Community members wonder whom to blame for the lack of resolution, mentioning both Tate & Lyle trying to buy time, and the lawyer’s lack of transparency, as some of the issues.

Tate & Lyle responds to this claim that they continue the position that they are not aware of any agreement and that till date they remain in the position that KSL is responsible for the compensation: “We are also very frustrated that they have not received compensation. But

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.inclusivedevelopment.net/eus-everything-but-arms-initiative-is-impoverishing-cambodian-farmers/> and <https://youtu.be/P4tDurVDx-U> including features of the Koh Kong case)

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/in-cambodia-still-fighting-for-the-land-they-lost/>; Oxfam (2013)

<sup>56</sup> <https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2013/11/coca-cola-leads-the-way-on-land-rights/>

it also is not our position that we are supposed to compensate. It is KSL who is responsible for returning land and for compensation. We would love to see this resolved, 200 [176, MA] claimants have not received compensation.”

KSL is responding that they returned the land and never agreed to compensation. “To avoid doubt, KPT and KSI made clear that they would not be responsible for monetary compensation. It was understood in the mediation that Tate & Lyle would take that part.”

For the 176 families it is a bittersweet resolution: Yes, they are happy to have their land compensated. But what they miss is the compensation for 13 years without livelihood, and paying debts for loans for both living and the court cases. Some of them even had to sell the land to repay all debts. “We even broke the curse of the Khmer Rouge; how come we cannot break this curse then?” said one of the community members during a meeting at the end of 2019 with Oxfam US.

**Reflection**

**Contribution assessment**

First it needs noticing that most of the interventions took place long before the current SP and R2F started, but the land return took place in the SP period. So this contribution assessment is not about the contribution of the R2F but more about the long-term interventions of the Oxfam family.

The contribution is split into contribution towards the change of practice of the government (instrumental according to some interviewees) and the change of practice of the company. The contribution assessment of Oxfam (in Cambodia, UK, US, Novib) contributing to the outcome is weak and medium/strong.

Change of practice of the company: Oxfam played a significant role in changing the practice of KSL through the court cases in Thailand and the UK and the pressure on TCCC and their suppliers. The interventions are seen as necessary and probably sufficient as well.

Table 11. Contribution Assessment

Land grabs in the global sugar value chain		
	Change of government practice	Change of KSL practice
<b>Evidence</b>		
Output	Medium	Strong
Contribution	Weak	Medium
<b>Perceptions</b>		
Necessary Was Oxfam necessary for outcome? (Without Oxfam no outcome)	No	Yes
Sufficient Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of Oxfam only/intervention was sufficient for outcome)	No	Probably
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Medium/ strong</b>

The contribution assessment of the changes in government practice is considered weak. The interventions are considered not necessary nor sufficient in making the government change their practice. Other factors and actors that contributed as well include the EU. They at their turn were influenced by the Clean Sugar Campaign, Oxfam and other NGOs.

**On effectiveness**

The interventions of the various Oxfam offices had a three-fold approach:

- > Strengthening local CSOs to support the families and influence the local and national governments,
- > Launching an international campaign (Behind the Brands) in 2013, prior to R2F programme to influence big companies (in this case TCCC) and global consumers, and
- > Influencing governments, private sector and development agencies directly and indirectly, partly through using the companies as champions.

*Changes in private sector policies and practices* - Undeniable the companies started moving through the Behind the Brands campaign combined with the direct interventions from Oxfam US. The Coca Cola Company acknowledges the work of Oxfam (federation): “Through our long-standing engagement with Oxfam, we have worked to develop and improve our sustainability and supplier guidelines. Our company has engaged with Oxfam on this matter, and their input has helped inform the company’s supplier engagement strategy.”

KSL (and KPT and KSI) is influenced by the court cases in Thailand and the UK, and directly by Tate & Lyle Sugars/ASR, and TCCC as KSL states in the interview. The Coca Cola Company states it has been engaged in a dialogue with suppliers following the allegations, but does not wish to share details.

According to interviewees, CLEC as a partner of Oxfam in Cambodia and Oxfam Novib, was instrumental in supporting the 200 families, and in filing the court cases.

*Changes in public sector policies and practices* - The documents in the desk review and the interviewees mention two important forces that made the Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction move: The elections in 2017-2018, and presumably at the background the influence of the EU with the EBA status in Cambodia. According to some interviewees the Ministry was instrumental in the final return of the land.

In the background, Oxfam also worked to influence the EU office in Cambodia. Oxfam, partners and alliances actively lobbied and engaged with the EU Ambassador and with the Fact-Finding Mission Team at country level. To this end, Oxfam global project staff actively engaged with the EU’s Brussel office too.

**On sustainability**

The companies included in the BtB campaign like TCCC, will likely adhere to their ‘change in policy’ and the scorecard since their reputation is at stake. Through their ‘zero tolerance for land grabbing’, they will as much as possible ensure their suppliers are clean. For Tate &

Lyle, the pressure will likely work as well. KSL does not see the returning of land as a change in their policies, they agreed to hand back on a humanitarian basis. They insist the land was owned by the government.

The change in the government's practice is very likely more an adhoc change and it is not sure it will be repeated in other cases.

The strengthened capacities of partner CLEC are likely to sustain, although the organisation itself may face financial sustainability when R2F stops.

### On relevance

The work done with the Behind the Brands campaign has shown to be very relevant for this case and possibly others, holding big companies accountable for resources used, showing concrete cases, making them move to better policies and practices and using their leverage.

Strengthening the local CSO CLEC to support the families and file the court case in Thailand is relevant for achieving the outcome as well.

On relevance at a higher level, the evaluation done by Oxfam US makes an important remark: "The EBA trade agreement created the incentives for land grabbing in this case and many others. In this sense, while each case requires attention on its own, to just address them on a case-by-case basis is like trying to rescue a tree when the entire forest is burning. Structural analysis of the trade context is key to identify the macro trends that allow for human rights violations, and could be used in a preventive manner: once a new trade deal is enacted, if the beneficiary is a country with a lax or weakly enforced land legislation, the potential for land grabbing is evident. Civil society organisations should use this to act early and engage with relevant authorities at the national and international level, in the hopes of preventing disputes that end up being taxing for communities, governments, companies and international buyers."<sup>57</sup>

## 3.4 Key observations R2F Global

### On contribution by the R2F to the outcomes

The contribution of the R2F (and predecessors in the case of the sugar value chain case) to the selected sets of outcomes is assessed as medium/strong. In the cases of the SDGs and the FMO the R2F contribution is assessed as strong, while the sugar value chain story shows a weak and medium/strong assessment.

In most stories the R2F programme is considered necessary for the outcomes to happen, while the programme is not sufficient since in all cases other actors are important contributors. As stated before, working in alliances in general means the outcomes are shared outcomes.

### On effectiveness

The three stories show how R2F effectively combined several strategies to make change happen.

The SDG case shows how alliance building works in influencing international framework agreements, and how skills and capacities of different actors are used to come to results, based on their individual strengths and without strengthening capacities perse.

The FMO case shows how outsider approaches (Campaigning against FMO) eventually opened the door for insider approaches, working on influencing FMOs policies.

In the sugar value chain story campaigning was combined with direct and indirect influencing of companies involved and indirect influencing of the Cambodian government. An important additional strategy followed by Oxfam Novib's partner in the sugar case, was the filing of complaints and court cases with a range of national, foreign, and international bodies.

### On sustainability

Sustainability is possibly limited in the case of the SDGs, strong in the case of TCCC and possibly Tate & Lyle, and possibly strong in the FMO case. The beverage companies and their suppliers will want to continue sticking to 'zero tolerance' to land grab since it harms their reputation.

The FMO case shows an implementation issue: There is no observed movement yet from policies to practices, apart from the publication of their Human Rights progress report.

### On system change

Both the sugar value chain and the FMO case work from a 'Do no harm' approach, while actually for system change, work needs to move to 'Doing good' to eventually contribute to realising smallholders' right to food.

## Reflection on the Theory of Change

The pathway to increased capacities of national, regional and global CSOs, and building alliances is used in the story of the SDG land indicators. Here it was not so much about developing capacities but in using each others' strengths to move forward.

The combination of campaigning with direct influencing of private sector actors is shown in the FMO and the sugar value chain stories. In both cases the 'champion' approach was used: FMO and The Coca Cola Company were both used as champions, showing how the work could be done.

The effectiveness of connecting global with local is nicely shown in the sugar value chain case, using local examples to influence global actors to again influence local actors. Another example is the SDG indicator work and the work on VGGTs in the countries.

<sup>57</sup> Oxfam US (2019) Internal document 'Sugar and land conflict in Koh Kong Province, Cambodia', page 18.

The assumptions made in the Theory of Change have in general proven valid. As such the R2F Theory of Change is still relevant.

An addition to the Theory of Change could include the filing of court cases as was done in the Global sugar value chain story. In the end it were the court cases in Thailand and the UK that made the company move.

Another suggestion is to include ‘doing good’ pathways in the Theory of Change, so that in the end the damage for small-scale food producers is not only reduced/controlled, but real improvements for small-scale food producers can emerge.

## 4. (Sub-)Thematic analysis Right to Food

### 4.1 R2F General findings per evaluation criteria

The main evaluation question for the Right to Food programme was formulated as follows:

*To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of public and private sector actors that protect and promote the prosperity and resilience of small-scale food producers and agricultural workers? How did these changes take place?*

#### Effectiveness

*Evaluation question 1. What changes in public and private sector policies and practices has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 3. What is the nature of the changes in policies and practices? (e.g. New policies? Amendments to existing policies? Implementation / enforcement of policies? Were they local, national or global level policies?)*

#### Findings from the R2F outcome database, policy and practice changes on all sub-themes, all countries (2015-2018)

All reported changes in public and private sector policies and practices are captured in an outcome database. This database was handed over to the external evaluators in May/June 2020. Unfortunately at that time the outcomes for 2019 and 2020 had not yet been collected.

#### A few observations arise from the table:

- > The R2F has contributed to a considerable number of changes in policies and practices. Most outcomes harvested (until early 2019) can be found in Political Will (258) and as such in the category of Early and Intermediate outcomes. This could be due to the fact that the

outcome database includes mainly phase 1 data, in combination with the long time needed for policy change processes.

- > The database shows a large number of changes in public policies (93), while the number of outcomes in private sector policies (33) is relatively small. Private sector influencing was relatively new to most partners.
- > Most outcomes were harvested at national (132) and local (166) level, reflecting R2F intentional focus on investments in countries.
- > Most changes of policies (government and private sector) occurred in Policy implementation (46 + 15), mainly at local level. Policy implementation refers in general here to compliance and enforcement of existing policies, so working on turning the policies into practices.

#### On the quality of the database (based on a quick assessment of all policy and practice changes outcomes N=389, included in the database)

- > The quality of the Outcome descriptions is assessed as ‘good’.
- > Most of the outcomes as listed in the database are real outcomes indeed (so not output) and are tagged with the relevant outcomes areas.
- > Only positive outcomes seem to be mentioned, not the negative outcomes.
- > Outcomes are not clustered around targeted outcomes. This makes it difficult to determine which outcomes belong together. E.g. more than one outcome may relate to Art 26 in Uganda.

Nature of change   Level of change	Global	Regional	National	Local	Total
<b>Changes in public policies</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>93</b>
New policy adopted	3		11	1	15
Policy damage limited	1		2	4	7
Policy implementation	1		4	41	46
Policy improvement	2		18	5	25
<b>Changes in private sector policies</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>
New policy adopted	4		1	3	8
Policy damage limited	0		0	5	5
Policy implementation	3		3	9	15
Policy improvement	1		0	4	5
<b>Increased political will</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>258</b>
(Re) formulate policy	9	1	26	9	45
Create space for CSOs to engage	5	1	13	11	30
Approval or support for ask	23	8	36	58	125
Place issue on agenda	19	5	18	16	58
	<b>71</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>384</b>

Table 11: Nature, level and number of outcomes Government and Private Sector actors only, all countries, all sub-themes Data from R2F Overview Outcomes V20191120

## Findings from the country- and global projects

### Changes in public policies

Of the eight cases that were further explored through the sample in the external part of this evaluation, seven had outcomes in public policies. Three cases were mainly working on new/improved policies (Uganda National Seed Policy; Myanmar Agricultural Development Strategy; Global SDG indicators), two on limiting damage (Uganda Art 26 and GMO bill), and two on enforcement/ implementation of existing public policies (Myanmar Alliance building for Tissue Banana Plantations, Global Cambodia Sugar value chain case).

Contributing to the changes in public policies was overall effective. Moving from newly developed policies towards changes in practices is a long- term endeavour, requires different tactics and activities with different stakeholders and deserves specific attention. The new/improved policies (Uganda National Seed Policy; Myanmar Agricultural Development Strategy; Global SDG indicators) did not result in full practices (yet), A lot of efforts have been invested in getting these policies or frameworks accepted, without putting much effort in defining a follow up. In the case of the Myanmar ADS this was mainly due to dissatisfaction with the scope of the final strategy.

Another set of policy outcomes may be short lived. Examples include the blocking in Uganda of the Amendments of Art 26, and the blocking of the GMO Bill. Both achievements –so both rejections – could be reversed any time by the political system.

However, as a result of blocking the amendments of Art 26, a start has been made in some districts with registration of customary land. Besides, several other land-related laws were redrafted as well as a consequence of the work on Art 26 that protects the land rights of citizens and farmers.

An interesting spin off of the direct influencing work in Uganda is that staff from two Ministries in Uganda (MoLHUD and MAAIF) as well as members of parliament explicitly stated during the interviews that they feel supported in their capacities to do their work.

In Myanmar we have seen that more inclusive processes do not always result in inclusive policies: CSOs and alliances can be strengthened and let their voices be heard, but voices also need ears. The government hardly took over recommendations for a more inclusive Agricultural Development Strategy. Oxfam's partner is no longer interested in contributing to the implementation since they regard the strategy as not relevant for the smallholders in Kachin and Shan.

### Changes in private sector policies

Two cases of the Global project (sugar value chain case and the FMO case) show effective Private sector policy and practice changes, both through a combination of international public campaigning and direct influencing at national level. Through BtB, companies along the sugar chain changed their policies and practices and FMO developed both their Sustainability Policy and their first progress report on Human Rights.

Private sector work is limited in both Myanmar and Uganda. This is remarkable since Myanmar (and to a lesser extent Uganda) suffers from rather exploitative companies. In the near future that will only become more apparent, when, for example, the Belt Road Initiative and the China Myanmar Economic Corridor will be further rolled out and implemented in Kachin and Shan states.

In Myanmar the R2F partners and Oxfam concluded after phase 1 that direct influencing of the private sector was not feasible, since the private sector was closed to advocacy and linked to military or political elites. In phase 2 they deployed alternative indirect influencing strategies like strengthening communities and local governments to ensure companies comply.

Other organisations in Myanmar and abroad do target the (mainly Chinese) private companies and China has – though maybe limited in effectiveness – guidelines for Chinese investments overseas. Tactics to combine international attention and pressure to leverage space (and protection) for national level work need to be considered.

In Uganda the private sector is seen by interviewees as having similar interests as the government, and difficult to approach. Therefore not much attention was paid to the private sector actors. Oxfam and partners have written a Private Sector Strategy in 2018. This has not yet resulted in more attention for the Private Sector actors.

There are good lessons to learn by the country programmes of global work on the private sector and how to use the international work to create space – and ears! – for national level work in sensitive areas. Influencing Chinese companies may require a totally new approach.

### Contribution

*Evaluation question 7. What was the contribution of our SP to these changes in relation to other actors and factors?*

*Evaluation question 8. Which factors/strategies were most important to achieve or contribute to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

Overall, the contribution assessments conducted by the external evaluation team show *medium/strong contribution* to the outcomes in the country and global projects. The contribution of the programme to the practice change of the Cambodian government is considered weak. Here the EU was mentioned as an influential actor, and a spin off of the change of government. The contribution assessment of the National Seed Policy and Strategy in Uganda was undetermined since no evidence was submitted on output and contribution.

	Uganda				Myanmar		Global			
	Art 26	NSP		GMO	ADS	Alliances	SDGs	Sugar		FMO
		Process	Content					Gov	KSL	
<b>Evidence</b>										
Output	Strong	None received	None received	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong
Contribution	Strong	None received	None received	Medium	Medium	Medium	Strong	Weak	Medium	Strong
<b>Perceptions</b>										
Necessary	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/no	Yes/no	No	Yes	Yes
Sufficient	Probably	No	Yes	Probably	No	No	No	No	Probably	No
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Undetermined</b>	<b>Undetermined</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Medium/strong</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Medium/Strong</b>	<b>Strong</b>

Table 12. Contribution assessment

In many cases R2F's interventions are considered *necessary* for the outcome to happen (without the R2F programme the outcome would not have happened) but *not sufficient*, indicating that the R2F was not the only contributing actor but other actors and factors played a necessary role as well.. This is a characteristic of policy advocacy work, which requires working in alliances, an approach many times followed by the R2F. It also shows the sometimes limited clout of NGO-Alliances, especially in more closed states – and the need to use tactics involving other power stakeholders (like international actors).

### Collecting evidence

Evidence on output – as possible contributors to the outcomes – in general is rich. Although in interviews it is clear that the contribution to the outcome was medium to strong, the evidence collected by R2F on its contribution in general is meagre. Partly this is a consequence of advocacy work, but partly also a consequence of not paying sufficient attention to collecting and monitoring contribution evidence.

### Assessment of the internal contribution stories

Through the selection of the eight sets of outcomes and further researching the contribution of R2F to these outcomes, the external evaluation team aimed to further substantiate the internal contribution stories.

For seven out of the ten outcomes (see Table 12), the contribution of the R2F was further substantiated, and assessed as medium/strong contribution. The contribution to two outcomes could not be determined (lack of evidence) and in one case contribution was considered as weak.

### Factors & strategies contributing to the changes in policies and practices

One fundamental successful strategy that was followed in Uganda and Myanmar, but also in the Global project, is the strengthening of CSOs in combination with alliance building. In both the Global Land right indicators in the SDGs, Uganda and Myanmar we see

how Oxfam and partners identify allies effectively, research the issue at hand (many times with the support of experts), come to a shared understanding of the issue, and speak with one voice. In all these cases this is the basis of any other influencing pathway. In Myanmar the alliance was built from scratch and in the context of post-conflict distrust it took a long time to build, while in Uganda and in the SDG case the CSOs have been working in (land-)alliances already for quite some time.

In Uganda and in the Global sugar value chain and FMO case, the combination of a number of strategies was instrumental: Combining direct influencing of the government/ company, with indirect influencing through (international, and/or national) public campaigning and CSO capacity development/ alliance building. This was especially strong in the Article 26 case, where Oxfam and partners targeted the whole society with similar messages spread through partners, allies and the media, while organising meetings with MPs to inform them on the issues at hand. The combination of using the different strategies was reflected in the overall Theory of Change.

A strategy that was less visible in this sampled sub-theme, though mentioned in the overall ToC, is working with 'champions' to demonstrate more sustainable pro-poor (business) models, policies and practices.

Other actors that contributed to the establishment of the (sets of) outcomes include other NGOs and projects (Uganda NSP, SDG, Myanmar Alliances), the EU (Sugar value chain), multi and bilateral actors (Myanmar ADS, SDG).

### Capacity development for influencing

*Evaluation question 2. What changes in civil society's influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society's influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)*

*Evaluation question 9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to*

*the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacities?*

*Evaluation question 10. Can the changes in civil society's influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

### **On strengthening influencing capacities**

In the analysis of the CATool 2020 (R2F, N=19) the six following topics were mentioned most frequently as relevant for capacity development: Context and power analyses (90%), Strategizing (90%), Lobbying the government (84%), Building alliances (84%), Gender mainstreaming (84%) and MEAL for influencing (95%).

These topics were confirmed during the interviews of the country projects. Besides the influencing capacities, interviewees many times also mentioned thematic topics like understanding legal procedures and laws (see below).

Five topics less frequently mentioned in the CATool include research (68%), media work (68%), public campaigning (68%), lobbying private sector (63%) and digital influencing (58%).

This does not totally tally with findings from the external evaluation team of the researched country projects: In Uganda digital influencing, research and media work was mentioned quite a few times during interviews; in Myanmar research was mentioned as an important topic. This could be a result of sampling of the outcomes.

### **Effective capacity development strategies**

In the CATool analysis 2020 the most effective capacity development strategies that contributed to results included the co-design of strategies and plans (72%), training and workshops (65%), co-implementation of activities (64%) and opportunities to connect with other stakeholders (59%). Learning by doing, and sharing concrete lived examples seem very effective.

Partners in Myanmar and Uganda indicated they have learned a lot from the R2F programme and have strengthened their capacities for influencing.

Some interviewed partners put an emphasis on 'local' mutual capacity development through alliance building and peer learning vis-à-vis capacity development coming from outside. "We [consortium/author] have selected each other for the added value each organisation brings, that gives us the strength and so we learned from each other" (interviewee Uganda). Formal peer learning was mentioned as well in Myanmar where alliance members spend a chunk of their quarterly meeting to exchange and update each other on both thematic as well as influencing issues.

### **Expert based thematic skills for influencing**

Another way of strengthening skills and capacities mentioned in the sampled outcomes frequently was to invite experts to train partners on thematic skills, and to do research on thematic issues together. This happened in Uganda with the Amendments of Article 26, the National Seed Policy and the GMO Bill. In Myanmar this happened in Kachin with the Tissue Banana Plantations.

Thematic skills are perceived as needed for being able to do research and evidence-based advocacy.

### **Dissemination of capacity development**

In the R2F CATool analysis the most frequently mentioned third parties whose capacities were strengthened as part of the R2F included other CSOs (83%), community groups (83%), and government officials (61%).

In interviews for the external evaluation, all partners mention that they disseminate their capacities through their members, through communities, and farmer leaders. In Uganda specific mentioning was made of Members of Parliament being strengthened, and staff from Ministries. Interviewees from the Ministries and Members of Parliament refer explicitly to the R2F programme for their strengthened capacities.

### **Strengthened partners**

The interviewed partners in Myanmar, Uganda and in Cambodia (sugar value chain case) agree that without strengthening their influencing capacities, either by outside or inside interventions, they would have been less successful in influencing policies. The stakes are high, so collective countervailing power is needed. Especially in Myanmar, some sub-national partners indicated they had limited experience with influencing and advocacy before the R2F programme started.

Thanks to the programme, the interviewed partners state their skills and performance have increased considerably. This is confirmed by the CATool. Their efforts have, for instance, contributed to blocking the Amendments of Article 26, the GMO Bill and to changing the National Seed Policy in Uganda, and to the Tissue Banana Plantations moratorium for new plantations and the Standard Operation Procedures guidelines in Myanmar. Partners in Myanmar also contributed to influencing the ADS but were less successful in getting the ADS as they envisioned.

The partner in Cambodia strengthened their capacities in influencing strategies of the private sector to get the land returned to the families.

### *Sustainability*

*Evaluation question 6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?*

### **Creating a roaring dragon**

The external evaluation team found that through the programme a vast network of organisations, alliances and people has been built in both Uganda, Myanmar and in the global case of SDGs, and capacities have been strengthened. This 'roaring dragon' is considered sustainable. The CSOs are determined to continue after the programme stops. In both Uganda and Myanmar partners and members of the alliance state they will



prevail. “We are an organisation, not a project! We will continue, long after R2F stops.” (Uganda). “So let me repeat, we formed the alliance not based on a project. The alliance was built to deal with land issues. It is all in the way we work, how we contribute time and money, how we work together. And yes, we can do more with support of R2F, but we will continue to implement the recommendations of our research.” (Myanmar)

The roaring dragon is considered important for keeping the policy changes sustained and ensuring the policies will turn into practices. This is especially important in Uganda and to some extent in Myanmar and Cambodia (sugar case). If the dragon keeps on roaring, the ears eventually have to listen.

Not only capacities of CSOs, alliances and communities have been strengthened. In Uganda also staff of two ministries were strengthened. These strengthened capacities are deemed sustainable as well, its created ears willing to listen, or even hands to cooperate in the future.

### **Sustainability of public policy changes**

The National Seed Policy (Uganda) and the policy changes on the Tissue Banana Plantations in Myanmar will likely sustain. Some other public policy outcomes, however, may be short lived: In Uganda the Amendments of Art 26 have been rejected but could reappear in other laws and bills as well, as explained by various interviewees. The GMO Bill has been rejected twice by the President, but the Bill is still there and there are signs that the President intends to sign the Bill after all. In Myanmar and Uganda elections may influence the sustainability of the results as well. On the positive side: as a spin-off of the Art 26 work, land owners have started registering their (customary) rights to land, and other laws and bills have been redrafted thanks to the work on Art 26.

In the Global case of the SDGs it is insecure whether the inclusive land right indicators will remain on the indicator list, and make it to Tier I. Likely the ‘land community’ will proceed (and act) when the indicators are thrown off the list.

In the case of land grabbing in the Global sugar value chain case, Oxfam’s partner CLEC will not easily survive without financial support from outside, either by Oxfam Novib or another donor. The families will keep their land but may have less power when CLEC is no longer there to support them. The government has returned justice partially but it is not clear whether they have changed their policies and practices fundamentally.

### **Sustainability of private sector changes**

R2F Global project is here the only source of examples: It is expected that the private sector (i.e. the beverage companies) will continue to stick to ‘zero tolerance’ to land grabbing since it harms their reputation and therefore it seems a sustainable change. In the case of FMO it is very likely the policy changes (Sustainability Policy, and Human Rights report) will sustain.

### *Relevance and systemic change*

*Evaluation question 5. Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?*

How does the R2F programme and its outcomes in the end contribute to the impact statement ‘Women, men and children living in poverty realise their right to food’? Is the programme working on root causes of the problem and targeting the right actors and right issues?

The R2F programme in Uganda, Myanmar and through the Global project is working on quite a number of relevant root causes that hinder the transformation towards an inclusive agricultural system: The lack of inclusive agricultural policies on land and seeds, and in case of Uganda also on extension services; lack of responsible private sector actors (Myanmar, Cambodia/sugar case). It is also working on windows of opportunities: building alliances to strengthen claims and ask for accountability; raising the capacities and voices of farmers and the broader public to counterbalance the power of the government.

Creating a ‘roaring dragon’ through strengthening CSOs and building alliances in the countries is a core outcome of the programme. It is seen as a strong potential pathway for influencing government policies, and a rather ‘safe’ pathway for influencing. “If the individual organisations try to address the issue alone, sometimes they receive threats. It is risky. To act collectively is safer.” (partner in Kachin). Knowing what is coming up in Shan and Kachin with the CMEC, alliance building is key. However, as the Agricultural Development Strategy in Myanmar shows, ‘voices need ears’. So building alliances and creating voices are not always enough.

In Uganda the alliances have been working hard to change public policies, and they were quite successful. Here the mechanisms have shown that Members of Parliament are sensitive to losing votes, and as such there is a shift in the power balance. This balance is still rather fragile. As stated earlier, MPs and the President may shift opinions once again, and with that, (parts of) the public policies. When that happens, the alliance needs to be vigilant. In the end one wants to have sustainable and inclusive policies that support the livelihood of small holders.

In the sampled outcomes of the two countries (Uganda and Myanmar) there is hardly any (direct) influencing of the private sector, even though the private sector, especially in Myanmar and to a lesser extent in Uganda, plays a negative role for social and environmental justice. The global work on the private sector (sugar value chain case and the FMO case) is a good example of how influencing the private sector could work leveraging at different levels of a worldwide influencing network..

One of the opportunities that emerges from the system analyses is the role of multi- and bilateral institutions. In Myanmar use was made of the influence multi- and bilateral donors have on governments. Although they may have differing points of view on smallholders and food sovereignty, their emphasis on inclusive governance provides a good entrance to influencing (and may provide protection for CSOs by their sheer involvement) and could be a good target of influence as well.

At this moment in time, it is premature to draw conclusions whether the policy changes supported social and economic justice. First steps have been taken in influencing policy changes, and first changes in policies can be seen. After the adoption of new/improved policies the alliances need to stay awake and keep pushing towards implementation.

In some cases, the public policy changes prevented ‘increased social and economic injustice’, so reducing harm. Examples include the returning of the land in Cambodia to the families, the BtB work on the sugar value chain, the rejection of the Amendments of Article 26 (worsening of land rights), rejection of the GMO bill (GMO crops influencing regular crops, the use of chemicals and other risks), the policies to reduce the risks of the Tissue Banana Plantations and land grabbing. The art is now to sustain the policies and to move from reducing harm to doing good.

### *Theory of Change*

*Evaluation question 11. What do the answers to the above questions mean for our Theory of Change?*

The below text refers to the generic R2F ToC in the approved programme document, showing the three pathways and the related sets of R2F assumptions underlying the thinking (See Part II Right to Food (R2F) Introduction).

#### **Untestables**

Not everything stated in the Theory of Change has been tested and brought into practice within the sampled sub-theme and sets of outcomes:

Private sector work is missing in Uganda and minimal in Myanmar, while at Global level this work is particularly strong. Global uses information from the ground level to influence the international private sector globally and at country level. Country offices could learn a lot from approaches and effectiveness of the work by Global on engaging the private sector and/or learn how to use the international pressure to open doors at national level. There is willingness, but lack of experience, and cold feet in working with the private sector, which requires other skills and tactics compared to Government related influencing work. Also a well-crafted strategy towards non-Western (Chinese!) companies is needed. This expertise is to be built as it was not ready and available neither in the global nor in the country programmes.

Collaboration between global, regional and national CSOs is happening, but is not very prominent in the country cases. The role and added value of Global work is also not made explicit in the overall R2F ToC or the country ToCs.

#### **What works, what does not**

The Art 26 case in Uganda and the Sugar case in Cambodia show that a combination of different pathways like strengthening capacities and building alliances, direct & indirect influencing, and public campaigning is working well. Politicians in Uganda are aware their

positions depend on the vote of their citizens. In Cambodia the government was probably influenced by pressure from outside including the EU combined with pressure from inside.

Pathway ‘Capacity development and alliance building’ was core in all projects. Quite a number of interviewees underline the importance of capacity development and alliance building as core outcomes of the R2F programme. Strengthened/strengthening CSOs is a pathway *and* a targeted outcome at the same time in the overall R2F ToC, while in the Myanmar R2F ToC strengthened CSOs is a means. The question arises whether strengthened CSOs are a means or an end in the R2F.

Capacity development and alliance building does not necessarily lead to changes in policies and practices. In the case of Myanmar ADS, building alliances and strengthening CSOs and communities to raise their voices is nice, but ‘voices need ears’. Without political will, as was the case in Myanmar ADS, building alliances and strengthening CSOs will not produce strong policy results.

Assumption A1 ‘Joining CSO forces at different geographical levels around a common goal increases influence over decision makers’ has proven true in the sampled story of the Global sugar value chain, the SDGs, the Uganda Amendments of Art 26, and partly with the ADS in Myanmar (last two both at national and sub-national level). The story on the ADS also shows that next to joining CSO forces more is needed when there is a lack of political will.

Assumption A5 ‘CSO working in partnership will add value to their collective efforts as different CSOs represent different constituencies and contribute different areas of expertise’ has proven true in the sampled country and global projects.

Pathway ‘Mobilising citizens through public campaigns and media’ has worked in the sugar value chain case and in Uganda very well. In Myanmar the limited civic space restrained this pathway.

Assumption A3 ‘Awareness does not automatically lead to behavioural change. Citizens need to be provided with tools and platforms for interaction with influential actors and decision makers’: In Uganda as well as in Myanmar interactions between Members of Parliament and citizens/ communities connect the two different groups of stakeholders, and ‘to move from being aware to action’. It influenced both citizens/ communities and MPs.

Assumption A4 ‘As citizens become active advocates, public pressure creates windows of change and strengthen political will for improved policies has proven true in Uganda, the Global Sugar case and the early FMO case. In Myanmar this has not proven true due to the limited civic space.

Pathway ‘Using public and private champions for demonstrating feasibility of more sustainable pro poor models, policies and practices’ is a somewhat underrepresented pathway in the sampled sub-theme. In Uganda CSOs worked together with Ministries (through a MoU) which helps both sides for policy influencing and policy improvement. In Uganda also CCMS was used as a model for farmers’-based seeds systems. In the Global sugar value chain case, Coca Cola and other companies

in the sugar chain were used as models/champions as well. In the FMO case, FMO is supposed to function as an example as well although this may take more time. The core of the interventions though focus on more 'reactive' actions.

Assumption A2 'Support of influential actors is important to influence final decision makers, as they hold both formal and informal power'. In both Uganda and Myanmar we have seen this assumption working. Nevertheless, this is also a fragile assumption. In the cases ADS/ Myanmar and GMO Bill/Uganda this support also stopped and left the outcomes insecure.

Assumption A6 'When influential public and private sector champions demonstrate the feasibility of more sustainable ways to produce and consume food, this will strengthen support among key stakeholders'. This was proven in a limited way in the Global sugar value chain case, where Coca Cola was one of the leading companies in the BtB campaign.

### Possible additions to the Theory of Change

The role and added value of Global work could be made more explicit in the overall R2F ToC or the country ToCs.

Use of international guidelines/frameworks is somewhat invisible in the ToC but it could be a helpful instrument to put governments under pressure. When governments are not fully willing to listen to their citizens and farmers, pressure from outside to align to international conventions and guidelines could be helpful.

The approach via international court cases also has shown to work and could be included more explicitly in the ToC.

Use of international institutions and bilateral donors - In Myanmar the government listens to the international donor community and international institutions like the FAO and the ADB. There are many more opportunities for influencing here. Also, more active engagement with the Dutch Embassy can be a meaningful approach in the focus countries (like Uganda).

What could be made explicit in the Theory of Change is the role of research for evidence-based advocacy. In both Uganda and Myanmar these were to a certain extent the tipping points of influencing MPs, the public and the government.

Developing the capacities of MPs and high-ranking civil servants on the technicalities and implications of the issues is a very effective influencing strategy, and so is the direct thematic support on the (national) legal frameworks for policy analysis. These strategies deserve a place in the ToC as well.

### Discussion Theory of Change

Strengthening CSOs is in the R2F Theory of Change both targeted outcome and pathway, which leads to the discussion whether Strengthening CSOs is a means for contributing to policy and practice changes, or an 'targeted outcome/ end' in itself. Or in other words: Does the targeted outcome of strengthened CSOs and alliances contribute directly to the long-term outcome (small scale food producers and agricultural workers benefit from local to global public and private sector policies that

protect and promote prosperity and resilience) or do they contribute to the long-term outcome via the other targeted outcome of inclusive policies and practices of in the public, private and international sector? In the initial overall ToC it has not been made explicit how the targeted outcomes are supposed to contribute to the long-term outcome. No assumptions have been defined. Asking the question, is also answering the question. The long-term outcome is about benefiting from policies, and so the strengthened CSOs and Alliances are considered by the external evaluation team as a means to ensure policies and practices are supporting the prosperity and resilience of small-scale food producers and agricultural workers indeed. A very important means indeed.

Another discussion is how the shifts in power relations are represented in the ToC. And how do they in the end contribute to inclusive policies and system change? The R2F ToC imagines changes in peoples' lives to come, among other things, from the implementation of improved public and private sector policies. It assumes implicitly that such implementation will simply follow the adjustment of the policy. However, our analysis of the sampled outcomes shows that holding public and private sectors to account for the implementation of their improved policy is a necessary additional and often time consuming effort, which should figure explicitly as a separate step in the ToC and strategy.

## 4.2 Conclusions R2F

Creating a 'roaring dragon' through CSO strengthening and building alliances by R2F in the sampled countries is considered effective, relevant, sustainable and a core outcome of the programme, as countervailing power in the harsh political environments. It is a strong potential pathway for influencing government policies, and working through an alliance is a rather 'safe' pathway for influencing, especially in the restricted civic space context of the sampled projects. Research and evidence-based advocacy, 'speaking with one voice' and using social media added to the influencing power of CSOs.

The 'roaring dragon' has in the sampled countries contributed to relevant and notable changes in policies. From the example of the ADS Myanmar it has become clear, however, that a 'roaring dragon' is not always sufficient: voices need ears, or with other words: Voices need political will to be listened to.

Contribution of the R2F to the sampled policy outcomes is assessed as medium to strong in seven of the ten sets of outcomes. In many cases the SP contribution was perceived as necessary but not sufficient, as is common in policy advocacy programs.

Sustainability of the public policy changes shows a mixed picture. The Ugandan National Seed Policy, and the changes in the Tissue Banana Plantation policies seem sustainable. Also, the spin-off of the work on Art 26 (registration of land and draft versions of other land related policies) is likely sustainable. However, not a single result of the political and legislative process is written in stone, so continued attention (beyond R2F lifecycle) is needed. Some other outcomes on public policies and frameworks have the risk of being short-lived. This refers to the rejection of the Amendments of Art 26 and the GMO Bill in Uganda, and possibly the inclusive land right indicators of the SDGs.

In most countries the policy cycle is a longer-term cycle without quick results. At this moment in time, it is still premature to draw conclusions whether the policy changes supported social and economic justice. First steps have been taken in influencing policy changes, and first steps can be seen in changes in policies.

In some cases, the public policy changes prevented ‘increased social and economic injustice’, so reducing harm (the returning of the land in Cambodia to the families, the BtB work on the sugar value chain, the rejection of the Amendments of Article 26, the rejection of the GMO bill, the policies to reduce the risks of the Tissue Banana Plantations and land grabbing. The art is now to sustain the policies and to move from reducing harm to doing good.

Private sector work is missing in the sampled sub-theme and the sampled countries Uganda and Myanmar, while at Global level this work is particularly strong and has opened doors at specific national cases related to monitoring the implementation of international standards, and/or policy commitments. Country offices could learn a lot from approaches, tactics and effectiveness of the work by Global on engaging the private sector. This includes learning on how to influence non-Western companies.

While China plays a large role in global resource trade, including timber, food and agriculture, water, minerals and as such is a major actor in many countries in land grabs and pollution, also in the sampled countries, influencing the Chinese private sector is hardly included in the work of R2F in the sampled countries, but should be.

Strategic engaging with multi- and bilateral agencies to influence the government is effectively practised in e.g. Myanmar. This type of engagement could be practised more often as a deliberate tactic, since multi- and bilateral agencies are highly influential in Myanmar and Uganda and can thus play their role in getting an attentive ear. Dutch Embassies could support more strongly given their role in multilateral agencies and bilateral cooperation with the countries.

In general the R2F Theory of Change and its pathways is still relevant. The case of Myanmar shows that the ToC is most relevant in countries that already have some civic space and where the government has ears to complement the people’s voices.

The long-term outcome is about benefiting poor farmers and workers with policies that protect and promote their prosperity and resilience. So the strengthened CSOs and Alliances are considered by the external evaluation team as a means to ensure policies and practices are supporting the prosperity and resilience of small-scale food producers and agricultural workers indeed. A very important means indeed.

Some additions could be made to the ToC including the role of the global work, working with international frameworks, and multi-and bilateral agencies; using international court cases to fight injustice; and the strengthening of capacities of government staff and politicians. In the ToC it has not been made explicit how the targeted outcomes are supposed to contribute to the long-term outcome and impact. No assumptions have been defined. It is also not clear how the shifts in power relations are represented in the ToC and contribute to

inclusive policies and system change. It is important to do so in the future, as a key element for learning and adjusting tactics.



# Part III: Finance for Development

## Part III – Finance for Development

### Introduction

The Finance for Development (F4D) programme seeks to strengthen CSOs and the public in their combined efforts to improve policies and practices, aiming at the long-term outcome that ‘more women, youth and other citizens benefit from higher quality and quantity of finance for development, an enhanced fiscal system and a sustainable inclusive financial and corporate sector, tackling extreme inequality’. This will ultimately lead to ‘more citizens enjoying their basic rights and financial inclusion and experiencing equal opportunity in more democratic societies’ (impact).

Five pathways (targeted outcomes) are hypothesised to reach the long term outcome: 1) National civil society increasingly hold governments, international institutions and the private sector to account for extreme inequality and poverty, 2) Governments, international institutions and multinational corporations take measures against tax evasion and performance, 3) Governments ensure more pro-poor fiscal policies, 4) Governments and international institutions enhance development aid and innovative finance, and 5) governments, international institutions and the private sector ensure an inclusive sustainable and stable financial sector.

Note that the five pathways/targeted outcomes as presented in the F4D Theory of Change (ToC) are the same as the five ‘sub-themes’. In the case of R2F and C&F, the sub-themes are not integrated in the ToC.

According to the programme document (2015), two conditions must be met to empower citizens and challenge power relations. “First, attitudes and beliefs must be changed: people must believe that inequality is a problem and that it can be tackled. Secondly, it is vital to strengthen partner organisations and broker partnerships with allies at national, regional and global level, as challenging power relations requires a wide constituency and critical mass.”

Active citizens and CSOs together with ‘influential champions’ will create an enabling environment for policy change. Political/civic space is an important precondition.

The envisaged outcomes of the Finance for Development programme are hypothesised to follow an extensive Theory of Change (see Figure 3).

As a result of the programmed interventions, and following the five change pathways/targeted outcomes, the ToC identifies a number of early and intermediate outcomes:

#### Change pathway 1.

- > Strengthened citizen and CSO capacities to research and influence

- > Enhanced space for CSOs to advocate
- > Enhanced transparency and access to information for CSOs <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

#### Change pathway 2.

- > Strengthened national and international coalitions
- > Increased political will in the public and private
- > Increased public pressure on policy makers

#### Pathway 3.

- > Political and private sector support for improved policies
- > Promotion of inclusive development priorities which reduce extreme inequality,
- > Increased strength of CSOs to conduct research, develop and implement advocacy

#### Pathway 4.

- > Political and private support for quantity and quality of aid and innovative finance models
- > Strengthened citizen and CSO influence on decision makers on aid and innovative finance. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- > Strengthened international coalitions and increased access of national CSOs to global policy processes

#### Pathway 5.

- > Political and private sector support for pro-poor financial flows
- > Political and private sector support for financial sector reform
- > More responsible, accountable, inclusive and transparent financial sector <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- > Enhanced research capacity of civil society actors working on the financial sector

The ToC is based on 8 underlying assumptions (numbered from A1 to A8).

The F4D programme is being implemented in 10 countries and also through the global programme FAIR/Even it Up (FAIR/EiU). FAIR/EiU incorporates Oxfam’s broader work on inequality, complemented by a 40+ country programme for capacity building and national level advocacy. A part of the FAIR/EiU programme is captured under the Strategic Partnership.

In co-creation with local partner organisations, for each of the countries where the programme is implemented, the generic Theory of Change has been ‘translated’ to national contexts.

This results in the fact that in each country different change pathways are developed. For this evaluation, however, the generic ToC is leading.

### The evaluation of F4D

For the evaluation of the F4D programme, the external evaluation team selected, based on a range of criteria, the following sub-theme and projects:

- > Sub-theme: ‘Pro-poor fiscal policy’ Access to and governance of systems that support resilient



Figure 3. Theory of Change Finance for development

- liveliness of smallholder food producers' (429 of the 730 reported outcomes fall under this sub-theme);
- > Within this sub-theme three projects: Cambodia, Uganda and Global (FAIR/EiU)

The internal evaluation team wrote contribution stories for the outcomes that are reported from sampled projects. Due to a lack of capacity, it was not possible for the internal evaluation team to conduct a contribution

analysis of all outcomes that were harvested on the sub-theme in Cambodia, Uganda and for the Global project. The staff from the SP selected outcomes for the internal contribution story, based on two criteria. First, to ensure relevance and opportunities for learning, the outcomes had to be higher-level outcomes. Secondly, the set of outcomes to be included in the contribution story had to be diverse and represent the main areas of work of the project. In the introduction paragraphs for the three projects the selection process is further explained.

Another internal team wrote ‘A cross-cutting narrative on the Strategic Partnership’s capacity development of civil society for influencing’, highlighting the work and results of the capacity development efforts of the programme. This work is assessed by the external evaluations in part V of this report.

The external evaluation team answers the 11 evaluation questions by critically assessing the findings of the internal evaluation team combined with collecting additional external information and providing an external view. The external team also collected additional information to verify and complement the Contribution Stories produced by the internal evaluation team.

For the F4D part of the external evaluation, desk review was combined with interviews, either online or face-to-face interviews. For the face-to-face interviews, a local consultant was recruited in Cambodia. For Uganda and Global, all interviews were done online.

Table 13. Interviewees F4D

# interviews	Global	Cambodia	Uganda	Total
Oxfam & partner staff	12	15	7	34
Externals	7	10	3	20
Total	19	25	10	54

Part of the external evaluation was also a Collective System Analysis (CSA) per project (except Global). The background of the methodology is further explained in the background part of this report (Part I). The results of the CSA-workshops are presented at the end of each country project.

After the presentation of the evaluation of the three projects (Cambodia, Uganda and Global) the key observations regarding contribution, relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, capacity strengthening and relation to the ToC are summarised. In the last paragraph an analysis is presented of the main findings of the F4D programme, including an assessment of the validity of the generic ToC.

## 1. Cambodia Contribution stories

### Introduction

The problem analysis at the start of Oxfam Novib’s F4D activities in Cambodia has revealed that, to counter increasing inequality and to address extreme poverty, inclusive fiscal policies and fiscal justice are needed in Cambodia, as are investments in and access to social sectors like health and education. However, there was little debate about taxation and public expenditures in Cambodia. Budget transparency and public

participation/involvement were hampered by the lack of information and understanding among the general public on budget processes. Another reason for the lack of debate on taxation was that only few NGOs in Cambodia were engaging in budget analysis at the national, sectoral and sub-national level. Their capacities on fiscal and budgetary issues were low.

To reach the long-term outcome and impact in Cambodia, as formulated in the ToC, four pathways of change were hypothesised: (1) Capacity development of CSOs, (2) Empowering people, (3) Stronger and wider alliances, and (4) Direct lobby and advocacy towards the government.

Oxfam in Cambodia partnered with five national NGOs: NGO Forum, Transparency International Cambodia (TIC), Gender and Development Cambodia (GADC), Star Kampuchea (SK), and Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC). NGO Forum is also the secretariat of the Budget Working Group (BWG), a coalition of seven NGOs aiming to increase transparency in public fiscal management and to increase fiscal space for public spending.

### Selecting outcomes for research

The outcome database of F4D Cambodia, for the sampled sub-theme ‘pro-poor fiscal policies’, counts in total 67 outcomes, of which 27 have been selected by Oxfam for further description in their contribution narrative.<sup>58</sup>

The following three outcomes were selected to assess the contribution of the SP:

#### *Story 1. Increase in education budget by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports*

- > In January 2018, the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia increased from 12.3% to 14.7% (+2.4 %-point) of the national budget, compared to an increase of 1.5 %-point in the previous year (submitted by NGOF).

#### *Story 2. Disclosure of information:*

- > On 31 December 2016, the Ministry of Economy and Finance disclosed new budget documents to the public to contribute to increasing the budget transparency score of Cambodia through the Open Budget Index Survey 2017 (submitted by NGOF).
- > On 27 October 2017, the Ministry of Economy and Finance publicly disclosed the executive summary of draft budget laws for 2018 to contribute to increasing the budget transparency in Cambodia (submitted by NGOF).

#### *Story 3. Dec 2017 Core groups case (investigative story)*

- > In December 2017, 9 communes in the target provinces-Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, and Prey Veng, allowed the core groups to participate in

<sup>58</sup> Contribution Narrative, Oxfam Novib, April 2020. ‘Finance For Development - How change happened in Oxfam Novib’s and SOMO’s programme on pro-poor fiscal policies.’ Chapter 2.



monthly and quarterly meetings which provide them (the core groups) space to engage in commune budget planning and disclosure of budget information (TIC/GADC).

The three selected outcomes/stories cover two different pathways. Story 1 and 2 are on pathway 4 (Direct lobby and advocacy towards the government) and story 3 falls under pathway 3 (Stronger and wider alliances).

### 1.1 Contribution story 1.

## Increasing the Cambodian education budget

*Outcome: In January 2018, the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia increased from 12.3% to 14.7% (+2.4 %-point) of the national budget, compared to an increase of 1.5 %-point in the previous year (submitted by NGOF).*

The increase of the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) in January 2018 has been one of the more concrete outcomes documented by the Oxfam partners in Cambodia. According to Oxfam, the Government of Cambodia had expressed its commitment to education, but ‘allocated resources seemed to lag behind’.

At first glance the reported increase in 2018 seems moderate: a 2.4%-point increase, elevating the budget from 12.3 to 14.7% of the total government budget (still below the international benchmark of 15-20% established during the so-called Incheon Declaration<sup>59</sup>). But in real terms the increase was considerable: from 610 to 848 million dollars, an increase of almost 40%. This increase was, according to Oxfam, a result of ‘constructive engagement’ of the Oxfam partner NGO Forum with the ministries of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Later increases of the education budget were more moderate: in 2019, the education budget increased to 904 million dollars (13.5 % of the total government budget). In 2020, the budget levelled at 919 million dollars (down to 11.4% of the national budget).

The numbers are contested, however. After reading this story, a staff member of a UN organisation in Cambodia, writes that the 2018 increase was not 2.4 percentage points, but 1.15 (12.95% in 2017 and 14.1% in 2018). Miscalculation was a result of the inclusion of donor funds, says this interviewee.

The 2018 budget increase was the first reported result of a 3-year advocacy strategy and plan (2017-2019) developed by NGO Forum with the objective to increase budget allocation of ministries of social sectors (among which education) in Cambodia. NGO Forum (a

membership organisation of over 90 local CSOs) facilitated a capacity needs assessment, showing that the capacity of involved NGOs on (sectoral) budget analysis needed to be strengthened. The contribution of the capacity strengthening efforts to the outcome is unclear. The timing of events is confusing: the capacity needs assessment was conducted in December 2017. As a result, in 2018, several capacity building activities were employed. According to Oxfam’s contribution narrative: “In 2018, the NGO Forum facilitated a series of trainings on budget analysis especially in the education sector.” These training took place after the outcome on the increased budget was achieved. That would indicate that the capacity development played no role in achieving the outcome. According to a staff member of Oxfam in Cambodia, the capacity development activities, however, started in 2017 and these *did* contribute to the influencing capacities leading to the outcome.

The advocacy intervention started with an analysis of the 2018 budget proposal by the Government. This was done by the Budget Working Group together with NGO Education Partnership of Cambodia (NEP), an organisation uniting several Cambodian NGOs focusing on education. NGO Forum acts as the executive secretariat of the Budget Working Group, consisting of over 10 CSOs and networks. NEP is also a member of NGO Forum. Based on the budget analysis, the BWG drafted a policy statement. This statement was discussed with the Ministry. According to a former staff-member of NGO Forum, this was the first time that Cambodian NGOs discussed the budget with the Government. Apart from discussing the policy statement with the Ministry, BWG and NEP also engaged with the National Assembly on fiscal policies and public spending.

The interventions focused on direct advocacy at government level. But there were also interventions at the local level. Local organisations were trained by NGO Forum/BWG in understanding the national budget process. Regional organisations campaigned at sub-national level for increased education budgets and they identified local priorities. This provided input for the debate on the national level.

### The contribution narrative revisited

In the Contribution Narrative, Oxfam recognises the importance that the Government of Cambodia attaches to education as a driver of development.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the Government of Cambodia committed itself to the education goals as formulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (mainly SDG#4). This raised the question if the education budget would have increased irrespective of the efforts by the SP. Other sources indicated that the bulk of the increase in the budget can, in fact, be explained by a government decision in 2015 to increase the wages of civil servants (of which teachers

<sup>59</sup> [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en\\_2.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Contribution Narrative, Oxfam Novib, April 2020. ‘Finance For Development - How change happened in Oxfam Novib and SOMO’s programme on pro-poor fiscal policies.’ Chapter 2.

and other school staff are the largest group). Some 80% of the education budget goes to salaries.<sup>61</sup>

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## Reflection

### Overall assessment

The proof that the outcome was achieved is conclusive. There are, however, doubts about the exact amount of the budget increase (2.4% or just 1.15%). The contribution narrative as developed by Oxfam Novib on this outcome does not seem very likely. Major contributors to the outcome are not included in the contribution narrative:

- > With their sizeable budget support and matching funds, 'development partners', (i.e. the international donor community) have considerable influence on the national education budget.
- > Perhaps the biggest contributing factor to the increased education budget is the decision made in 2015 by the Cambodian government to increase the salaries of government workers. That alone explains the bulk of the education budget increase.

A decisive contribution by the F4D partners to the outcome is also unlikely in view of the fact that civic space in Cambodia is extremely limited. There is little room for national CSOs to engage with the government on policy issues. Furthermore, the topic of fiscal policies is relatively new to Cambodian CSOs. As a consequence, capacities are not yet fully developed (and they were even less so in 2017, when the advocacy for the budget increase was employed).

The validity of the F4D ToC is (partly) confirmed by the story. The alternative contribution hypothesis stresses the value of strengthened alliances and cooperation with other stakeholders and specifically the development partners. This also confirms the value of one of the Assumptions (A4 in the ToC).

The strengthening of alliances and the joint coordination of strategies (e.g. through NGO network organisations like NGO Forum, NEP and the Budget Working Group) has facilitated that NGOs increasingly speak with 'one voice', adding considerably to their relevance. It has also put fiscal matters higher on the agenda of civil society as a whole. Also, at the Commune level, more people engage on fiscal and budget matters that may have an influence on their daily lives. The assumptions in the F4D ToC in this respect (notably assumptions A1 and A7) hold true (see (sub-)thematic analysis for an explanation of the assumptions).

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<sup>61</sup> <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/563279/education-ministry-boosts-teachers-salaries-amid-reforms/>

Several interviewees also agree that further increased thematic capacities would contribute to more influencing power of CSOs.

Advocacy in Cambodia is a delicate matter. Political influence on policy matters by NGOs is problematic. By law, NGOs are not permitted to play a political role. And as all interviewees agree, putting pressure on the political process by organising protest and demonstrations is dangerous. The main advocacy strategies are constructive and non-confrontational: dialogue, debate, social media (Facebook), and direct influencing. Local communities have slightly more room to protest publicly (peacefully) against specific abuses. Cambodian CSOs have learned to cleverly navigate the obstacles and opportunities, this includes not being identified as the organiser or instigator of public protest.

The political context in Cambodia does not completely exclude the role of CSOs. Their room to move is, however, limited to specific roles and activities. Advocacy and lobby of CSOs towards the government preferably takes the shape of ‘technical advice’. Indirect advocacy is possible, for example by channelling proposals through other actors (mainly the development partners). Based on their increasing capacities, some CSOs have managed to secure a platform for dialogue with the government.

Some advocacy can also be targeted at the government by stressing the support of the public for certain measures. A government official suggests that CSOs could gain more influence by, for example, conducting surveys among Cambodian citizens, since policy proposals backed up by the approval of citizens are more likely to be accepted by the government. As a staff member of a UN organisation in Cambodia says: “Surveys are a smart way to communicate the voice of the general public and engage in constructive dialogue with the government. Surveys are less controversial, depending on the topics.” (Social) media – mainly Facebook – are another way to gather and show public support for certain proposals. Same UN staff member: “Depending on the messages, the support of the public is important so that the government knows that it represents a certain number of the voice of the public, not the voice of CSOs.”

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### On Contribution

The contribution of the programme and the interventions by Oxfam and partners is not very high. It is likely that the budget increase would have taken place with or without the SP. It was like pushing a train that was already on the move.

The limited civic space for NGOs in Cambodia is without a doubt a major obstacle for a meaningful (and successful) dialogue between NGOs and Ministries (and the National Assembly). Most interviewees agree that room for NGOs to influence fiscal and budget policies is mainly to be found based on thematic expertise. As

Cambodian CSOs are relatively new to the topic of F4D, capacities are still relatively low.

Table 14. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment Increase in education budget	
Evidence	
Evidence output	Medium
Evidence contribution	Weak
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	No
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome?	No
Overall assessment	Low

### On relevance

Logically, the level of national budgets is an important indicator of the quality of education in a country. No wonder that international institutions have established ‘benchmarks’ that include the percentage of the national budget spent on education (and other social sectors). A higher budget, however, is no guarantee for a better and more pro-poor education sector. The impressive increase in Cambodia’s education budget between 2015 and 2019 is to a large extent the result of increased overall salaries of teachers and other staff, which was previously decided upon.

With the benefit of hindsight: the efforts of Oxfam and partners may in this case have been better put to use by monitoring and guiding the pro-poor expenditure of the (increasing) education budget, based on detailed local data and experiences, accompanied by relevant surveys among citizens and backed by existing organisational infrastructure, like the so-called ISAF. Several interviewees agree that locally gathered, reliable data, for example on local spending of education budgets, are needed as a foundation to effective, pro-poor (education) policies. Also advocating for making school operating budgets publicly available and participative, was recommended by one of the interviewees. NGOs, with their grassroots network, are ideally placed to feed such data into policy making government agencies.

### On sustainability

The sustainability of the outcome (increased education budget) is not guaranteed. Indeed: after a number of years of increase, the relative height of the education budget started decreasing after 2019. Further decreases are expected as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Capacity development

Quite a number of interviewees indicate that the capacities of NGOs have increased, especially since 2018. This is also confirmed by the data in the CATool (see part V of this report). Limited thematic knowledge, however, is mentioned as one of the reasons for limited influence and advocacy capacity. According to several interviewees, high staff turnover is an important cause. Working at NGOs that engage in policy advocacy is considered unstable and unsafe. Many prefer working at the government or in the private sector. Civil society seems to be experiencing a brain drain. Concrete data to back this observation were not found, but the trend is confirmed by the coming and going of people in the F4D department of Oxfam in Cambodia.

## 1.2 Contribution story 2.

# Disclosure of Cambodian budget information

### Outcomes:

*On 31 December 2016, the Ministry of Economy and Finance disclosed new budget documents to the public to contribute to increasing the budget transparency score of Cambodia through the Open Budget Index Survey 2017 (submitted by NGOF).*

*On 27 October 2017, the Ministry of Economy and Finance publicly disclosed the executive summary of draft budget laws for 2018 to contribute to increasing the budget transparency in Cambodia (submitted by NGOF).*

Disclosure of information by the government is included in the F4D Theory of Change as a Targeted Outcome. In this context, Oxfam partner NGO Forum reported increased budget transparency by the government of Cambodia in 2016 and 2017.

The evidence of the outcome can mainly be found in the so-called Open Budget Survey (OBS), an initiative of the International Budget Partnership.<sup>62</sup> Since 2015, Cambodia increased its score on the OBS considerably. A process that continued after 2017, when the outcome was reported.

It must also be made clear that Oxfam partner NGO Forum is, since 2008, also the research institute that collected the data for the Open Budget Survey for Cambodia, and drafted the report.

According to the OBS 2019, Cambodia scored 32 (out of 100) on budget transparency. In the region, only Myanmar scored lower. Cambodia's international ranking was 86 out of 117 countries. Albeit low, Cambodia has seen a notable increase in budget transparency over the last five years. In 2015, the score was 8, in 2017, the score was 20. One of the indicators used to assess budget transparency is the number of (selected) budget documents available to the public. In 2015, only two documents were available, but in 2019 all relevant documents became available (see figure 4).

Figure 4. From Summary Open Budget Survey Cambodia 2019

## Public availability of budget documents in Cambodia

- Available to the Public
- Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
- ⊘ Not Produced

Document	2010	2012	2015	2017	2019
Pre-Budget Statement	●	●	●	●	●
Executive's Budget Proposal	●	●	●	●	●
Enacted Budget	●	●	●	●	●
Citizens Budget	⊘	⊘	●	●	●
In-Year Reports	●	●	●	●	●
Mid-Year Review	●	●	●	●	●
Year-End Report	●	●	⊘	●	●
Audit Report	●	●	⊘	●	●

## The contribution narrative revisited

According to the Contribution Narrative as developed by Oxfam, "[t]he capacity strengthening of the Budget Working Group and its clear advocacy strategy to influence on the disclosure of this budget information can be linked to achieving this outcome." The contribution narrative also mentions "(...) the support of the European Union and Sida in influencing the Ministry through the Technical Working Group on Public Financial Management Reform (TWG-PFMR) and direct technical assistance to the Ministry on budget transparency as part of their reform agenda."

As a first observation, it can be questioned whether a government policy change achieved in 2016 can in all fairness be contributed to a programme that only started in 2016. It is more likely that the activities that led to the outcome were developed before the Strategic Partnership started in Cambodia. The Open Budget Survey that the policy change is likely to be a reaction to, was published in 2015.

<sup>62</sup> The Open Budget Survey is part of the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Initiative, a global research and advocacy programme to promote public access to budget information and the

adoption of inclusive and accountable budget systems.  
<https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/cambodia>

The contribution of the programme to the outcome of 2017, however, is likely. Like in the years before, NGO Forum, commissioned by the International Budget Partnership, carried out the research to produce the evidence on the lack of transparency of the Cambodian government, but the F4D programme facilitated the Budget Working Group (an alliance of 7 Cambodian CSOs) to use the evidence to engage in dialogue and advocate for releasing budget documents.

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The role of the media in Cambodia is relevant. The publication of the OBS usually is picked up by the media in Cambodia. This contributes to the impact of the survey. Media attention may very well lead to more public attention to budget transparency. Unfortunately, few Cambodian journalists have 'budget literacy', says the Cambodian independent reporter, Vann Vichar. More cooperation between journalists and CSOs could be beneficial for both, according to Vichar. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM'S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]

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Ouk Vannara of NGO Forum shares the observation that regional 'peer pressure' can be a positive force towards more budget transparency. He points mainly at Vietnam and Myanmar. "Like Cambodia, Vietnam has just one political party but, all the same, that country has made bigger steps towards transparency. That can be an inspiration for our government."

Several interviewees stress that national NGOs in Cambodia can increase their clout by emphasising and engaging their grassroots presence and network. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM'S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]

**Reflections**

**Overall assessment**

The proof of the outcome is clear and not in question. The internally drafted contribution narrative, however, does not accurately reflect the contribution of the SP. It is not very likely that the SP contributed to a large extent to the 2016 outcome, as the SP at the time was only in the start-up phase, and the OBS that the outcome was based on, was published in 2015. The 2017 outcome could in part be the result of SP interventions: supported by the SP and based on the data of the OBS, the Budget Working Group lobbied at the Ministry of Economy and Finance for more transparency. But there are other factors that contributed to the outcome: the EU used the leverage of its donations to entice Cambodia to more budget transparency; the 'peer pressure' by countries in the region (as a result of the OBS). And of course, the Open Budget Survey is a major contributor to the outcome, but the survey is not financed or initiated by the SP; the SP can only take credit for the lobbying based on the survey. It is difficult to differentiate what contributed more to the outcome: the OBS itself or the advocacy based on the OBS. In that regard, also the 'peer pressure' by other countries in the region must be taken into account. Also the media attention is a contributing factor.

Both the EU-representative and the government official interviewed for this story may have ulterior motives for questioning the contribution of the SP to the outcomes. But they do add to the doubt on the actual contribution narrative as presented by Oxfam.

The alternative hypothesis is more likely: the increased transparency was mainly a result of the OBS in combination with EU-pressure and 'peer pressure'. The 2016 outcome was too early for the SP to have had a contribution. A contribution of the SP to the 2017 outcome is more likely, but probably fairly limited. Additional advocacy by NGO Forum and other SP partners contributed to the discussion at government level on budget transparency. Later on the involvement of Oxfam and its partners increased, strengthened by increased capacities and by reclaiming a place in the dialogue.

The increased transparency of the Cambodian government on budget documents is a 'targeted outcome' in the F4D ToC (note that 'Enhanced transparency and access to information for CSOs is also identified as an early outcome). The research capacities of NGO Forum are an important stepping stone for the OBS to have impact, but these capacities existed before the SP started. Also the media attention for the OBS fits

into the ToC logic. The capacity development interventions of the SP probably came too late to really have contributed to the outcomes. The influencing capacities of CSOs – especially after 2017 – were greatly reduced as a result of shrinking civic space. So the early outcome of 'enhanced civic space' did not materialise. After 2018, CSOs found other, clever ways to operate in the remaining space.

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**On contribution**

Based on the considerations above, the following contribution table can be drawn.

*Table 15. Contribution Assessment*

Contribution assessment disclosure of information	
Evidence	Weak/medium/strong
Evidence output	Medium/strong
Evidence contribution	Weak/medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	Probably not
Sufficient: Was programme sufficient for outcome?	No
Overall assessment	Low/medium

**On relevance**

Budget transparency and accountability are important preconditions for citizens and NGOs to engage in fiscal and budget advocacy. The strategy to pressure the government to more budget transparency is important. In addition, it provides opportunities to discuss government openness and to put the question of transparency on the agenda. The release of specific documents is a clever, simple and attractive instrument. Document disclosure should however not be confused with real transparency of fiscal policies. Even full disclosure of all documents can still hide how budgets are spent in 'the real world' and how budgets can benefit or harm the position of marginalised people.

The relevance of the outcome is notably enhanced by linking increasing budget transparency to efforts to capacitate people to understand budget issues and to increase awareness of its importance. The outcome database developed by the internal evaluation process (through outcome harvesting) shows several outcomes that relate to increased budget awareness of citizens. Especially the work at sub-national level focuses on increasing knowledge and awareness (see for example the story on community ‘Core Groups’ later in the report). Budget transparency and growing awareness are mutually reinforcing. Together with increased transparency and increased capacity, media also have a role to play in ‘translating’ complex fiscal issues into news items that may attract a larger audience. In that respect, training national journalists on fiscal matters deserves attention.

### On sustainability

Several interviewees indicate that there are no reasons to presume that the Cambodian government will withdraw from its movement towards more transparency. Indeed, this would probably result in loss of face within the region. It is not unthinkable, however, that the government will reduce the disclosure of documents that may provide ‘ammunition’ for the (banned) opposition to reclaim its position in Cambodian politics. Generally, capacity development of CSO staff and other stakeholders contributes to the sustainability of outcomes.

### On capacity development

The increased capacities of CSOs have contributed to the influence of CSOs in Cambodia. As the theme of F4D is relatively new for CSOs in Cambodia, their thematic capacities in some cases are not yet sufficient.

The high staff turnover NGOs in Cambodia poses a serious issue regarding the sustainability of capacity development efforts and for an increase of capacities up to the required level.

### 1.3 Contribution story 3 (investigative story)

#### Outcome:

*In December 2017, nine communes in the target provinces-Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, and Prey Veng, allowed the core groups to participate in monthly and quarterly meetings which provide them (the core groups) space to engage in commune budget planning and disclosure of budget information (submitted by TIC/GADC).*

#### *Increasing Gender Based Budgeting at commune level*

## Core Groups to raise women’s voices

*Sa Im (43) welcomes us with a broad smile. She is standing in front of her house, busy trying to dry her rice, which she had recently harvested from her flooded rice field. It is a windy day, this 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, so Sa Im invites us to sit under her small wooden house on stilts, protected against the elements. Along the bumpy road to Sa Im’s home, the landscape was dominated by rice fields. In the garden surrounding her house different crops grow, including an array of hot chili plants.*

We visit Sa Im to hear about the so-called Core Groups. These Core Groups are initiated by the organisation ‘Gender and Development Cambodia’ (GADC), a partner of Oxfam, as part of the Finance for Development programme. The Core Groups are intended to empower citizens in local budgeting, with special focus on Gender Responsive Budgeting. GADC installed Core Groups in nine different communes, in the provinces Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, and Prey Veng. The Groups, all made up of women from those communities, are also designed to support GADC in gathering and developing data to support evidence-based research. In each of the communes, there may be one or two Core Groups made up of one member from each of the villages in that commune. All of the members have received capacity development support throughout the project. Training sessions were organised on: women’s rights, gender-based violence, decentralisation processes and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), alongside some ‘soft skills’ training to build confidence around facilitation, communication, mobilisation and representation.

#### Liver disease

Sa Im is a Core Group member in the Talour commune<sup>63</sup>, a collection of eight villages with in total between five and six thousand families, in the province of Pursat, in the north-west of Cambodia. She became a member in 2016, some years after her husband had died from liver disease. “Life was so difficult as a new widow: I had to raise my three children all by myself. Before my husband died, we spent all of our money, and took out loans to cover his medical treatment. Soon after that, my second child, a daughter, dropped out of school to help me with farming. My first son continued his studies as he was still able to concentrate on that”. A few years later, Sa Im’s daughter started to work in a garment factory, to support the family’s debt repayments, which had increased with a loan for the rice farm.

With support from her daughter, with an allowance for being the Core Group member in her village and alongside her salary for the position of deputy village chief (which she took on not long after joining the Core Group), Sa Im’s financial situation has much improved. “I still need to pay over \$150 in debt service every month, but with my daughter’s contribution and my own income we just about manage it.”

To be honest, before joining the Core Group, Sa Im wasn’t really concerned with what happened in her community. She was not busy with gender equality issues or domestic violence or how budgets were allocated to support the poor and vulnerable in her village. The training from GADC helped to change her perspective and gave her the knowledge and confidence to take on her new role, specifically in relation to influencing local budget decision-making processes to ensure that the needs of the poor were reflected in prioritising how commune funds are allocated.

### Transparent and accountable

Some days earlier, in GADC’s office in Cambodia’s capital Phnom Penh, Eng Chandy, GADC’s Advocacy and Networking Programme Manager, had explained: “Our Core Group members need to have a strong understanding of the F4D project and of the commune’s responsibility to be transparent and accountable regarding fiscal policy-making. During the first phase of the project, we focused on GRB, specifically regarding the school budgets and how budgets respond to the needs of locals, especially young girls who often drop out early from school.” Eng Chandy leaned forward and added: “Core Group members need to be courageous to challenge local decisions on budget allocation. Our capacity development focuses on building the required confidence for them to effectively conduct their roles.”

While designing the set-up of the Core Groups and training the commune officers and Core Groups members on GRB, GADC made sure that the activities were linked to the local ISAF activities (see box).

### Implementation Plan for Social Accountability (ISAF)

Since 2015, social accountability activities have been implemented in most of Cambodia’s districts and communes. ISAF is part of a decentralisation plan of the

Cambodian government, funded (among others) by the World Bank. The goal is to improve the quality of services (e.g. education and health) provided to rural families. Almost four thousand Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) work in over half of the country’s districts. Several national and international NGOs cooperate in the implementation of ISAF.

Without being able to reveal exactly how much the annual budget for the commune is, Sa Im does know that there are two specific budget lines for supporting the poor and women’s needs. “Our commune has a budget to support those impacted by domestic violence, and another fund to support women and poor families who are facing emergencies.” She explains: “There recently was a case where a father had raped his own daughter, so the commune provided financial support for the mother and daughter to go to the hospital and for travel expenses during the legal process. In circumstances like this, the support of the Core Group is critical.”

The fact that the Core Group openly discusses cases like these has already had an impact on women in the village, Sa Im says. Women who had previously been afraid to discuss the violence they were experiencing, or to confront their husbands, had become more confident. Learning about women’s rights and related issues had given several women the confidence to report the abuse to the authorities and seek support when it happened.

### Phone calls from villagers

GADC’s training and the role they played in the capacity development are also appreciated in other communes we visited. Alongside capacity development for the female Core Group members, GADC also provides training to Commune Leaders to enable them to better respond to the concerns of the communities they serve. Pum Thoun (44) is a clerk from the neighbouring commune of Talour. Seated in his office in the meeting hall, he explained: “GADC plays an important role in supporting our work. The training on developing annual commune budget plans, has shown us how to include the commune’s responsibilities regarding social services in the budget. It has helped us to see the importance of including sufficient funding for women and children’s issues and the poor and vulnerable members of our community. This year, that has led to a considerable increase of the social fund, which now accounts for around 10 percent of the total commune budget.”

The work of the Core Groups has brought existing gender differences to light and made women realise that changes are needed. The prominent position of the female Core Group members had worried some men about the traditional role of men and women in their community.

### Coordinating the tractor

In commune Boeung Khna we meet Yim Chem (45). Chem has been a core group member since 2014. We interview her in the shadow of her big wooden house just

<sup>63</sup> Communes are the third administrative level in Cambodia. The 25 provinces are divided into 162 districts. The districts are divided into

more than 1,600 communes and these govern almost 15,000 villages.



before lunchtime. Becoming a Core Group member resulted in initial distrust of her surroundings, Cham confesses. “When I participated in the GADC training and workshops in Phnom Penh, the neighbour told my husband that I might be trying to avoid my household duties through taking on this work. This caused my husband to be concerned and we argued about it. The training gave me the confidence to discuss the importance of this work with my husband, and he eventually became my supporter.” But her work as a Core Group member gained Yim Chem eventually more supporters than just her husband: while we talk, she receives several phone calls from villagers needing her help with coordinating the tractor for farming the rice together. “Lots of villagers call me for help with the harvest, or their concerns about the lack of seeds to grow rice next season because of the recent flooding.”

Although there have been many positive aspects relating to her role, including the raised awareness of GRB and women’s rights within the community, Chem described the issues that still need to happen if women’s lives are to improve. Neither she nor the community members get much information about the commune budgets, and she has no idea how much is allocated for social services. This lack of information is added to a general lack of consciousness among citizens about their commune’s budget. “Some villagers don’t even know what ‘commune public services’ are, even though they use them regularly.” Chem often has to explain to people from her village that commune budgets are not a ‘gift’, but that they come from tax revenues, paid by the people themselves. As a result of increased tax revenues over the past five years, public funding, and hence commune budgets, have grown, so pro-poor fiscal policies and local social services should be growing in a corresponding way, says Chem.

“We need better services so that young children, people with disabilities and those that are ill can be cared for in the community, but currently these don’t really exist”, Chem explained. “We do have one pre-school, but it is located below a villager’s house and is only open in the morning.”

All of these ideas have been discussed among the villagers, but with eight men and only one female on the Commune Council, Chem is not convinced that they will be included in next year’s Investment Plan. “When the female commune council member brings up issues related to women and youth, her voice is often ignored”, says Chem. She encounters little support, as when the commune officials are consulting the villagers to develop the annual budget plan, many of the women aren’t confident enough to bring up their issues.

### Reduction of domestic violence

Ms. Kong Engly (38), the commune council member from Boeung Khna agrees with Yim Chem: women need to build more confidence to confront the men. This can only be achieved through capacity development. “I also need leadership training to learn more about the law and legal processes”, she explains. “I also hope that we will have more female commune council members in the future, so that we can help each other to promote gender equality and the needs of women in our community.”

Although the shortcomings are clear to be seen, Engly also points out that a lot has been achieved. Her training on GRB has enabled her to advocate for increases in the social fund budget for women and children: from 2 million riel (\$500) to 40 million riel (\$10,000) for this year, which accounts for about 15 percent of the total commune annual budget.

GADC reports that since the F4D project started, the number of community members involved in holding their communes to account on the development of the Investment Plans has grown markedly. Earlier, no more than 20 to 40 citizens joined village consultations and related meetings, and this has increased to over 90 members per village actively engaging in the meetings. The model of building the capacity of the Core Group members along with local authorities is bringing about some remarkable successes, especially in relation to budget allocations for local social services and support for the poor and vulnerable in those communities. Plans are in place to extend the project to neighbouring communes where lessons learnt can be readily shared amongst the participating stakeholders.

## Reflection

### Overall assessment

The proof of the outcome is strong. The contribution of the SP is clear. The outcome is also a clear result of the activities of Oxfam partners (TI and GADC): the selection and training of core group members convinced commune council members to open periodic spaces for dialogue and advocacy on budget matters of the commune, especially regarding Gender responsive Budgeting. A contributing factor was perhaps the fact that the Cambodian government seems interested in a process of decentralisation, which has materialised, among others, in the so-called ISAF plans. GADC is already involved in these plans and the Core Groups seem to fit nicely in the ISAF process.

The outcome can be seen as a targeted outcome within the F4D ToC (Governments ... are more transparent and accountable). There is a clear pathway toward this outcome through early and intermediary outcomes involving increased capacities of citizens and CSOs.

### Contribution

Table 16. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment Core groups in Kompong Chhnang	
Evidence	
Evidence output	Medium/strong
Evidence contribution	Strong
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	Yes
Sufficient: Was programme sufficient for outcome?	Almost
Overall assessment	high

### Relevance

The relevance of enabling citizens to interact directly with the community leadership is high. The interviews with Core Group members give an indication of the empowering effect. That the space for dialogue that was created by commune councils is not just for the show, is illustrated by the very concrete results that are established by the Core Group advocacy: a sizeable increase in the social budget for women and children in one of the communes.

The relevance must, however, also be seen in the light of the size of the project. Core Groups are established in less than twenty communes of the 1,600 communes in Cambodia. There are plans to extend the approach to other communes, but for nationwide coverage a completely different set-up would be necessary. Some sort of linking to, for example, the ISAF structure would possibly facilitate dissemination of the project. The evaluators have no information if such a trajectory is being contemplated.

### Sustainability

The sustainability is to a large extent captured in the strengthening of the capacities of both Core Group members and civil servants at commune level. Apparently, an agreement was made between GADC and commune officials that the space for dialogue will continue after the project ends. But long-term sustainability is not assured. Apart from the increased awareness among commune officials of the importance of gender responsive budgeting, there seems to be little incentive for them to continue. Linking the Core Groups to, for example, the ISAF structure would possibly enhance sustainability.

### Capacity development

The strengthening of capacities at commune level has been a decisive factor in the outcome. The sustainability of the strengthened capacities depends partly on the continued involvement of the individuals that were capacitated.

## 1.4 Cambodia F4D – Collective system analysis

In December 2020 an online Collective System Analysis workshop was organised with Oxfam in Cambodia and its partner organisations Transparency International Cambodia, Star Kampuchea, GADC and NGO Forum. In total 13 people participated in the workshop.

The participants were first invited to identify obstacles and ‘root causes’ (marked in blue ovals, see figure 5). In a second round opportunities (in red ovals) were identified. Collectively the opportunities and obstacles were placed in the matrix. After the workshop, the external evaluator simplified and clustered the obstacles and opportunities as identified by the workshop participants and added the interventions by the SP (in yellow circles). Also other obstacles and opportunities were added to the figure, based on desk review and interviews. The matrix shows that most obstacles and root causes are identified at the level of the national

government. At the level of ‘formal laws, policies and practices’ obstacles were identified relating to poor transparency of government fiscal policies, lack of enforcement of policies and lack of civic space. Notable are also the obstacles identified at the level of ‘norms and values’: government policy making is inspired by a belief in trickle down economics and an emphasis on security considerations. Corruption obstructs a fair implementation of policies.

Another cluster of obstacles (combined with some opportunities) can be discerned at the level of ‘local communities’. These are all related to lack of capacities at local level.

At the level of the private sector, lack of transparency of corporate tax-behaviour and lack of information on tax issues at the level of small and medium sized businesses are identified. The private sector can both be targeted as a champion and a blocker for pro-poor (corporate taxes).

‘Development Partners’ (DPs) – i.e. multilateral and bilateral donors – can be a valuable ally when trying to place issues on the government agenda.

Opportunities are identified at the level of national NGOs (increase capacities and alliances) and with local communities (increased awareness). Also the Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework (ISAF) was mentioned as an opportunity. ISAF is led by the government of Cambodia and supported by, among others, UNDP and the World Bank and by national NGOs (including GADC and Star Kampuchea). In several cases the role of regional (e.g. ASEAN) organisations are identified as providing ‘peer pressure’ to the Cambodian government.

The third layer in the matrix are the interventions by the SP (yellow circles). Some notable obstacles that the SP in Cambodia does not seem to tackle are at the level of ‘norms and values’: among others the views of the government on development, the way corruption undermines fair taxes and the focus of the government on security. According to the outcome database, the whole F4D programme only reported 2 outcomes (out of 730) on ‘changing norms and values’ (none for Cambodia). Possibly results regarding changing norms and attitudes were merely not reported (in the SP MEAL-system outcomes regarding changing norms and attitudes are collected in surveys than through outcome harvesting. But an end-survey was not executed in Cambodia). Also the private sector is not targeted (no outcomes in Cambodia on changed policies of the private sector). ‘A sustainable and inclusive financial and corporate sector’ is part of the projected long-term outcome of the F4D project in Cambodia, but the private sector is not included in the change pathways chosen by Oxfam in Cambodia. The F4D ToC for Cambodia does not include outcomes focusing on the private sector, nor outcomes focusing on norms and values.

Finally, there seems to be room for improvement in involving the ‘Development Partners’ in the programme. Development partners can assist in providing room for NGOs in the dialogue with the government. In this respect it is interesting to see that Oxfam in Cambodia is, since April 2020, participating in a project with, among others, the EU, the ILO and Unicef, to improve ‘synergies between social protection and Public Finance Management in Cambodia’.

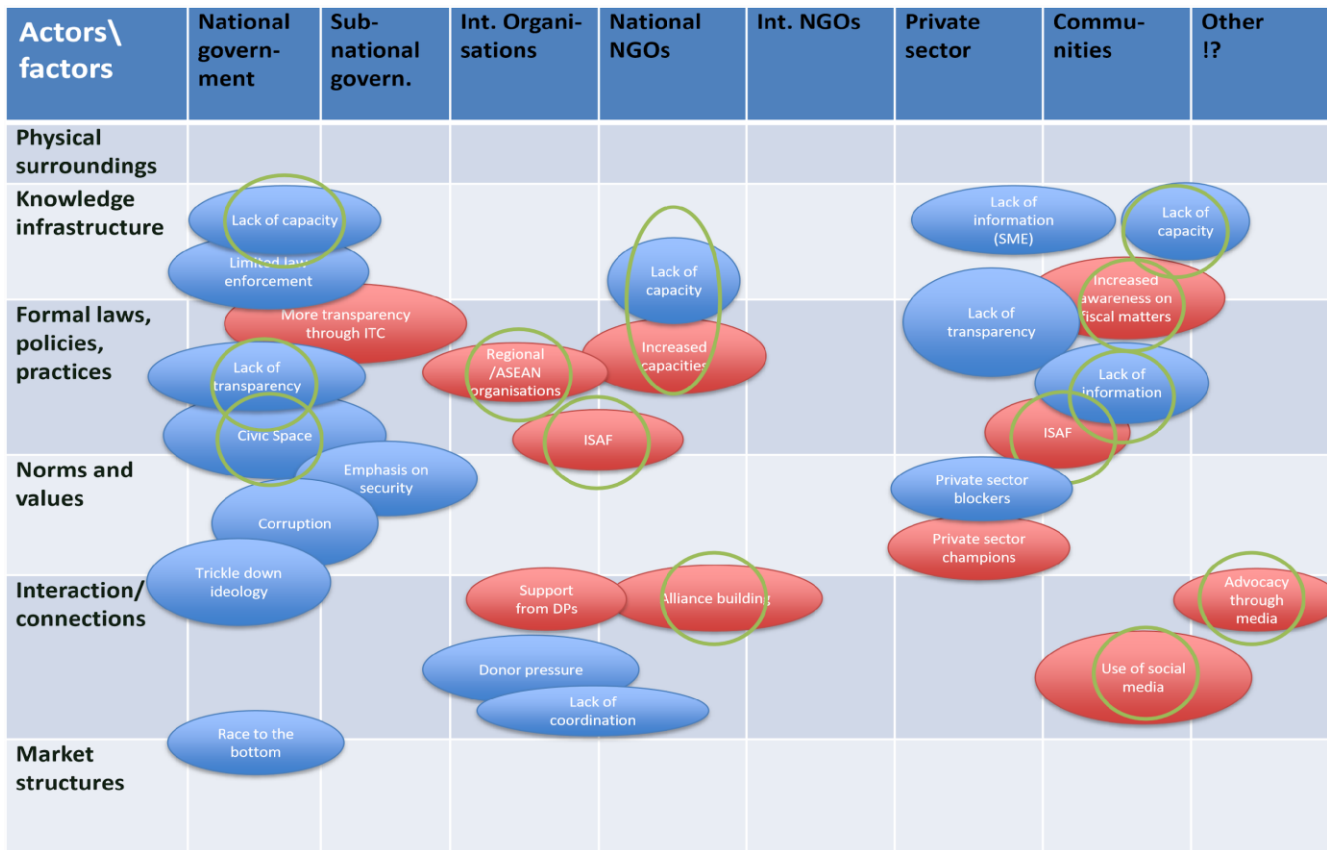


Figure 5: Obstacles, opportunities and interventions in Cambodia

1.5 Key observations F4D Cambodia

**On contribution**

Of the three contribution narratives developed for Cambodia, two are assessed as ‘low’. In both cases the presented contributions of the SP to the outcomes were exaggerated: only a small part of the outcome can be contributed to the SP interventions. The third contribution narrative was a good representation of the role of SP supported activities in the realisation of the outcome.

**On effectiveness**

The theme of Finance for Development is relatively new in Cambodia. No wonder that some stakeholders observe that the thematic knowledge of some CSOs is limited in some aspects. This should not obscure the fact that considerable growth in capacities has taken place.

In spite of serious restrictions on civic space, Oxfam in Cambodia and its partners have contributed to relevant policy changes of the Cambodian government. The CSOs work cleverly around the limitations that the law sets on national CSOs. By widening and strengthening alliances, CSOs increasingly speak with ‘one voice’, which contributes to being heard by government agencies. Working in alliances also provides safety.

On a number of topics, CSOs have found a place in official working groups where government policies are discussed.

Growing influence of CSOs depends to a large extent on the development of civic space. The evaluation did not focus on the interventions of the SP to create more civic space or to mitigate the effects of civic space limitations. It is noted, however, that civic space is not clearly included in the country ToC.

**On sustainability**

The outcomes that are researched are fairly sustainable. Both national outcomes are clearly secured in government policies that are not likely to be retracted or overturned any time soon. To regress in transparency transparency would signify considerable loss of face for the Cambodian government. And the increase of the education budget is in line with (and even a result of) the government’s own planning. It is possible, however, that the education budget will be reduced if a Covid induced economic recession forces the government to reduce spending. A continuation of the Core Groups’ access to commune councils seems to be agreed upon. But real sustainability of this outcome would require some institutional embedding of the core groups.

More in general, the sustainability of many of the outcomes of the F4D work in Cambodia is strengthened by the increased capacities of the actors involved.

**On capacity development**

The increased capacities of Oxfam in Cambodia and its partners have secured CSOs a place to dialogue with government institutions on fiscal and budgetary matters. F4D is a relatively new theme for Cambodian CSOs, as a

result the initial level of thematic capacities was low. In spite of the efforts, the capacities are not yet at the level to maximise influence. Especially in Cambodia, thematic capacities are essential as the government limits the position of CSOs to a technical advisory role.

High staff turnover threatens the sustainability of capacity strengthening efforts and reduces the increase of capacities. The high staff turnover is strongly related to the critical position of civic space in Cambodia. Working for CSOs that engage in policy advocacy is considered unstable and unsafe. Many prefer working at the government or in the private sector. Civil society seems to be experiencing a brain drain. In the case of the Core Groups, capacity strengthening of Core Group members and community officials have notably contributed to the outcome.

### On relevance

The outcomes that were assessed by the external evaluators are considered relevant.

The level of the budget is an important quality indicator of education in a country. A higher budget, however, is no a guarantee for a better and more pro-poor education sector. As the increase of the budget was already decided upon by government, the efforts of the SP would have been put to better use by monitoring and guiding the pro-poor expenditure of the education budget, based on detailed local data. Several interviewees agree that locally gathered, reliable data, for example on local spending of education budgets, are needed as a foundation to effective, pro-poor (education) policies. NGOs, with their grassroots network, are ideally placed to feed such data into policy making government agencies.

Within the F4D ToC, the transparency of budget information is both an early and a targeted outcome. The strategy to pressure the government to more budget transparency is important. In addition, it provides opportunities to discuss government openness and to put the question of transparency on the agenda. The release of specific documents is a clever, simple and attractive instrument. Document disclosure should, however, not be confused with real transparency of fiscal policies. Even full disclosure of all documents can still hide how budgets are spent in ‘the real world’ and how budgets can benefit or harm the position of marginalised people. The relevance of the outcome is notably enhanced by linking increasing budget transparency to efforts to capacitate people to understand budget issues and to increase awareness of its importance.

Budget transparency and growing awareness are mutually reinforcing. Together with increased transparency and increased capacity, media also have a role to play in ‘translating’ complex fiscal issues into news items that may attract a larger audience. In that respect, training national journalists on fiscal matters deserves attention.

Influence of citizens on their community budgets is very relevant. As such the Core Groups are valuable. The size of the project (only 9 communities participate in the project) limits the relevance.

### Reflection on the Theory of Change

This reflection concerns the generic F4D ToC, not the country ToCs.

The research into the contribution of the SP interventions to the selected outcomes confirms the validity of the F4D Theory of Change. The identified early outcomes regarding the strengthening of influencing capacities of citizens and CSOs as well as the strengthening of alliances and coalitions are important stepping-stones towards the targeted outcomes.

There is added value in coordinating and engaging with the locally established international donor community, i.e. the so-called ‘development partners’ (EU, the World Bank, SIDA etc). In several cases the international donor community contributed to the effectiveness of CSO-lobby (e.g. by facilitating contact between CSOs and government, or by promoting the presence of CSOs during dialogue on development issues etc). This is in line with assumption A4 of the F4D Theory of Change. Engaging the ‘development partners’ is not included in the ToC of Cambodia. It is very promising that Oxfam in Cambodia since 2020 participates in an EU project on social protection and Public Finance Management.

### Additional observations

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## 2. Uganda Contribution stories

### Introduction

At the start of the programme, Oxfam in Uganda and partners identified as most urgent the need for more

inclusive fiscal policies to tackle increasing inequality and to address extreme poverty. Fiscal policies in Uganda were disproportionately impacting the poor. Hindered by a narrow tax base and limited sources of revenue, the fiscal system in Uganda did not seem to promote inclusive growth and citizens' participation. Fiscal justice was further undermined by a tax exemption regime and weaknesses in the tax administration together with limited citizens' participation.

A need for increased public spending on service delivery in the education, health care and social protection sectors was identified, as well as a need to strengthen CSOs to empower citizens to influence unfair fiscal policies and practices. The goal was to improve the social contract between citizens and the state, with improved revenue performance from citizens and the state delivering on the expectations that taxes are put to good use for service delivery and to create more opportunities for equitable economic growth.

To reach the long-term outcome and impact, four thematic pathways of change were hypothesised: (1) Strengthened systems for fair fiscal revenue mobilization, (2) Increased public financing, (3) Enhanced accountability and transparency, and (4) Innovative revenue generation. These four pathways of change all target the outcome area 'Improved policies of governments (and global actors).

To implement the F4D project, Oxfam in Uganda collaborated with the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade and Information Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) and the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) to improve policies and practices on the national level by engaging different stakeholders like national or district policy makers. They also aimed to collect input from communities on topics such as social accountability and budget monitoring to use this input in their influencing campaigns. A fourth F4D partner i.e. Public Affairs Centre Uganda (PACU), worked with a consortium that included Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD), Advocates for Research In Development (ARID) and Forum for Rights Awareness and Monitoring Uganda (FORAMU) at sub-national level.

### Selecting outcomes for research

The outcome database for F4D Uganda, within the sub-theme 'pro-poor fiscal policies', counts in total 37 outcomes. 27 outcomes were collected during the 2016-2018 period, 10 outcomes were included for the year 2019/2020. Contribution stories were only written for 10 outcomes before 2019. According to Oxfam, due to a lack of capacity, it was not possible to conduct a contribution analysis of all outcomes that were harvested on this sub-theme in Uganda. The selection from the overall database to the outcomes to be elaborated in the contribution story for each project was done by staff from the Strategic Partnership, based on two criteria. First, to ensure relevance and opportunities for learning, the outcomes had to be higher level outcomes. Secondly, the set of outcomes to be included in the contribution story had to be diverse and represent the main areas of work of the project.

In the majority of the 10 cases described in the internal contribution analysis, the outcome described is clear and high-level (targeted outcomes). In some cases the contribution is not clearly described, or the contribution described does not seem to lead to the outcome. Some outcomes do not seem very relevant or suitable to act as an example of a wider process. Based on a number of selection criteria (e.g. the quality of the outcomes, level of the outcomes, complexity, balanced representation of the various pathways, feasibility and risks) the following outcomes were selected for further research:

#### *Nov 2018 Mobile Money Tax case*

- > In November 2018, the Central Government of Uganda abolished the mobile money tax on deposits and transfers of funds and also reduced tax on withdrawals of funds from 1% to 0.5% of transaction value.

#### *2018 Increased budget allocations for social sectors case*

- > In 2018, the government of Uganda in the approved budget FY 2018/19 significantly increased allocations to the social sectors of education, health, agriculture and social development when compared to what was initially proposed in the National Budget Framework Paper.

## 2.1 Contribution story 2.

# Campaigning against the tax on Mobile Money Transfers

### *Outcome:*

*In November 2018, the Central Government of Uganda abolished the mobile money tax on deposits and transfers of funds and also reduced tax on withdrawals of funds from 1% to 0.5% of transaction value.*

MPs had turned up in unusually large numbers during the session of the Ugandan parliament on October 2nd 2018. On the roll was the vote on an issue that had repeatedly made headlines in Uganda in the months before: the recent tax that the government had imposed on the transfer of money by using a mobile phone. At the end of a heated session, parliament decided to reduce the tax on the withdrawal of mobile money transactions from 1% to 0.5%. Taxes on all other mobile money transactions were scrapped. Although they had campaigned for a total scrapping of all mobile money tax, the Oxfam partners, SEATINI and CSBAG, saw the final decision as a success and as an outcome of their advocacy.

The campaign against the mobile money tax originated in a meeting of the Tax Justice Alliance (TJA) in April 2018, where the tax bills of the government were discussed. The TJA is a network of Ugandan NGOs,

established in 2014, aiming to deliberate on tax issues and pool human, financial and technological resources for common and/or joint action. The TJA-member organisations, including Oxfam partners SEATINI and CSBAG, decided to start a campaign against the mobile money tax (and against the tax on social media, the so-called Over the Top Services). Initially, the campaign, involving the presentation of a position paper and the lobbying of a number of MPs, did not prove successful. In spite of the advocacy efforts, in July 2018 a bill was approved in parliament stipulating a tax of 1% on all mobile money transfers. A second campaign was developed by the Tax Justice Alliance. This time more emphasis was put on mobilising public opposition against the tax. In the briefing *Eight reasons why taxing transaction value on mobile money is a bad idea*, CSBAG calculated that, after the deposit, the sending and the withdrawal of an amount of 50,000 shilling (about 11 euro), only 46,025 shilling remains.

According to Grace Namugambe and Regina Navuga, staff members of SEATINI, the ‘winning move’ in the campaign was involving the public. “Earlier campaigns were not successful because we did not manage to really involve the public. After the tax was initially approved, in July, the public felt it was being affected directly. That made them respond to our message.” Julius Mukunda, executive director of partner CSBAG, agrees that getting the public on board is key. He talks about the “sensitisation of the public on the implications of mobile money tax on their disposable incomes.”

Specifically involving people outside the capital, was an important strategy of the campaign, George Otto adds. Otto is a staff member of Pader NGO Forum, a local organisation based in northern Uganda. As Uganda has a district system of representation, for MPs the voices of their constituents matter: they need their support to get re-elected. Through appearances on local radio talk shows and other means of spreading information (like ‘bumper stickers’), Otto and his organisation managed to convince people to write to their MPs on the unfairness and negative outcomes of the tax. Otto: “One MP confessed that she had received numerous calls from people from her constituency. Before she had been undecided, but realising how the people are affected by the new tax, she turned out to be a real champion of the cause in Parliament. She talked to a lot of her colleagues.”

Apart from the general public, also the business community was involved in the campaign. After the tax was introduced in July 2018, telecom companies, service providers, mobile money vendors, all reported sizeable reductions (up to 40%) in transaction volumes. They expressed their fear that the tax could result in job losses for those in the mobile money business, especially those with small kiosks. The Kampala Mobile Money Dealer’s Association, which participated in the campaign, revealed that of the 41,000 members they had in June 2018, less than 29,000 remained in July.

Appearing before a parliamentary commission on finance, even representatives of telecom companies MTN and Airtel Uganda – the biggest telecoms in the country, declared that the tax had considerable negative effects on the economy.

### The contribution revisited<sup>64</sup>

Kigundu Sulaiman, Director of Uganda’s parliamentary budget office, estimates that the campaign against the tax contributed for 70% to the decision to change it. “... their contribution was significant to the softening of the hearts of the change of discourse regarding the mobile money tax.” According to Sulaiman, the organisations succeeded in sensitising the public about the tax. “They analysed how the tax affected mainly poor people. They managed to let the media pick this up. As a result, the executive had to rethink the tax and eventually it had to be reviewed. I think the review was largely because of their campaigns.”<sup>65</sup>

The admission of Sulaiman, can be seen as a ‘smoking gun’ proof of the contribution of the SP to the outcome. But there are also other stakeholders that contributed to the outcome.

### Social media tax

Almost at the same time as the mobile money tax, the Ugandan Government proposed a tax on the use of social media (the ‘over the top tax’). This tax too was the subject of a campaign by CSBAG and SEATINI. But where the campaign against the mobile money tax was successful, the campaign against the social media tax was not. That raises the question why. According to most interviewees the key difference between the two campaigns was the participation of the public. According to George Otto, Ugandan citizens preferred not paying the social media tax rather than fighting it. It was possible to avoid being taxed for social media use by installing a Virtual Private Network (VPN) and thus hiding your IP number from the service provider. “This was a strategy used by many Ugandans.”

It was also remarked that the social media tax had more political relevance for the Ugandan government. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]

A specific actor who campaigned against the tax was the Ugandan singer/member of Parliament/presidential candidate Bobi Wine (real name Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu). Wine, not mentioned in Oxfam’s contribution narrative, organised several public demonstrations against the mobile money tax (and the social media tax), that attracted quite a crowd. The MP was even arrested during one of the rallies. George Otto, however, estimates that, in the end, the influence of Wine on the outcome was relatively small: “The campaign was already well underway and many people were activated

<sup>64</sup> During the data-gathering phase of this end-term evaluation, Uganda was going through an unstable phase, due to the upcoming elections. This seriously hampered access to advocacy targets like Members of Parliament (MPs), civil servants and other actors in the legislative and executive branches.

<sup>65</sup> Sulaiman Kigundy was interviewed for this evaluation by a staff member of a local partner of Oxfam, using a questionnaire provided by the external evaluation team.

when Bobi Wine entered the scene. He basically jumped on the bandwagon.” But Otto is probably one of the few people who values the contribution of Bobi Wine as ‘small’. The activities by Wine were so densely covered by the media that for many Ugandans the popular politician/musician was the main contributor to the abolishment of the tax, says senior Ugandan journalist Joachim Buwembo. In Buwembo’s recollection the campaign by SEATINI and CSBAG “... must have been overshadowed by the popular young opposition politician Bobi Wine when he led protests against the tax. So generally, in the public it is perceived as his ‘war’.”

It was mentioned above that Ugandan businesses, including ‘giants’ like Airtel and MTN, also protested against the tax. That raises the question if the opposition from these companies on their own would not have been enough for the outcome to materialise. Joachim Buwembo does not think so. Buwembo analyses that both companies do not have the ear of the Ugandan government as they are both being targeted for tax evasion. “The Executive has called MTN thieves in plain language. Their moral authority is low.”

## Reflection

### Overall assessment

The proof of the outcome is clear and undisputed. The internally drafted contribution story is largely substantiated by the external interviews and desk review. The main contributor to the abolishment of the tax was the broadly supported, and cleverly executed campaign designed and led by two Oxfam partners, SEATINI and CSBAG. These organisations managed to coordinate the opposition against the tax from a relevant number of actors. Maybe most notable was the participation of the mobile money vendors, and other private sector actors in the campaign. Of course these (mostly small) enterprises and entrepreneurs also stood to lose from the tax, had it been imposed. Also vital was that the public became aware on time that the tax would affect them directly. Media played an important role in mobilising the public (and vice versa).

The pathway towards the outcome confirms the validity of the F4D Theory of Change. The starting shot was possible thanks to the increased capacities of the member organisations of the Tax Justice Network (e.g. SEATINI and CSBAG) to analyse the tax bills and to design and develop a large scale campaign. The fact that the campaign initially was not successful shows the importance of three other vital early outcomes. The first is the forging of a broad and relevant coalition involving stakeholders beyond civil society. The second early outcome is the involvement of the public. And the third is the extensive media coverage. The interplay between the last two factors created a ‘perfect storm’ that probably could not have been planned or foreseen.

The political context possibly also played a role. For the Ugandan government to give in regarding the mobile money tax mainly resulted in loss of (much needed) revenue. The social media tax, however, was not just a fiscal policy, as the stakes involved in this tax were much higher. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY].

## On Contribution

Table 17. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment mobile money tax	
<b>Evidence</b>	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium/high
<b>Perceptions interviewees</b>	
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	Yes
Sufficient: Was programme sufficient for outcome?	Maybe
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>High</b>

## On effectiveness

It was a strategic move to incorporate the mobile money vendors (and other private sector actors) in the campaign. Another smart element of the campaign was the decentralised character: involving organisations and individuals from many parts of the country. This decentralised approach probably persuaded a number of MPs to vote for the abolishment of the tax law, and even convinced some to actively campaign against the law.

## On capacity development

Several interviewees agree that capacities among Uganda NGOs regarding fiscal matters have grown considerably over the last five of six years. Before 2015, there were very few Ugandan NGOs that were involved in fiscal matters. A few years later, there already was a network of organisations that was capable of analysing the national budget and of planning campaigns based on that analysis. Over the years, the SP provided many opportunities for capacity development, often during learning sessions that included partners from several countries, thus stimulating the opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences. These capacities are shared with other partners and partners of partners. Training was offered on, among others, taxation, gender responsive budgeting, budget analysis and influencing (like use of social media in campaigns). Without these trainings, which were also provided to local communities, the outcomes of the programme would have been minimal, most interviewees agree.

Also the capacities to carry out advocacy have grown. This is confirmed by the data in the CATool (see also part V of this report). In the interviews, the capacity to influence was mainly attributed to the thematic knowledge of CSOs. Thematic knowledge facilitated evidence-based advocacy. This strategy fits the current situation of limited civic space in Uganda.

## On relevance

The intensive use in (eastern) Africa of mobile money systems has greatly improved the availability of banking

services to a wide section of society. After the introduction of a tax on mobile money transfers, the total volume of money transfers quickly decreased. There were also instances where certain payments (e.g. to providers of public services) were not made. And finally, it was predicted that the tax would kill innovations in the mobile money sector. In all, this certifies to the relevance of abolishing the tax. In addition, it can be argued that the tax is regressive as it does not distinguish between the rich and the poor. The percentage is the same for all income groups. At the same time, abolishing the tax further reduces the, already narrow, tax base of the Ugandan government.

One of the origins of the opposition against taxes is the weak ‘social contract’ between citizens and the state. Citizens know that paying taxes will not automatically lead to improved services. Corruption is seen as an important reason for poor service delivery.

The mobile money tax – and other taxes on money transfers – are for the government one of the few instruments (apart from VAT) to tax the large informal sector of the country. But again: such innovations need a level of trust between government and citizens. One can say that without increased trust between government and citizens, taxation as an instrument in fighting inequality is rather ineffective. Ignoring the issue of distrust is like ignoring the mass of ice below the iceberg. The outcome database shows that the programme has achieved hardly any outcome on the level of ‘changing norms and values’ (only 2 out of 730).

### On sustainability

In view of the broad opposition against the tax, it is not likely that the mobile money tax will be re-introduced. On the other hand, it cannot be excluded that future innovations in the banking system will again lead to some kind of taxation of money transfers. In view of the low tax base of Uganda and the limited sources of tax revenue, the government is constantly looking for new options to raise taxes. No doubt that these too will be met with opposition.

The sustainability of the outcome (and other outcomes achieved by the F4D programme in Uganda) is greatly enhanced by the increased capacities of CSOs. The mobile money campaign has created awareness among the public about the impact of taxes on their personal lives. And it has also shown them that a well-organised, broadly supported campaign can bring practical change. It remains to be seen if and how this increased awareness can be maintained and harnessed for future campaigns.

Media attention was also an important element of the campaign. The Oxfam partners in Uganda have grown in their capacity to use the media (old and new).

## 2.2 Contribution story 2.

### Increasing social sector budgets

#### Outcome:

*In 2018 the government of Uganda significantly increased allocations to the social sectors of education, health, agriculture and social development in the approved budget FY2018/19, compared to what was initially proposed in the National Budget Framework Paper for FY 2018/19*

Oxfam Uganda has identified increasing budgets for social sectors as a valuable instrument to tackle increasing inequality and to address extreme poverty in Uganda. Public expenditure on sectors like education, health and agriculture especially benefit poor and marginalised people in Uganda. In fiscal year 2018/2019, Oxfam partner Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) and its affiliated organisations, advocated for an increase of social sector budgets.

Supported by the F4D project, CSBAG trained its member organisations to understand and analyse the budget proposals. The CSOs argued that the budget proposals on social sectors fell short of several international commitments made by the Ugandan government, like the Malabo declaration on the allocation of 10% of the National Budget to agriculture and the Abuja declaration for the allocation of 15% of the national budget towards health. The proposed budget also fell short of the commitments made in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals. The CSBAG-members developed budget alternatives that are more pro-poor. In the first months of 2018, no less than 24 CSBAG-members met with national parliamentary committees on health, agriculture, education and social development. During these meetings, the organisations presented several alternatives to the proposals developed by the Finance ministry. As a result, a number of suggestions were adopted in the final, approved budget. The combined social sector budgets increased from 5,062.07 billion shillings in the proposal to 6,198.83 billion shillings in the final budget for fiscal year 2018/2019. An increase of some 22%.

According to the internal contribution analysis<sup>66</sup> as developed by Oxfam Novib, CSBAG used three approaches to achieve the policy outcome: providing evidence, offering alternatives and showing the need to policy makers.

Julius Mukunda, Executive Director of CSBAG, stresses that the success of the lobbying efforts is a result of the increased sophistication of the approach chosen by his organisation. “We used to be very angry. That was the basis of our interaction with the government. It really didn’t get us anywhere. But nowadays we operate much more strategically. We call it ‘constructive engagement’. This does not mean that we have lost our militancy: we

<sup>66</sup> Contribution Narrative, Oxfam Novib, April 2020. ‘Finance For Development - How change happened in Oxfam Novib and SOMO’s programme on pro-poor fiscal policies.’ Chapter 3.



still go out on the street if we must. But in our dealings with the government we now make sure we have the right information. We know what the results may be of certain government policies. We can explain why these results are less desirable. And we present realistic alternatives.”

The capacity development provided by the SP was important, most interviewees say. CSBAG mobilised and trained its members to analyse the various budget proposals and to produce alternative budget proposals. This required new thematic capacities (like learning about taxes and budgets). The advocacy capacities were mainly strengthened by co-creation and ‘learning by doing’: like setting up lobby campaigns with CSO partners. Julius Mukunda: “We have definitely grown in our abilities to use the media. In the campaign to increase social budgets, for the first time we used mini-documentaries to engage the public. In one of these one-minute documentaries someone addresses the situation where a kilogram of sugar costs one-and-a-half dollars whereas a litre of milk is sold at merely 20 cents. And then we explain about tax regimes and subsidies. We explain that increasing the national health budget will lead to higher wages for health professionals and better equipment. Educating people on such matters increases our support when we demand changes.” At the same time, it is acknowledged by Oxfam in Uganda and partners that the willingness among citizens and companies to pay taxes is quite low. Many people experience that paying taxes does not result in increased services.

The ability of CSBAG to mobilise local support is enhanced by the fact the CSBAG is a membership organisation. Many CSBAG-members are locally based. Information about the budget and the alternatives developed by CSBAG were shared with members in many parts of the country. As MPs in Uganda have a local constituency, including the voice of people in all parts of the country was vital. MPs had to be made aware that their constituencies were involved. To reach local citizens, CSBAG and its members appeared frequently in radio-talk shows and voiced their concerns in other media. According to Mukunda the awareness among ordinary Ugandans about fiscal matters and state budgets has grown considerably as a result of campaigning by CSBAG, SEATINI and other CSOs. “A lot has changed over the past years. We get many calls from people. They are angry about what is happening: the corruption. They demand accountability.”

The approach of seeking and gaining public support was also chosen as earlier approaches proved less effective. A staff member of a partner of Oxfam in Uganda: “What we saw was that interacting with MPs was less and less effective. They came to our meetings, politely listened to our message, assured us that the matter had their attention and dismissed us again. It was all just words. But now they realise that we voice the complaints of their own constituency. So now they do listen. And they even sometimes change their voting.”

### Contribution narrative revisited<sup>67</sup>

Besides Oxfam and its partners there are also other actors and factors that have contributed to increased budget allocation on social sectors.

A favourable factor was that the Ugandan government had signed international agreements like the Malabo declaration, the Maputo declaration and the Abuja declaration. In these declarations, governments pledge to spend certain percentages of the GDP on social sectors like agriculture (10%) and health (15%). This commitment has certainly contributed to the success of the CSBAG campaign. Sulaiman Kigundu, director of the Uganda Parliamentary Budget Office, says that NGOs make clever use of these commitments: “CSBAG and SEATINI often base their plea for pro-poor budgetting on these international declarations. Although technically it is not always possible to dedicate 15% of the GDP to health, when CSOs refer to such declarations signed by Uganda, the government often listens.”<sup>68</sup> But the pressure on an increase of social sector budgets is also grounded in other international agreements and frameworks, of which the Sustainable Development Goals are probably most broadly supported.

A contributing factor that is hardly taken into account in the contribution narrative developed by Oxfam is the international donor community, like the EU, the World Bank and bilateral donors.

Joris van Bommel, Head of Development Cooperation at the Dutch Embassy in Kampala, emphasises that the donor community (like the EU, WB and bilateral donors) has additional leverage to influence the national budgets of Ugandan social sectors. “The level of the national education budget, for example, is often an indicator for support. If the budget is not at a certain level, the support is withdrawn.” And this is not an empty promise, Van Bommel explains: “This year, the education budget went down and the Global Partnership for Education threatened to withdraw the 100 million dollars it had reserved for budget support. Unfortunately, the government did not flinch and forgo on the 100 million! A disgrace, really.” What Van Bommel wants to say is that the Ugandan government will not easily be pressured or persuaded into doing something it does not feel like doing. It illustrates the difficulty of the work of organisations like SEATINI, says Van Bommel. He suggests working more closely together with the international community.

National CSOs could increase their influence by better coordination with the international donor community, and specifically with the Dutch embassy. Van Bommel: “The SP partners could, for example, initiate contact with us in an earlier stage. Not just when the campaign is already over. If we talk about a campaign in the planning stage, we can provide links with useful partners and give tips. It would be strategically important for them to

<sup>67</sup> During the data-gathering phase of this end-term evaluation, Uganda was going through an unstable phase, due to the upcoming elections. This seriously hampered access to advocacy targets like Members of Parliament (MPs), civil servants and other actors in the legislative and executive branches.

<sup>68</sup> Sulaiman Kigundu was interviewed for this evaluation by a staff member of a local partner of Oxfam, using a questionnaire provided by the external evaluation team.

create some sense of ownership for their campaigns among the donor community.”

At the same time, Van Bommel observes that the relevant Ministries take both CSBAG and SEATINI seriously. “SEATINI has considerable thematic knowledge regarding taxes. CSBAG had a large lobby capacity. They know how and when to lobby. Other organisations do not have such a good sense of timing.” Although both organisations have influence in setting the agenda at government level, their influence on the budget is rather low, says the Dutch diplomat.

In the process of targeting MPs for advocacy national media play an important intermediary role, says Joachim Buwembo, a senior journalist in Uganda. “Local CSOs ‘translate’ the, sometimes complicated, budget issues for journalists who then approach MPs on their views on the matter.” And Buwembo adds: “You need to know that our legislators are just average Ugandans in terms of knowledge.”

## Reflections

### Overall assessment

The proof of the outcome is conclusive. A limitation on the assessment of the contribution is that no government official was found available to reflect on the influence of CSOs on the increased budgets. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Oxfam partners participating in the F4D programme have evolved into serious actors regarding governmental fiscal policies. The fact that a sizeable proportion of CSO proposals regarding extra attention for the social sectors were included in the 2018/2019 budget, is a clear indication that these organisations are capable of influencing the government agenda. The contribution narrative took the political will of the government to address these issues into account. What is not mentioned in the contribution narrative is the role of the donor community. From the sheer size of the support of international donors to social sectors in Uganda, it must be deduced that the influence of these donors on government budgets is considerable. A realistic contribution hypothesis should include the role of these actors. A clear recognition of their role is an important step towards involving them in future strategies.

The change pathways leading up to the outcomes confirm the validity of the ToC. CSOs’ capacities to do research are a vital early outcome. Political will at government level is probably a *sine qua non*. Based on the outcome database as presented by Oxfam, however there is no evidence that SP interventions contributed to increased political will on government side.

The civic space in Uganda is under threat. This has not impeded the CSOs to establish a platform for productive dialogue with the relevant ministries. While some interference of CSOs with government policies is severely restricted, there obviously is room to engage with the government on social issues. Apparently CSBAG and SEATINI have been able to take advantage of this space. The information shared with the external evaluators does not include outcomes that indicate that the available civic space was the result of SP interventions. It cannot be ruled out that such outcomes did emerge but were not captured in the MEAL-system.

### On contribution

Table 18. Contribution Assessment

<b>Contribution assessment</b> increased social sector budgets	
<b>Evidence</b>	
Evidence output	Medium/high
Evidence contribution	Medium
<b>Perceptions interviewees</b>	
Necessary: Was the programme necessary for outcome?	Maybe
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome?	No
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Medium</b>

### On effectiveness

The constructive attitude of CSOs contributes to its effectiveness. The fact that the SP partners provide clear policy alternatives is also an important factor. Oxfam in Uganda and its partners are valuable partners of government because they provide knowledge of and access to a unique network that encompasses both the global level and the grassroots level.

Also the increased (thematic) capacity of Oxfam partners added to their effectiveness (see next paragraph).

Unfortunately, the problematic relationship between civil society and the Ugandan government limits added value. On the one hand CSOs that are mainly concerned with service delivery can establish excellent working relations with the government. But CSOs that criticise government for its lack of accountability and for the high levels of corruption, face serious security risks and can see their moving space greatly reduced. The issue of budgeting for social sectors apparently is an area where CSOs have room to move and where the government allows CSOs to provide input and arguments for policy change. At the same time, it is clear that the government will set the boundaries, and it will not be pressured into doing what does not fit its (political) interests.

Some interviewees indicate that the accountability of NGOs themselves is problematic. A simple review of the websites of the organisations mentioned in the contribution narratives shows that NGOs, for example, are not very transparent on their funding. Says one interviewee: “By being accountable themselves they can better demand accountability from the government.” Another interviewee adds that “... the understanding between local CSOs and ‘ordinary’ people is affected because people see that CSO staff are generally and obviously better remunerated than the average person.”

It is clear that the Government of Uganda over the last years has developed an anti-NGO narrative. Interviews with Oxfam-staff and partners show that they are working on developing a counter-narrative that profiles CSOs as actors that are vital in the service delivery in rural and marginalised areas. Also the role of CSOs in

increasing social budgets could play a role in this more positive narrative.

### On relevance

Sufficient government budgets are a sine qua non for adequate social services. The relevance of a sizeable increase of these budgets goes without saying. Increased budgets, however, are not a guarantee for more pro-poor policies. A lot depends on the issues the extra budget is spent on, and on the concrete implementation of the policies. The proposals of Oxfam's partners included clear suggestions on where added budgets should be spent on. The implementation phase, however, is not clearly integrated in the F4D ToC. There is a gap between the targeted outcomes and the long-term outcome. There is a general problem in Uganda (as in many other countries) that laws often are not enforced or that well-placed or affluent individuals and groups can avoid complying with the law. Knowing this, more emphasis on policy implementation and enforcement is in order.

### On capacity development

Several interviewees comment that Ugandan NGOs have increased their capacities considerably over the last years. This has contributed to the fact that evidence-based advocacy (an important strategy in the face of shrinking civic space) is now possible. Solid technical/thematic knowledge is a necessity for influence on policies.

Most of the outcomes reached during the programme would not have been possible without the strengthened capacities. Oxfam in Uganda and its partners have over the last years increased their knowledge on tax issues. All interviewees specifically mention increased thematic capacities as the 'sine qua non' of policy influence. The SP has provided many activities and opportunities for partners to increase their thematic capacities. It is a pity that thematic capacities are not included in the CATool (see part V).

One interviewee, however, remarks that shrinking civic space has negatively influenced the influencing capacities of Ugandan CSOs. An NGO-law has put civil society organisations under increasing government control. Over the last couple of years (after integrating the issue of civic space more prominently in the programme) CSOs have increased their abilities to deal with shrinking civic space: less confrontational and more geared towards engagement with government based on evidence-based advocacy. Civic space, however, was not a part of this evaluation assignment.

### On sustainability

The sustainability of the outcome of increased budgets of social sectors in fiscal year 2018/2019 is not per se high (depending, of course what the extra budget is spent on). Every next year a new budget has to be made. After 2018, the education budget, for example, dropped from 11.4% in 2018, to 10.9% of the national budget in 2019 and further to 10.10% in 2020. A campaign to increase the budget for social sectors in 2018/2019 does little for budgets in later years. Lobbying the government to keep social budgets at acceptable levels (or even increasing

them further) is to be repeated every year. Fortunately, the abilities of CSOs (and their awareness of the importance of increased budgets) are rather sustainable and may probably increase with every activity.

## 2.3 Collective system analysis - F4D Uganda

In December 2020, an online Collective System Analysis workshop was organised with Oxfam in Uganda and its partner organisations SEATINI, CSBAG, the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) and the sub-national organisation Ceford. In total 9 people participated in the workshop.

The participants were first invited to identify obstacles and 'root causes' (marked in blue ovals). In a second round opportunities (in red ovals) were identified. Collectively, the opportunities and obstacles were placed in the matrix. After the workshop, the external evaluator simplified and clustered the obstacles and opportunities as identified by the workshop participants and added the interventions by the SP (in yellow circles). Also other obstacles and opportunities were added to the figure, based on desk review and interviews. The matrix shows that most obstacles and root causes are identified at the level of the national government. At the level of 'formal laws, policies and practices' obstacles were identified relating to poor transparency of government fiscal policies, lack of enforcement of policies and lack of civic space. Notable are also the obstacles identified at the level of 'norms and values': limited transparency, corruption, political capture. Also the shrinking civic space in Uganda was identified as an obstacle.

Local communities lack knowledge regarding tax issues and are not engaged to address these issues.

The private sector does not contribute enough to the tax base: this goes not only for the informal sector, but also to large corporations that manage to dodge taxes by various means. International organisations provide opportunities for facilitating access to government and platforms for dialogue, but can also strengthen the advocacy of NGOs.

Finally, the external evaluator compared the identified obstacles and opportunities to the actors and factors targeted during the programme. The latter were added to the matrix with yellow circles. Gaps can be discerned at the level of 'norms and values', as issues like

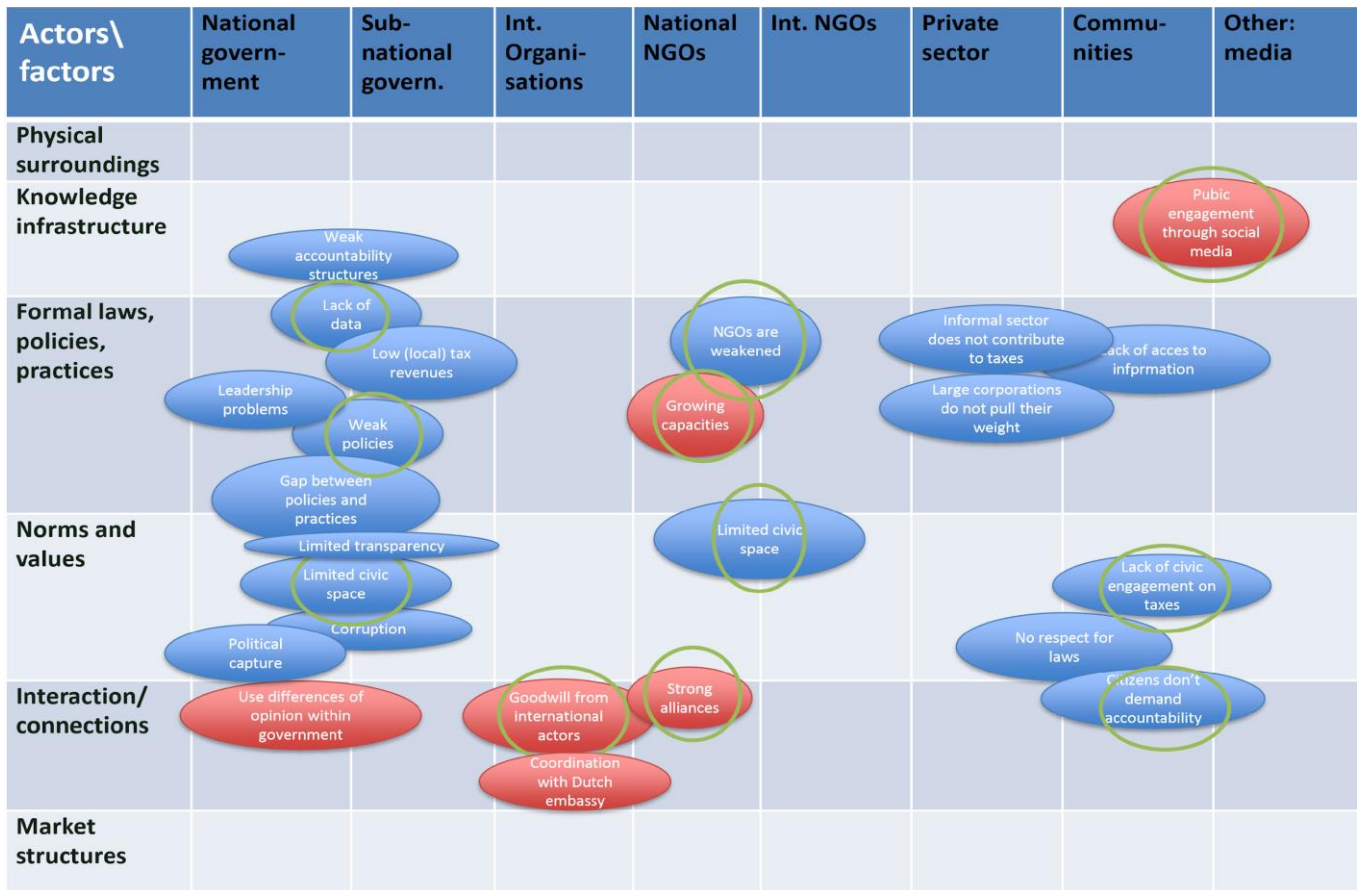


Figure 5: Obstacles/root causes, opportunities and interventions in Uganda

corruption and political capture are not addressed in the programme. The gap between changed policies and changed practices is also notable as is the absence of the private sector as a target is. More coordination with the Dutch embassy is a clear opportunity that is insufficiently seized. In contrast, the actors involved in the F4D programme have built goodwill among international institutions in Uganda (mostly the IMF), that may provide more benefits in the future.

## 2.4 Key observations - F4D Uganda

### On contribution

Of the two Ugandan F4D contribution narratives that were scrutinised by the external evaluators, one accurately portrayed the contribution of most relevant actors, including the SP. In the other narrative an important actor that considerably contributed to the change (i.e. the international donor community) was not included. The interviews and desk study confirm that Oxfam in Uganda and its partners have developed into relevant actors. Their interventions are often necessary elements of policy change. It is also clear that change can only be accomplished by working in alliances. In one of the cases the campaign alliance that was forged included a broad section of society and that contributed to the

success. There is progress to be found in aligning more with the international donor community.

### On effectiveness

There is little doubt that the considerable knowledge of Ugandan CSOs (specifically SEATINI and CSBAG) on budgetary issues has secured CSOs a place at the dialogue table. Involving the public in advocacy campaigns has been the deciding factor in the mobile money tax case. Especially aligning with actors outside the civil society arena – like the Kampala Mobile Money Dealers Association – gave the campaign extra impetus and contributed to ‘creating a critical mass’. Forming alliances is a winning strategy.

Another smart element of the campaign was the decentralised character: involving organisations and individuals from many parts of the country. This decentralised approach probably persuaded a number of MPs to vote for the abolishment of the tax law, and even convinced some to actively campaign against the law.

Shrinking civic space limits effectiveness. The issue of budgeting for social sectors apparently is an area where CSOs have room to move and where the government allows CSOs to provide input and arguments for policy change. At the same time, it is clear that the government will set the boundaries, and it will not be pressured into doing what does not fit its (political) interests.

Specifically in Uganda (but also elsewhere), the influence of national CSOs on government policies could well be negatively influenced by the international support they receive. To silence critical CSOs, the president of Uganda has spread the narrative that CSOs are agents of foreign powers interfering with domestic issues and siding with the opposition. Oxfam's and Partners' response to this narrative and the negative framing, is to develop a counter-narrative emphasising, among other things, their positive contributions to development in Uganda (e.g. regarding service delivery and empowerment of citizens in marginal and rural areas). But beyond the government's obvious attempts to limit civic space, some interviewees suggested it could be worthwhile to look at the issue from a more principled point of view: at what point will external funding intended to change national policies meet its ethical boundaries.

A related matter is the need for CSOs to maximise their own transparency. To call upon the government and the private sector for transparency, CSOs need to have their house in order. The work on increasing transparency that is already being done needs to be stepped up. The funding of Ugandan national CSOs is not transparent, some interviewees claim. This observation is confirmed by a simple check of CSO websites. Maximum transparency can be a defence against the anti-CSO rhetoric by the government. But it can also provide 'downward' transparency towards the citizens whose support is needed to influence policy makers.

### **On sustainability**

The sustainability of many of the outcomes of the F4D work in Uganda is strengthened by its emphasis on capacity development as a vital building block.

In view of the broad opposition that was mobilised, the chance that the Ugandan government will reintroduce the mobile money tax is not great. The budget increases in fiscal year 2018/2019 were reduced in later years. Lobbying the government to keep social budgets at acceptable levels (or even increasing them further) is to be repeated every year. Fortunately, the abilities of CSOs (and their awareness of the importance of increased budgets) are rather sustainable and may probably increase with every activity.

Media attention was an important element of the mobile money campaign. Oxfam partners in Uganda have grown in their capacity to use the media (old and new). Increasing capacities of journalists on fiscal matters and the importance of pro-poor policies may further increase the sustainability of F4D outcomes in Uganda.

### **On capacity development**

The capacities of Ugandan CSOs have increased considerably. This has contributed to the quality and effectiveness of advocacy efforts. Thematic knowledge facilitated evidence-based advocacy. This strategy fits the current situation of limited civic space in Uganda. Also the capacities to do advocacy have grown. This is confirmed by the data in the CATool (see also part V of this report). In the interviews, the capacity to influence was mainly attributed to the thematic knowledge of CSOs.

### **On relevance**

The Ugandan outcomes researched by the external evaluators are relevant. Sufficient government budgets are a sine qua non for adequate social services. And abolishing the mobile money tax signifies getting rid of a regressive tax. Relevance of policy outcomes can be improved by assuring and monitoring implementation. The implementation phase is not clearly integrated in the F4D ToC. There is a gap between the targeted outcomes and the long-term outcome. This gap was also identified during the CSA-workshop as an obstacle to fair fiscal policies.

The CSA-workshop also brought to light that some elements that are considered obstacles to fair fiscal policies are not addressed. These are most notably obstacles on the level of norms and values (e.g. corruption and political capture) and also the private sector. The data in the outcome database show that on these issues there are very few outcomes (see paragraph on (sub)-thematic analysis).

### **Reflection on the Theory of Change**

This reflection concerns the generic F4D ToC, not the country ToC of Uganda.

The selected outcomes by and large confirm the validity of the F4D Theory of Change. Intermediate outcomes like strengthened capacities of citizens and CSOs are vital steps toward policy changes. The formation and strengthening of (national) coalitions have also proven to be an important success factor.

In the mobile money tax story, the interplay between increased public pressure and increased media coverage stands out. These two early outcomes are interlinked. In the specific case of the mobile money tax, this interlinking evolved into a process of mutual enforcement: more media coverage produced more public pressure and as public pressure rose, more media became interested in the topic. An element that contributed to this mutual enforcement was the fact that the campaign included the participation of a broad segment of society. Not just CSOs, but also members from the business community and consumers organisations. This confirms the validity of the assumption that a critical mass of citizens is needed to influence decision makers, but the specific mix of the 'critical mass' is also relevant. This emphasises the value of seeking alliances that stretch beyond the 'usual suspects'. Broad alliances also reduce the risk of government repression and are an antidote against an anti-NGO narrative.

Shrinking civic space negatively affects the effectiveness of critical CSOs. But civic space is not reduced for all aspects of civic engagement. Within the topic of F4D, the Ugandan SP partners have managed to increase the space for advocacy for pro-poor fiscal policies. Organisations like SEATINI, CSBAG and the Tax Justice Alliance have been able to establish dialogue platforms with parliamentary organisations, MPs and relevant ministries. For these government institutions, the CSOs that were trained through the SP are valuable sources of information as well as providing access to both the grassroots level and the international level.

### Additional observations

- > A narrow tax base is one of the key problems in the tax system. This not only reduces the total revenue of taxes, it also affects the support to tax measures among the relatively small segment of Ugandan society that contributes to most tax revenues. This leads to tax evasion measures by taxpayers. And that, in turn, further corrodes the support of Ugandans to the tax system. One interviewee suggests that Oxfam should investigate ways for governments to tax the informal sector in a way that contributes to formalising the sector and that does not negatively affect the livelihoods of marginalised people.
- > One of the origins of the opposition against taxes is the weak ‘social contract’ between citizens and the state. Citizens know that paying taxes does little to improve services. Corruption is seen as an important reason for poor service delivery. Measures to make fiscal policies more fair and pro-poor, cannot go around the issues of corruption and the weak social contract. This relates directly to the unclear positioning of ‘changing norms and values’ outcome area in the Theory of Change. Unfortunately possible outcomes regarding changing norms and attitudes could not be assessed as they are not captured in the harvested outcomes. Stories of Change and surveys where such outcomes may have been reported were not shared with the external evaluators.

partners in nine countries. Approaches include the FAIR.-Even it Up! Knowledge & Learning strategy led by Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub for Governance & Citizenship (KHG&C), the Fair Tax Monitor (FTM), the FAIR/EiU Support Mechanism (FESM) and the work with the Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA).

In the global F4D programme (regarding the sub-theme of pro-poor policies), the SP defines capacity support as its only change pathway. As a result this project has no policy outcomes. The outcomes that were recorded are almost all related to strengthened CSOs and widened alliances. A quick review of the outcomes shows that they often do not stretch beyond the ‘sphere of control’. Many outcomes are better defined as outputs. Within the change pathway of the F4D change theory, strengthened capacities of citizens and CSOs are on the level of early outcomes. For the task of the external evaluator (to assess contribution), this constitutes a problem: it is not very illuminating to assess contribution in a process that is largely under the ‘sphere of control’ of the actor under investigation.

Further study into the complete set of outcomes shows that many (higher level) outcomes of capacity development efforts of the global theme are not reported within the FAIR/EiU project, but they are included as part of country level reporting. The cases elaborated in this sub-chapter relate to these higher level outcomes. In short: to assure a relevant field of research, we chose outcomes that, strictly speaking, are outside of the research sample.

The work process of the Global Project is described as follows: “Where necessary, Oxfam strengthens country offices and CSOs to research and understand tax systems and public spending practices as well as to undertake thorough power analyses. Support requests are submitted by country offices to the global team in The Hague. SP F4D global staff, regional platforms, country offices, partner organisations and allies are all part of the process, including inputs from leading experts from other organisations and academics. Oxfam Novib’s F4D global project and Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub for Governance & Citizenship support the design of the learning component in a systematic manner.”

### Sampling results

Most ‘global’ F4D outcomes (in total there are 48 global outcomes) fall under the ‘tax evasion and avoidance’ sub-theme. Outcomes in this sub-theme include the high-profiled work of ON and SOMO on denouncing the Netherlands as a tax haven and lobbying for a change in Dutch fiscal policies. This work will not be part of this evaluation, as this sub-theme was not sampled. The sampled sub-theme ‘pro-poor policies (fighting inequality)’ resulted in only 11 outcomes filed during the programme period (until June 2020). The modest number of outcomes combined with their low level, however, is not necessarily an indication for limited effectiveness.

Of the 11 outcomes, six fit into the ‘strengthened CSOs’ outcome area; two outcomes involve ‘increased citizens voice’; another two involve ‘stronger and wider alliance’; and the last one is filed under ‘Increased political will / Place issue on the policy agenda’.

## 3. Global Contribution stories

### Introduction

The FAIR/Even it Up (FAIR/EiU) programme was chosen for further research regarding the *global* activities of the Finance for Development (F4D) theme. In daily practice, ‘global’ refers to the activities of the global F4D team in The Hague, supporting the work of

The ‘change pathway’ relevant for the selected sample is ‘Strengthened CSOs’.

Based on preliminary document study and initial interviews, the following outcomes were selected for further research.

#### *Davos Case*

- > Oxfam Novib has continued to strengthen the Fight Inequality Alliance and to broaden national alliances in Zambia, Kenya, Philippines, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in order to advocate against extreme inequality and poverty, which has resulted in changes in countries.

#### *Fair Tax Monitor Case*

- > In the period April 2017-March 2018, the Alliance for the Fair Tax Monitor and the individual partners and country offices were strengthened as a result of the co-creation process and face-to-face meeting developing the revised research and scoring methodology and supporting in its implementation (submitted by the Fair Tax Monitor)

#### *Tax expenditure in Vietnam case (investigative story)*

- > Between April and May 2018, the Vietnamese tax administration worked with Oxfam Novib on the preparation and delivery of a workshop for staff of Oxfam Vietnam and partners on tax expenditure reports, later co-authoring a policy brief on this topic from June 2018 to January 2019.

### 3.1 Contribution story 1.

## ‘Davos’ and the fight against inequality

#### *Outcome:*

*Oxfam Novib has continued to strengthen the Fight Inequality Alliance and to broaden national alliances in Zambia, Kenya, Philippines, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in order to advocate against*

*extreme inequality and poverty, which has resulted in changes in countries.*

Over the last years, Oxfam has seized the momentum of the yearly Davos conference of the World Economic Forum (WEF) to draw attention to the growing inequalities in the world. Most prominent is the yearly publication of a report focusing on global inequalities.<sup>69</sup> This report is always published in January around the opening day of the WEF in Davos, when the international media flock together to witness the arrival in Davos of world leaders, business CEOs and assorted billionaires. In addition to this publication, as part of the Strategic Partnership, Oxfam supports the Fighting Inequality Alliance (FIA). FIA is a group of international and national non-profit organisations, including faith-based organisations and trade unions, committed to question the excessive concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the few.

FIA has chapters in a growing number of countries where local inequalities are addressed and where national campaigns against ‘Davos’ and what it stands for are developed and rolled out. The SP global programme supported FIA chapters in eight countries as well as its coordinating secretariat. In addition, Oxfam enabled the presence in Davos in 2020 of the Pan Africa Coordinator of FIA, Njoki Njehu.

#### **Reviewing Oxfam Novib/SOMO contribution claims**

The outcome selected for further research, hardly stretches beyond the sphere of control of the SP. Therefore, after consultation with Oxfam Novib’s staff, the evaluation research focuses on two, higher-level outcomes, that are not part of the outcomes reported in the outcome database, but that are included in the contribution story as developed by Oxfam.

- > As a result of campaigning and advocacy (by both Oxfam and FIA), over the last couple of years ‘inequality’ has emerged as an important topic of the ‘Davos narrative’.
- > As a result of campaigning and advocacy by the FIA-chapter in Kenya, policy makers in that country have opened up to FIA demands: FIA has been invited by the National Treasury to present budget proposals.

#### **The Davos story revisited**

An outcome claimed in the Outcome narrative developed by Oxfam is that “The story shifted to the story of the “two mountains” (mountain of garbage in Kenya slum vs. mountains and luxury ski resorts of Davos)”.<sup>70</sup> The yearly gathering of global leaders, influencers and the rich and famous is increasingly framed in the media and by CSOs like Oxfam as hypocritical and as a manifestation of the problem of the current economic system, rather than the solution. At the same time,

<sup>69</sup> The 2020 report focuses on inequalities regarding care work: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620928/bp-time-to-care-inequality-200120-en.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> Oxfam/SOMO. June 20, 2020. *Finance For development – How Change Happened in Oxfam Novib’s and SOMO’s programme on pro-poor fiscal policies*. Contribution Story Global (chapter 4). P 21

the topic of 'inequality' is increasingly discussed during Davos and by Davos' participants. This changed narrative can be (partly) seen as a result of campaigning of Oxfam and its partners. The evidence that Oxfam presents to support this claim are media articles (Reuters, IPS, the Independent).

Njoki Njehu, Pan-Africa Coordinator of FIA estimate that campaigns by Oxfam and partners (including FIA) have contributed considerably (some 40-50%, according to her assessment) to the changed narrative in and during Davos. Important elements of the campaigns are the yearly reports on inequality, the national campaigns in several countries, the global campaigns (like #EyesOnGreed). These activities contribute to a buzz surrounding the WEF in Davos, focusing not on the actual agenda of the Forum but on the hypocrisy that the world is supposed to turn to billionaires to solve the issue of inequality and poverty. In the words of Njoki Njehu: "Every billionaire is a policy failure." During the last editions of the WEF, Oxfam executives have been present in Davos as 'white badge' guests of the WEF. Former Oxfam executive director Winnie Byanyima was co-host in 2015. Njoki Njehu was WEF guest during the 2020 edition of the 'billionaires ball'.

The impression that the topic of discussions has changed during the yearly Davos meetings is confirmed by Silvia Magnoni, Head of Civil Society Communities at WEF. She agrees that the Davos-narrative has shifted toward more emphasis on inequality. Rather than seeing this as a result of Oxfam's campaigning, Magnoni discerns a joint strategy of Oxfam and WEF to put inequality issues on the agenda in 'Davos'. While Oxfam staff see WEF as an advocacy target, Magnoni says she is pleased with the 'cooperation' with Oxfam. "We have a common approach. Every year, at the start of the Davos conference, Oxfam published the inequality report. As a 'neutral' platform we are not free to be as outspoken as Oxfam, but we see that Oxfam shakes up decision makers. Oxfam helps us in creating the extra buzz around the Forum. Oxfam's inequality report has become part of the Davos tradition."

According to Magnoni, Oxfam could increase its effectiveness if it would make more use of its local, grassroot partners. "We are interested in getting multiple perspectives at the table. We know the position of Oxfam. We want our partners to get into contact with grass root voices. Sometimes I think that Oxfam should step aside and provide a platform for its partners."

The presence of Njoki Njehu, the Africa coordinator of FIA during the 2020 edition of 'Davos', was an example of Oxfam 'stepping aside' and opening the stage to one of its partners.

Njehu stresses the importance of the SP's capacity development efforts for the national chapters of FIA. She says that stronger national campaigns on inequality add to the persuasiveness of the global narrative. In her own case, Njoki Njehu remembers that prior to her trip to Davos, she received training by Oxfam to hold her ground and to present herself as firm and well informed: "That was very important for me to act in Davos in a confident manner."

Apart from the contributions of Oxfam and partners to the prominence of Inequality as a Davos-topic, Njoki Njehu indicates that other actors also contribute to this changing image. "The international financial institutions

now accept that inequality is a key concern; it became part of the SDGs; even the Pope repeatedly speaks out against inequality."

Also other interviewees indicate that the changing narrative on inequality is the result of many voices. An Oxfam staff member emphasises the role of journalistic platforms in putting unfair tax-practices (by the super rich) in the limelight: "It was the investigative work of journalists that uncovered the 'Panama Papers'. That brought the subject of tax evasion on the international agenda. Oxfam was probably the organisation that more than any other, made use of their work." This Oxfam staff member thinks that Oxfam contributes for 30-40% to the global debate on inequality, although it is hard to distinguish between the contributions of the different Oxfams. "The prominence of Oxfam in the debate on inequality is exemplified by the fact that Oxfam-soundbites are repeated throughout the debate. For example the quote that the world's richest 8 men possess as much as the poorest half of the world population is repeated everywhere." A comprehensive investigation of reporting by the media is not part of this evaluation, but a simple (English language) google-search confirms that Oxfam's claim about the world richest 8 men owning as much as the bottom half of the world populations is repeated by numerous news sources: like the BBC, the Guardian, NYTimes, Reuters, etc. Using the so-called Trendkite platform, Oxfam measured that the overall media coverage in 2019 was slightly up from the previous year (from 11,059 to 12,703 media hits).

Magnoni estimates the contribution of Oxfam to the rise of inequality on the Davos agenda as 'surely more than 50%'. But she also agrees that inequality has become part of a global agenda, and that many actors, old and new, have contributed. "Inequality is not just Oxfam's theme. Trade unions speak a similar language. Also the human rights movement is increasingly showing its face in Davos. They approach inequality from another angle. The same goes for the climate movement. And then we have grass root actors and, of course, the WEF's own 'global shapers'."

Within the scope of this evaluation it is hard – and probably impossible – to establish who initiated the current debate on inequality. It is clear that the SP/Oxfam rides the wave of increasing attention to inequality, but at the same time they can be seen as (partly) causing the wave. It is reasonable to assume that campaigning by the SP/Oxfam has intensified the debate and contributed to the fact that the debate takes place at a high profile platform like the annual World Economic Forum in Davos.

A possible increase of political will was recently (February 2021) identified in Vietnam where, according to Oxfam Vietnam, the Prime-Minister, after receiving



the latest inequality report,<sup>71</sup> ‘steered his Government Office to send the Oxfam report to related Ministries to study and adopt in the development of their policy advice and recommendations to inequality reduction and sustainable development in Vietnam in the coming time’.

### The Fighting Inequality Story revisited

SP-funding has strengthened the FIA-chapters in 8 countries. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY].

According to Antonia Musunga, National Coordinator at FIA Kenya, the capacity development provided by the SP has greatly improved the position of FIA vis-à-vis the Kenyan Government. Musunga explains that Oxfam Novib was especially instrumental in changing the approach of FIA. “They showed us the value of evidence based advocacy. Before we just put our demands on the table. And that made it easy for the government to ignore us. We now present documented facts, that makes it possible for us to ‘talk truth to power’,” Njoki Njehu adds: “The yearly budget in Kenya is very complex: hundreds of pages with financial stuff. Nobody really understands that. Experts from Oxfam looked at it and produced a two-page summary. That we could use for our advocacy. We could understand that many essential goods are taxed heavily and some more luxury items less so.”

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY].

Also the strength of the alliance contributed to the outcome, Antonia confirms. “Acting as a real alliance our voices all speak the same message: we all speak about inequality. That is new for us. And it strengthens our message about tax policies that fight inequality.”

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

The contribution of FIA to the change in political will at government level; indicating an openness to engage with FIA on budget matters, can only be assessed by involving the opinions of key actors at the level of the ministry. After the demonstrations in Kenya in the summer of 2020 (that have been knocked down hard by security forces), however, the relationship between FIA and the Kenyan government has deteriorated. Both FIA and Oxfam stressed that communication with the government was no longer possible. Oxfam urged the external evaluator not to proceed in trying to interview government officials.

## Reflection

### Overall assessment

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]. It is likely that the SP contributed to the changing narrative on equality during the yearly Davos meeting. The yearly report on inequality invariably draws lots of media attention. Messages produced by Oxfam and its partners are repeated on many platforms and are frequently mentioned when ‘Davos’ was in the news. Oxfam has profiled itself as a relevant voice in the worldwide discourse on inequality. To what extent Oxfam contributed to the inequality narrative cannot be determined. In the context of Davos there are also other actors that contribute to the changing narrative. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

The Davos/FIA case loosely fits the assumption #A1 as included in the F4D ToC (this is, according to Oxfam Novib-staff the relevant ToC for this outcome, rather than the ToC that was developed for the global FAIR/EiU programme): “As the influencing capacity of CSOs is strengthened, more will engage in the topic of financing for development, joining forces around a shared agenda.”

The outcome of the changed narrative on inequality in Davos can plausibly be (partly) contributed to campaigning by the SP and its partners. Interventions include: capacity development of CSOs, publishing of evidence, opinions and demands, and seeking a space on international level for civil society actors.

The interventions have contributed to early outcomes as defined in the F4D ToC: increased media coverage; enhanced space to advocate, strengthened CSO capacities to influence and increased political will in the public and private sector. The changed narrative in Davos (that is being investigated here), can be placed under the intermediate outcome (as specified in the F4D ToC): ‘Increased public and private support for improved policies and practice’.

An assessment of the capacity development pathway of the FIA Kenya outcome is not really possible because Kenyan government officials, according to FIA, have broken all contact with FIA (and other civil society actors) as a result of demonstration in July 2020. In addition, the changed capacities of the FIA-staff in Kenya was not assessed as part of the CATool exercise.

### On Contribution

Interviewees rate the contribution of Oxfam to the changed narrative as ‘between 30% and 40%’ and ‘surely more than 50%’. It is clear that ‘changed narrative’ is a rather vague notion and contribution cannot be firmly established. It is also beyond doubt that Oxfam has emerged (or has confirmed its position) as a relevant actor in the global debate about inequality. ON and the strategic partnership make clever use of the buzz that Oxfam International created with its yearly report (and

<sup>71</sup> Oxfam (January 2021) The Inequality Virus - Bringing together a world torn apart by coronavirus through a fair, just and sustainable economy. Download at:

<https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621149/bp-the-inequality-virus-250121-en.pdf>

probably vice versa). Oxfam Novib plays a role in the global efforts: it provides resources for the Davos campaigns and contributes to the ‘Davos report’. The contribution of specifically the interventions initiated by the Strategic Partnership is in this case especially hard to ascertain, as interventions by Oxfam International, Oxfam Novib (including SOMO), other Oxfam offices and their local and regional partners are difficult to distinguish.

Table 19. Contribution Assessment

Contribution assessment	Davos Case
Evidence	
Evidence output	medium
Evidence contribution	Weak/medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the programme necessary for outcome?	Maybe
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome?	No
Overall assessment	Low/medium

### On sustainability

The sustainability of the changed Davos narrative can be questioned. In 2019 the Davos participants spoke about ‘Globalisation 4.0’. The 2020 theme of WEF was ‘Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World’. In 2021 the WEF was scheduled to be ‘The Great reset’ and the need for equal, inclusive and sustainable economies. But beyond 2021 the attention may shift to topics that are then in vogue. If not followed by concrete actions, talk about inequality is mainly that: talk. According to Njoki Njehu the inequality topic in Davos is merely a ‘fashion item’.

The sustainability of the outcome in Kenya is low. After public demonstration in the summer of 2020 virtually all contact between FIA and the Kenyan government was broken. The political will to engage in dialogue (and the enhanced space to advocate) vanished quicker than they were gained.

The increased capacities of FIA-staff will hopefully remain and contribute to future outcomes.

### On relevance

The relevance of the interventions regarding ‘Davos’ and the WEF can be found in the assumption that it provides fertile ground for follow-up in a later time and in a different setting. This could well be true. And the external evaluators do not want to take away from the great value of the ‘Davos’ work in changing the narrative. At the same time there is no concrete proof that this changed narrative produces concrete policy changes. Davos is not the place where new policies are actually formulated and established. It is a place for networking and for laying the foundations for future deals. The fact that the ‘narrative’ around and in Davos has changed is reassuring, but does not necessarily constitute actual change. It can be questioned, in addition, if Oxfam representatives are present in the Davos corridors where

the powerful really ‘wheel and deal’. Insofar as the external evaluators could verify, the SP monitoring system has not identified cases where the changed Davos narrative has resulted in (movement towards) actual (sustainable) policy change on a global level. The nature of informal platforms like WEF, implies that direct linkages towards relevant and concrete policy and practice changes are difficult to prove. The outcome database does not include policy outcomes that can be linked directly to the changed ‘Davos’ narrative. Of course, concrete policy changes were not the explicit goal of the Davos campaigns.

### Effectiveness

According to an Oxfam Novib staff member ‘Davos’ “helps us to open doors for engagements that have eventually translated into policy change, fundraising and influencing opportunities.” This staff member points out, for example, that the Belgian Prime-Minister reached out to Oxfam during the 2020 WEF. According to Oxfam the Belgian Prime-Minister seemed “keen to adopt Oxfam’s solutions to addressing inequality.” Also, prior to the 2019 WEF, the managing director of the IMF remarked that inequality had become “one of the most complex and vexing challenges in the global economy.” Something that Oxfam had been influencing the IMF on since 2016, says this Oxfam staff member. Both examples indicate that the Davos narrative in some cases leads to increased political will beyond ‘Davos’. But clear indications of changed policies or practices (or other targeted outcomes) as a result of the changed narrative in Davos are not identified. What is missing is a clear strategy and methodology to evolve from early and intermediate outcomes like ‘increased media coverage’ and ‘increased public pressure’ to targeted outcomes like new pro-poor fiscal policies (including policies that fight tax evasion and avoidance).

Assumption A2 says that ‘As champions in the media and public advocate for change, the terms of the debate will shift, creating an enabling environment for policy change.’ It is unclear both in the F4D ToC as in the practice of the SP and its partners, how the ‘enabling environment for policy change’ can be operationalised to ensure and/or promote pro-poor fiscal policies.

At national level some outcomes are identified that seem sustainable. Unfortunately the selected outcome in Kenya could not be fully investigated. As indicated before, the relations between FIA and the Kenyan government have frozen after demonstrations in July 2020. Without including the views of the main target of the advocacy efforts of FIA assessing the effectiveness cannot be verified. The breaking of all communications between FIA and government, however, does suggest that the sustainability of advocacy results may be in jeopardy. Obviously, in Kenya there is a delicate balance between achieving a ‘place at the table’ with the government and the freedom to protest.

### On capacity development

As in most other outcomes, the main ‘driver’ of the outcomes have been the capacity development interventions. As a part of the FAIR/EiU Knowledge &

Learning Strategy several initiatives were employed to strengthen capacities of Oxfams and partner organisations. Learning events, lectures and learning meetings took place in (among others): Johannesburg in March 2017, Entebbe in November 2017, Dakar in February 2018, Marrakech in June 2018. These learning events were to a large extent demand driven: ‘local’ Oxfams and partners indicated their capacity needs, and events were planned accordingly. During the learning events the *technical/thematic aspects* of F4D took centre stage: budget analysis, fiscal justice, Gender Responsive Budgeting etc.

### 3.2 Contribution story 2.

## Fair Tax Monitor story

#### Outcome:

*In the period April 2017-March 2018, the Alliance for the Fair Tax Monitor and the individual partners and country offices were strengthened as a result of the co-creation process and face-to-face meeting developing the revised research and scoring methodology and supporting in its implementation (submitted by the Fair Tax Monitor*

The Fair Tax Monitor (FTM) is an evidence-based advocacy tool that identifies the main bottlenecks within national tax systems and provides evidence for advocacy work at national and international level. Its overall goal is “to strengthen the advocacy activities at the local and global levels and to increase the visibility of Oxfam’s work on fiscal justice”.<sup>72</sup> The tool, introduced in 2014, uses a jointly developed common research framework, standardised methodology and unified research approach, allowing for a comparison of tax policies and practices in different countries. The FTM assesses national tax systems in 11 countries in six areas: Progressive Tax System; Sufficient Revenues; Well Governed Tax Exemptions; Effective Tax Administration; Pro-Poor Government Spending; and Accountable Public Finances.

#### Reviewing Oxfam Novib/SOMO contribution claims

The research into the FTM involves six reported outcomes. All outcomes fall within the ‘Strengthened CSOs’ pathway, except for one that falls in ‘Stronger and wider alliances’. Most of these outcomes hardly exceed the output level.

Overall, the contribution story as presented by Oxfam gives a clear overview of the interventions leading to the six described outcomes.<sup>73</sup> There is, however, a lack of evidence of the outcomes, as baseline data are lacking. As

most outcomes are on the level of increased capacities of either local Oxfam offices and/or local partner CSOs, it would be relevant to compare the levels of (advocacy) capacity at the beginning and at the end of the programme. The data of the Capacity Assessment tool (CATool) only provides information on capacity development of a limited number of organisations between 2018 and 2020. These data are not included in the contribution narrative as presented to the external evaluators.

Even without quantitative data, results (increased advocacy capacity) are probable, given the input (training, workshops). The real question is if the increased capacity to influence contributed to enhanced effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

Therefore, based on initial interviews, the external evaluators have identified several higher-level outcomes of the FTM-interventions that may give an indication of the effectiveness of the programme.

- > Increased influence of Ugandan CSOs on government institutions, like the Ministry of Finance.
- > The influence of Ugandan CSOs on the (ongoing) negotiations between Uganda and the Netherlands regarding the Double Tax Agreement (DTA) between the two countries
- > The reduction of the General Sales Tax (GST) on prepared food from 17% to 7.5% in the Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan in 2018.

In the following paragraphs we will assess the contribution of the SP to these outcomes.

#### Fair Tax Monitor revisited

*Increased influence of Ugandan CSOs on government institutions, like the Ministry of Finance*

The campaign for fair taxes in Uganda, in line with the Fair Tax Monitor, has increased the influence of Ugandan CSOs on government institutions, like the Ministry of Finance.<sup>74</sup> An Oxfam Uganda staff member explains that Oxfam and partners have increased access to members of parliament (including the chairman). And also within the Finance Ministry strategically placed civil servants have opened their doors to Oxfam’s partner-CSOs like SEATINI.

A strategy that seemed particularly successful was involving the IMF in efforts to promote fair tax policies in Uganda. In 2017 Ugandan CSOs met with the IMF in Washington. An Oxfam-Uganda staff member recalls: “The visit took place at our request. Apparently such contacts are quite rare. We shared the Fair Tax Monitor and other information about the tax system in Uganda and how this affects the poor in our country. We advocated, for example, for involving civil society organisations in budget making. And we spoke out against regressive taxes like VAT. It was obvious the IMF

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/donors-partners/about-oxfam/projects-and-programmes/fair-tax-monitor>

<sup>73</sup> Oxfam/SOMO. June 20, 2020. *Finance For development – How Change Happened in Oxfam Novib’s and SOMO’s programme on pro-poor fiscal policies*. Contribution Story Global (chapter 4)

<sup>74</sup> Note that, in spite of numerous efforts, no official from the Ugandan government was found available to comment on the role

the Fair Tax Monitor, or the organisations behind it, played to influence decisions at government level. A balanced assessment of the contribution of the FTM and of Oxfam Uganda and its partners is therefore difficult to make.

was impressed with the level of our analyses.” After meeting the IMF in Washington, the Oxfam-partners connected to the IMF office in Kampala. Clara Mira, Resident Representative of IMF in Kampala, is very positive about the contact she has with the Ugandan CSOs. “We meet regularly, and that is very fruitful. They often brought to our attention aspects and implications of Ugandan tax laws that we did not know before. For example, we had frequent interactions regarding the 1% tax on money transfers using mobile phones. We agreed that this is a regressive law that especially affects poor people. We advised against such a move, as SEATINI and the other CSOs also did in their campaign against the law.” (Note: the outcome of the tax on mobile money transfers is discussed in §2.1 of the F4D part). The reporting of Oxfam-partners in Uganda, however, does not mention concrete changes in IMF policies or political will regarding the Ugandan tax system. It is therefore unclear if the supposed involvement of the IMF is limited to words or if words are followed by concrete actions. Clara Mira later comments that: “I would not say we changed our mindset, but we agreed and worked in the same direction, including by stating our views publicly.”

The visit of Ugandan NGOs to IMF-offices in Washington, arranged by Oxfam US, is an example of the added value of the ‘Worldwide Influencing Network’ that gave its name to the Strategic Partnership.

The reason that officials are willing to listen to Oxfam and its partners, several sources agree, is that their level of knowledge is high. Tax systems often take quite some technical knowledge to really comprehend. As someone from Oxfam Uganda states: “We are taken seriously because we have solid information. We know what we are talking about.” MPs are interested in the information Oxfam can provide. They can use it to strengthen their own position in parliament. But also IMF Kampala thinks that the influence of SEATINI et. al. is based on the high capacity of the staff. Clara Mira: “The NGO people I deal with are knowledgeable, committed, passionate and well researched. They work hard. In addition they are very good at communicating their message. They usually succeed in explaining difficult financial transactions in simple language for a relatively broad audience. Their events usually receive wide media coverage, which helps shape the public opinion.”

Reaching a relatively broad audience with fact based information and thus increasing public pressure is a deliberate strategy, and part of the SP-approach. A staff member of SEATINI adds: “In the past we mainly complained, but we did not back our opinions with research results. Nowadays our proposals are discussed in the political arena.”

Mira agrees that that CSOs have managed to persuade the Ugandan government to reflect more on the effects of taxes on inequality, but: “Unfortunately this reflection is not often followed by concrete action.” This sheds some doubts on the accurateness of the assumption that increased public pressure will lead to policy changes through increased political will. There still seems to be a disconnect between early outcomes and targeted outcomes, as mentioned in the general F4D ToC. It is, for example, not clear how much public pressure (or prolonged pressure for how long) will inevitably lead to policy changes in Uganda or elsewhere. The external evaluators realise that such a specification would be a lot

to ask, but without it the assumption that public pressure leads to policy changes is rather speculative.

It is likely (and confirmed by several interviewees) that the 2008 financial crisis has changed the general perspective on taxes. More than before, tax systems are judged by their ability to reduce inequalities and to generate revenues for public services that (mainly) benefit poor people. This changed perspective has no doubt contributed to some of the outcomes presented by Oxfam. International financial institutions, like the World Bank and even IMF, pressure national governments to modify tax systems for more pro-poor effects. This contribution to the researched outcome, however, is hard to assess.

*The influence of Ugandan CSOs on the negotiations between Uganda and the Netherlands regarding the Double Tax Agreement (DTA) between the two countries*

One of the more noteworthy outcomes resulting from the Fair Tax Monitor is the dialogue between Ugandan CSOs and the negotiating team from the Dutch Ministry of Finance regarding the Double Tax Agreement (DTA) between the two countries. A Double Tax Agreement is an agreement between countries to avoid that companies or individuals pay certain taxes twice (in both countries), but such agreements may also facilitate that companies are able to ‘shop’ for the best fiscal circumstances or avoid paying taxes at all. Oxfam Novib and Oxfam in Uganda claim that they succeeded in bringing both parties to the table after a long period without communication on the subject. This result was reported under the ‘Tax evasion and Avoidance’ outcome area. Research of Oxfam and Ugandan CSOs (notably SEATINI) revealed that the Dutch/Ugandan DTA contains several provisions that are detrimental to tax revenues in Uganda. One Oxfam-Uganda staff member estimated that the revenue loss as a result of the DTA amounts to “hundreds of millions of euro’s”. Mediation by Oxfam Novib in July, August and September 2019 contributed to the decision of both countries to re-engage in negotiations. In addition, the Dutch delegation was persuaded by Oxfam to meet with Ugandan CSOs, prior to the negotiations with the Ugandan government. During the (unique) meeting, Oxfam Uganda, SEATINI and the Tax Justice Alliance Uganda were able to inform the Dutch delegation of the concerns of the civil society in Uganda. According to a staff member of SEATINI: “Oxfam Netherlands [together with SOMO, RM] had prepared a paper with recommendations. This paper was very important for us. It gave us confidence in delivering our message.”

The DTAs are not a new topic for SEATINI. Says a staff member: “We started working on the DTA back in 2013. We got support from Action Aid at the time. We studied the tax agreements – and specifically the one with the Netherlands – to see to what extent they were in agreement with Ugandan laws. We shared our findings in 2014 with the Ministry and this resulted in the unilateral decision of the Ministry to stop all renegotiations on the DTA, until Uganda had developed a good framework. In 2018 the Netherlands approached Uganda to restart negotiations.”

Officials at the Dutch Ministry of Finance stress that the intervention by Oxfam Novib was not the main contributing factor to the restart of the negotiating

process. One Dutch official says: “There was no hesitation on our part to start negotiations. It was part of a general plan to renegotiate DTAs with no less than 23 developing countries. Our aim was to make the DTAs more beneficial to these countries. We did notice some reluctance on the Ugandan side to start negotiating. Maybe Oxfam helped in speeding things up a bit on their side. But the negotiations would have taken place anyway.”

Oxfam Novib did succeed in persuading the Dutch delegation to meet CSOs in Kampala. One of the Dutch negotiators: “Such a meeting is not customary. It was an idea of Oxfam. It was the first time for us. It was interesting to hear the views of the NGOs. It is definitely something that we will consider doing again in the future.” But at the same time the Dutch officials do not think that the meeting influenced the Dutch position during the negotiations with their Ugandan colleagues. Although negotiations were not finalised at the time of the interview, it is not likely that the Oxfam intervention will have effect on the outcome, the Dutch civil servants say. “Our position regarding all 23 countries is the same. It would not be realistic to change this position based on a conversation with Oxfam.” The Dutch negotiators are willing to admit that the meeting with the CSOs made them realise what is important for Uganda: “Maybe this affected our awareness and the care in which we voiced our position.”<sup>75</sup>

The Dutch negotiators were impressed with the level of knowledge of the Ugandan CSOs: “They know what they are talking about. Their knowledge of fiscal matters is good and up to date. That added to the quality of the meeting we had.”

The SEATINI staff members that were interviewed for this evaluation stress that their knowledge regarding tax matters precedes the Strategic Partnership. “We started working on tax issues back in 2008. We were initially supported by Action Aid.” Later SEATINI was part of the multi-country Capacity for Research and Advocacy for Fair Taxation (CRAFT) project, which was led by Oxfam Novib and Tax Justice Network Africa. “So when the Fair Tax Monitor started in 2016 we were already quite knowledgeable on tax issues. Nowadays we learn by doing.” The SEATINI staff members identify the 2017 workshop in Jinja as important. “This workshop was to strengthen our advocacy capacity. Together with experts from Oxfam we designed campaigns to address tax issues in Uganda. We especially focused on involving the public in our campaigns.” Unfortunately SEATINI was not included in the Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool), so concrete data on the development of the influencing capacity of this partner is not available.

#### DTA abused

In the end of November 2020 it was reported in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant*, that the double tax agreement between Uganda and the Netherlands has been abused on a large scale by multinational companies

with a headquarter in the Netherlands.<sup>76</sup> Among the companies profiting from the DTA are the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and the French oil company Total. Both companies operate in Uganda through private limited companies (in Dutch: *Besloten Vennootschappen, BV*) based in Amsterdam. According to Oxfam (on whose report ‘The Money Pipeline’<sup>77</sup> the article is based) Uganda stands to lose 287 million dollars in taxes from Total and CNOOC in the next 25 years.

*The reduction of the General Sales Tax (GST) on prepared food from 17% to 7.5% in the Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan in 2018.*

In 2018, the Pakistani government decided on a reduction of the General Sales Tax (GST) on prepared food from 17% to 7.5% in the Islamabad Capital Territory. Sales taxes (comparable to VAT) are considered regressive, as it is a ‘flat tax’ where the same levels apply to both affluent and poor people. Taxes on food especially reduce equality, as poor people tend to spend a much higher proportion of their income on food. Oxfam Pakistan and its partners have been lobbying since 2015 for a reduction of GST.

After a ‘power analysis’ Oxfam in Pakistan and its partners (specifically the Tax Justice Coalition Pakistan, TJCP) decided that tapping into the influence of the private sector in Pakistan was the best option to advocate for fair taxes. Oxfam and partners established contact with the Chambers of Commerce & Industries. According to Asim Jaffry of Oxfam in Pakistan, the political weight of the Chambers of Commerce is “more than any other private entity”. Jaffry explains that they managed to become part of the ‘Annual All Pakistan Presidential Conference’ where Presidents of all chambers of commerce & industries gather to discuss policies directly linked with the private sector. Jaffry: “It is a politically heavy weight forum where the Finance Minister himself was a regular guest. Even the Prime Minister visited this forum to address the private sector policy matters.” The first result of the lobby activities was that the Chambers of Commerce, together with Oxfam and TJCP, issued a ‘Joint Communiqué’ propagating four principles of an ‘Equitable & Fairer Tax System’. These principles included the reduction of sales taxes. “This Communiqué and other recommendations were then tabled to the Finance Minister Mr. Ishaq Dar”, Asim Jaffry says proudly.

The increasing stature of Oxfam regarding fiscal issues, resulted in a seat on the Tax Reforms Commission, where Oxfam was the only participating NGO. Asim Jaffry personally chaired a sub-committee on revenue and taxation. Oxfam and the TJCP presented research results to the Tax Reforms Commission, proving that the GST was widely evaded. “So bringing it down to a single digit would actually help the government to fight tax evasion.” A concrete result was the decision of the

<sup>75</sup> Note: The external evaluators realise, of course, that it cannot be expected that civil servants readily admit that their government’s position was changed because of lobby efforts.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/belastingverdrag-met-oeganda-op-grote-schaal-misbruikt~b2a8b48f2/>

<sup>77</sup>

<https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Files/rapporten/2020/20201001%20The%20Money%20Pipeline%20-%20Oxfam%20report.pdf>

Federal Capital to reduce GST on food items down to 7.5%. But Jaffry is confident that this will not be the end of it: “The chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in Pakistan endorsed the idea to bring down the GST rate at 12.5% across the country.”

The influence of Oxfam on the debate on fair taxes is confirmed by Asim Khattak, Chief of the Public Accounts Committee of the Federal Board of Revenue in the Islamabad region. Khattak says in an email-interview that Oxfam’s Fair Tax Monitor and its ‘CPI Basket study’ impacted the discourse on regressive taxes: “It generated debate about how a regressive taxation system is against equal opportunity, especially for the bottom 80% of society.” Khattak confirms that Oxfam significantly contributed to the rate reduction, mainly by initiating and stimulating a discourse about GST within the chambers of commerce. Obviously local businesses shared the wish for lower taxes, making their products cheaper for consumers. Oxfam succeeded in pointing to the influence of chambers of commerce towards this outcome.

At the same time, Khattak stresses that also other factors contributed to the end-result. Yes, the chambers of commerce played a role, but the government itself had already made, in the words of Mr Khattak, “(...) significant progress in balancing, public revenue needs with equity and social security needs of society.”

## Reflection

### Overall assessment

The proof of the increased influence of CSOs on the Uganda Ministry of Finance outcome is not conclusive. It is, however, clear that notably SEATINI has gained itself quite a reputation as a knowledgeable actor regarding fiscal and budgetary matters. The development of and the advocacy around the Fair Tax Monitor has played an important role in this. The proof of the DTA outcome is also not conclusive. After advocacy efforts of Oxfam Novib, there has been a meeting between Dutch negotiators and Ugandan CSOs. It is not clear if this resulted in a different point of view of the Dutch negotiators. The efforts by Oxfam Novib and the Ugandan CSO actors have probably resulted in an acceleration of the negotiating process. The proof of the reduced GST tax in Pakistan is conclusive.

The success of the Ugandan CSOs in F4D advocacy is to a large extent a result of their thematic capacities. Their input and opinions are valued and seriously taken into consideration by many relevant stakeholders in Uganda, including international organisations in Uganda and government institutions. It shows the validity of the F4D ToC and the Ugandan contextualised ToC. Unfortunately the thematic capacities are not assessed by the Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool). The GST tax outcome in Pakistan is the result of effective alliance building. Entering into a coalition with the Chambers of Commerce in Pakistan, not only increased the ‘critical mass’ (following Assumption 8A), but also provided easy access of Pakistani CSOs to high government officials who are often invited to meetings of the Chamber of Commerce.

### On Contribution

As mentioned earlier, the contribution of both Ugandan cases cannot really be established without input from the advocacy-targets, i.e. the Ugandan ministries.

The Dutch civil servants interviewed for this evaluation will not be tempted to value the contribution of Oxfam to the renegotiation of the DTA between Uganda and the Netherlands. However, they stress that the negotiations would have taken place anyhow, albeit maybe at a later stage. They also stress that the contact with Oxfam and its partners will not change the outcome of the negotiations. If that is so, the contribution of Oxfam Novib was modest and limited to some speeding up of an outcome that was bound to happen anyway.

Table 20: Contribution assessment

Contribution assessment	Increased influence on MoF Uganda	DTA Uganda Netherlands	Reduced GST in Pakistan
Evidence			
Evidence output	Medium/high	Medium/high	High
Evidence contribution	Low	Weak/Medium	High
Perceptions interviewees			
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	Yes	No	Probably
Sufficient: Was programme sufficient for outcome?	No	No	Probably not
Overall assessment	No assessment possible	Low (but high regarding the dialogue between Dutch negotiators and Ugandan CSOs)	Medium/high

A very relevant contribution of the SP, however, can be found in initiating the meeting between the Dutch negotiating team from the Ministry of Finance with Ugandan CSOs. This meeting would most probably not have taken place without the programme. Although the outcome of the DTA-negotiation will probably not be altered as a result of this meeting, it does seem that the Dutch negotiating team was sensitised regarding the position of the Ugandan civil society. Such meetings seem a model worth following up during future tax agreement negotiations between the Netherlands and other countries. It would provide CSOs an interesting advocacy platform. Dutch official delegations would thereby be contributing to increasing specific civic space for CSOs in countries where their position is under threat.

### On effectiveness

In all three outcomes the effectiveness of the interventions was high.

### On relevance

The relevance of a fair tax agreement between Uganda and the Netherlands is high: it can assure much needed extra revenue for the Ugandan state. The relevance of the intervention of Oxfam and its Ugandan partners in speeding up the DTA-negotiations between The Netherlands and Uganda, however, is rather low: it is very probable that the negotiations would have gone ahead even without the intervention, albeit somewhat later. It is also likely that the result of the negotiations will not be altered by the intervention. The intervention, however, did succeed in providing an opportunity and a space for lobby by Ugandan CSOs. That is certainly not without relevance.

It is a missed opportunity however – certainly in the context of moving Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network – that contact between CSOs and the Dutch negotiators was not sought in all (or at least some) of the 23 countries with which the Netherlands had opened renegotiations (or in other types of official Dutch delegations). It seems that the Dutch negotiators would have been open for suggestions to that effect.

General Sales Taxes are regressive taxes: they target the poor relatively more than the rich. The reduction of the GST from 17% to 7.5% is therefore relevant. The relevance however is reduced by the fact that the reduction only applies to prepared food sold in the Islamabad Capital Territory. Nevertheless the tax reduction saved the citizens of Islamabad (population of the Islamabad metropolitan area is little over 3 million) in total almost 100 million euros. Obviously the authorities of Islamabad miss out on these revenues.

### On sustainability

According to interviews with staff members of Oxfam and partners in Uganda, the capacity development efforts did not only benefit Oxfam Uganda and its direct partners, but also partners, mainly through the alliances and partnerships that were widened and strengthened. It cannot be assessed however, to what extent CSOs in general have increased their advocacy capacities. This process, however, does contribute to the sustainability of capacity building efforts.

The sustainability of results in Pakistan is a matter of concern. It can be questioned if all outcomes in Pakistan will survive the scheduled withdrawal of Oxfam from Pakistan. The outcomes in Pakistan researched during this evaluation also seem to rely heavily on the individual qualities and network of one Oxfam staff member. The official from the federal Board of Revenue, interviewed for this evaluation, thinks that further reduction of GST will only be possible if NGOs continue pushing. With Oxfam withdrawing from Pakistan, continued lobbying on fiscal matters is not assured. As the government is continuously looking for sources of tax revenue, without further advocacy and political pressure, a raise of GST cannot be excluded.

When advocacy leads to new (government) policies, such outcomes are relatively sustainable. Many outcomes however have as yet not reached the status of new policy or new law. Until that moment sustainability is doubtful. An example is the Increased openness of the Ugandan Ministry of Finance to a dialogue with (knowledgeable) NGOs. Especially with respect to the unstable civic space

in Uganda, doors towards the government can be shut in a heartbeat.

### On capacity development

The support of the Global team at Oxfam Novib to the development of the FTM in several countries focused on capacity strengthening. The contributions stories, however focused on policy outcomes, further along the change pathway. In all cases, however it was clear that increased capacities are at the base of most outcomes. This is most clear in the two Ugandan outcomes (increased influence of the Ministry of Finance and the DTA outcome). In both cases interviewees stress that the substantial thematic capacities of Oxfam's partners was key to the outcome. In the Pakistani GST-case this was less explicitly communicated. But it was clear that the research in which Oxfam showed that the DST was widely evaded and that the tax on balance did not provide the revenue that was hoped for, was only possible because Oxfam and local partners know what they are talking about. The acknowledgement of Oxfam's capacities regarding fiscal matters earned the organisation a place on the Tax Reforms Commission.

### 3.3 Contribution story 3 (investigative story)

#### Outcome:

*Between April and May 2018, the Vietnamese tax administration worked with Oxfam Novib on the preparation and delivery of a workshop for staff of Oxfam Vietnam and partners on tax expenditure reports, later co-authoring a policy brief on this topic from June 2018 to January 2019.*

*Tax expenditure in Vietnam*

## Evening up Vietnamese taxes

*Recently several changes have occurred in the Vietnamese tax policies. The government has decided to review the practice of providing tax incentives to (big) companies, and a scheduled rise of the VAT tax from 10 to 12% – causing over 200,000 people to fall into poverty! – was put on ice. Based on solid knowledge of complicated tax issues, Oxfam Vietnam and its partners have in recent years developed into serious actors in thinking about taxes and the way these can benefit poor and marginalised people in Vietnam.*

On the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2018, a tax expert at the National Institute for Finance (part of the Finance Ministry), participated in a workshop on tax expenditure in Hanoi. The workshop was initiated by the Hanoi office of Oxfam and led by Henrique Alencar, policy advisor for fair tax of Oxfam Novib. The tax expert presented the Vietnamese position. She said “My contact with Oxfam Vietnam started by coincidence. Mrs Huong from Oxfam Vietnam called my institute, in early 2018. They wanted us to participate in a workshop on tax expenditure. There are few people working on this topic at the institute. My colleague was busy at the time, so I took the call.”

It was the beginning of a fruitful partnership.

The tax expert agreed to co-host the workshop, attended by Oxfam Vietnam staff and its partners, Vietnam Initiative (VNI) and the Vietnam Institute for Economic & Policy Research (VEPR). And later, between June 2018 and January 2019, the tax expert co-authored a paper on transparency regarding tax expenditure together with Oxfam’s policy advisor Henrique Alencar.<sup>78</sup>

The workshop brought the participants new expertise on the highly complicated topic of tax expenditure. Tax expenditure – or tax incentives – is commonly defined as the loss of revenue attributable to special provisions allowing some entities (usually companies) in a country to pay less taxes. Such provisions are often initiated to attract (foreign or domestic) investments but they also limit total tax revenue. Less tax revenue results in less budget for education and healthcare; pro-poor factors that also contribute to economic growth. Finding the right balance between the costs of tax exemption and its benefits is the trick. According to the report by the tax expert and Oxfam-advisor Alencar, “(...) a transparent and periodical evaluation of the costs and true effectiveness of these corporate tax incentives is still missing.”

### Gateway towards the Ministry of Finance

Looking back on the workshop, the tax expert is very positive: “The information provided by Oxfam was new to me and it was convincing. It convinced me that the Vietnamese policies on tax expenditure are not always

effective.” According to Mrs Huong of Oxfam Vietnam, the workshop and following contacts with the Vietnamese Ministry of Finance helped the government in calculating the costs and benefits of tax expenditure policies. Mrs Huong: “It was clear that the Ministry lacked the knowledge to quantify the costs and benefits of tax expenditure and how to make the policies transparent. It was very informative for them to learn how other countries have tackled these issues.”

For Oxfam Vietnam to partner with the tax expert and the government institution was not only a way to share experiences and views. It also brought an opportunity to engage with the Ministry of Finance to explore mutual interests on ‘fair taxes’. The partnership build trust and added value in complementarity, which was helpful. The tax expert became a champion talking about the issue and pushing for more transparency on tax expenditure. New Oxfam reports on tax related topics are welcomed and taken seriously at her institute, the tax expert says: “We value the expertise of Oxfam. In recent years they have developed into an important voice in the public debate about taxes. They know what they are talking about.” Asked about what critique she could mention regarding the input of Oxfam, she says: “The only reservation I have is that their reports are sometimes one-sided. As policy-makers you have to balance several interests. Oxfam does not do that.”

### Winning approach

The winning Oxfam approach, the tax expert says, is that they are active on different levels: “They invite experts to their workshops, they provide the government with solid research reports and at the same time they inform and mobilise the public. This combination works very well.”

It is clear that, in the case of the topic of tax incentives, the ‘political will’ within the Vietnamese government regarding pro-poor tax policies has shifted. Mrs Huong of Oxfam Vietnam says that by the end of 2018, the government withdrew tax incentives in the draft law to create ‘Special Economic Zones’. This was done after Oxfam and its partner, the Vietnam Alliance for Tax Justice (VATJ), analysed the ‘harmful and wasteful tax incentive policies’.

[THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY] Ms Huong concludes: “The government acknowledged the idea that tax incentives come with a price. Less tax revenues result in less money for health and education.”

Another topic where Oxfam seems to have contributed successfully is the government’s changed view on Value Added Tax (VAT). As an instrument to stop the growing budget deficit of Vietnam, the government proposed in 2018 to increase the VAT from 10 to 12%. A research report carried out by VATJ and commissioned by Oxfam Vietnam calculated that some 200,000 to 240,000 people would fall into poverty as a result of the increased VAT. This report was echoed by leading economic experts. The World Bank even supported the Vietnamese government in their proposed VAT-rise. In November

<sup>78</sup> [https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/vietnam.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/Publishing%20tax%20expenditure%20report%20-](https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/vietnam.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/Publishing%20tax%20expenditure%20report%20-)

[%20International%20experience%20and%20recommendations%20for%20Vietnam.pdf](https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/vietnam.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/Publishing%20tax%20expenditure%20report%20-International%20experience%20and%20recommendations%20for%20Vietnam.pdf)



2018 the Vietnamese government decided to withdraw the proposal.

### **Onto the prime-minister’s desk**

An interview with a senior official at Vietnam’s top legislative body about the contribution of the project praises the high quality of the Oxfam VAT-report but added that “it still had some limitation such as narrow scope, and that it was not comprehensive enough.” According to the government official, the Oxfam’s report was not sufficiently ‘objective’. Nevertheless, he estimates the contribution of Oxfam and partners to the withdrawal of the proposal at 60%.

Shortly after the workshop of May 2018, the tax expert was requested by the office of the Prime-Minister to produce a report on tax expenditure. Although Oxfam’s views were not directly quoted in the report, many ideas that originated in the workshop did find their way onto the prime minister’s desk. As a result, the tax expenditure policies are currently being reviewed, the tax expert says. She confirms that new tax policies will pay more attention to the pro-poor effects. The ministry is preparing regular and transparent reporting on the costs and benefits of tax benefits.

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

There is little doubt that Oxfam Vietnam and its partners have had a considerable influence on the new ‘political will’ regarding pro-poor fiscal policies. The tax expert says that Oxfam is taken quite seriously at the ministry. The senior official said: “Personally, I think that the studies of Oxfam and its partners in assessing Vietnam’s tax policies in recent years are quite positive, providing multi-dimensional perspectives for policymakers. However, I think that Oxfam’s research and tax policy recommendations should be more balanced and fair, considering the current conditions of a developing country like Vietnam (...) If they take a broader, more objective view, I think that Oxfam Vietnam could play an important role in the tax policy making process in Vietnam. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]”

## **Reflection**

### **Overall assessment**

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[https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/sites/taxation/files/eu\\_list\\_update\\_18\\_02\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/eu_list_update_18_02_2020_en.pdf)

The evidence of the output is fairly clear. The story ‘Evening up Vietnamese taxes’ investigates the movement towards more progressive tax policies (and other pro-poor fiscal policy changes) by involving and informing an official of the National Institute for Finance (Ministry of Finance). The interventions by the SP have been an important factor in the realization of the changes.

But the SP was not the only actor pushing towards a change of tax expenditure policies. Also international organisations, like the OECD and the EU criticised Vietnam for its tax policies. The EU had placed Vietnam on a ‘grey list’ as a tax haven because of its tax exemption policies.<sup>79</sup> The grey listing was causing Vietnam reputation damage. And if the EU would find reasons to put Vietnam on the black list, severe EU-sanctions could be the result. The role of the EU was not included in the contribution narrative as developed by Oxfam.

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ].

The outcomes of the changes in the Vietnamese Tax policies show the importance of strengthened capacities to create room for advocacy. In the case of the participation of a staff member of the Vietnamese tax department in a workshop organised by Oxfam Vietnam was a very effective move that worked very well. It convinced civil servants at the Finance Ministry that Oxfam Vietnam had knowledge available that could benefit the government policies, but it also changed the staff member into a champion for pro-poor policies at the ministry. It shows the value of the ‘champion strategy’.

explained in Assumption A2 (see the graphic of the ToC at the beginning of this chapter).

The role of the EU, including the interplay between Oxfam Novib and the EU, emphasises the value of Assumption A4. It would be worthwhile to hypothesise a pathway of change involving international actors' potential influence on national pro-poor policies. This element is missing in the F4D ToC.

## On Contribution

Table 21. Contribution assessment

Contribution assessment	Changes in the Vietnamese Tax exemption policies	Rejection of the VAT increase
Evidence		
Evidence output	Medium/high	Medium/high
Evidence contribution	Weak/medium	Weak/Medium
Perceptions interviewees		
Necessary: Was programme necessary for outcome?	Probably yes	Maybe not
Sufficient: Was programme sufficient for outcome?	Probably not	Probably not
Overall assessment	Medium/high	Medium

## On Relevance

The relevance of both outcomes is high.

The OECD calculated that the revenue loss in Vietnam as a result of ineffective tax expenditure amounts to 1% of GDP. This loss of revenue limits the possibilities of the Vietnamese government to finance service delivery and providing funds for social sectors that benefit poor people. The OECD recommended Vietnam to conduct regular and consistent tax expenditure research and reporting.<sup>80</sup>

Value Added Taxes are regressive: accentuating existing inequalities in society. The rejection of the proposed VAT-increase put Vietnam more on the trail of pro-poor taxation and fair fiscal policies.

## On Capacity development

The story confirms the change pathway of 'Capacity development of CSOs'. In a relatively short time, Oxfam Vietnam and partners have gained knowledge that allows them to analyse complicated tax issues. The workshop that initiated the productive working relations with the tax department was part of the capacity strengthening support of the 'Global Team' in The Hague. This and other interventions added to the capacities of CSOs in Vietnam. Oxfam Vietnam and partners are increasingly considered relevant actors regarding tax issues in their country. In fact, the staff member of the Ministry states that, regarding tax expenditure, Oxfam is considered an expert entity that can provide useful data and analyses to the Ministry.

[THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM'S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]

The increased capacities of Vietnamese CSOs as a result of the capacity development efforts can be deducted from their growing position as 'experts' on fiscal matters. Two Vietnamese partners of Oxfam Vietnam participated in the CATool. The CATool data indicate a growth in influencing capacities, but these data shed little light on their strengthened capacities regarding fiscal matters.

## On Sustainability

The sustainability of the results is probably high as they are captured in government policies. The position of Oxfam Vietnam as an influential actor in Vietnamese tax policies depends to a large extent on the continuing and growing capacity and expertise of its staff. A risk is that of overshooting: Oxfam is valued as an expert entity, but that is not the same as having (political or ideological) influence on Vietnamese policy choices. There is also the risk that by their increased position as a technical advisor to Vietnam's Ministry of Finance, Oxfam Vietnam and their partners compromise their role of champions of pro-poor policies. This is especially a risk in the *de-politicised* Vietnamese political system where policy challenges are mainly seen as issues that require a technical solution. In other words: the Paper Tiger should take care that the Roaring Dragon does not die.

## 3.4 Key observations F4D Global project

### On contribution

Most of the contribution narratives provided by Oxfam about the global project give a fair picture of the contribution by the SP actors. In most cases, however, important contributors to the outcomes are not taken into account. As advocacy often involves working in alliances (which indeed is one of the strong features of the F4D programme), taking other actors into account is important. By acknowledging the contributions of other actors, possibilities for broader alliances and options for co-strategizing become apparent.

### On effectiveness

As mentioned before: it is remarkable that (as far as the selected sub-theme concerns) the 'Global project' is not very global: it only captures interventions and outcomes regarding the capacity strengthening by the global team in The Hague. That is a choice made by the programme staff. It does, however, separate the outcomes on capacity strengthening from outcomes further in the change logic. That (artificial) separation hinders a good analysis and assessment of the results of capacity strengthening. It has also led to a 'pollution' of the outcome database with outcomes that in reality are no more than outputs (see also the (sub)-thematic analysis).

An example of the added value of an 'international approach' can be found in the Vietnamese story, where

<sup>80</sup> OECD Investment Policy Reviews: Viet Nam 2018, p. 219

the activities of Oxfam Novib at the EU, were in perfect sync with the advocacy of Oxfam Vietnam and its partners. The clever interplay between international lobby efforts and national advocacy is not captured in the outcome database. It would be worthwhile to hypothesise a pathway of change involving international actors' potential influence on national pro-poor policies. This element is explicit in the F4D ToC. In the Davos case it is unclear if and how a changed narrative will eventually lead to targeted outcomes like changed policies or practices.

### On sustainability

The sustainability of the global outcomes is to a large extent solidified by the increased capacities of local Oxfams, partners and other stakeholders. Such capacities will hopefully remain and contribute to future outcomes. Actual outcomes, like a changed narrative and changed political will are rather volatile. In other cases outcomes are captured into concrete policy changes that will not easily be reversed.

### On capacity development

As in most other outcomes, the main 'driver' of the outcomes have been the capacity building interventions. As a part of the FAIR/EiU Knowledge & Learning Strategy several initiatives were employed to strengthen capacities of Oxfams and partner organisations. Learning events, lectures and learning meetings took place in (among others): Johannesburg in March 2017, Entebbe in November 2017, Dakar in February 2018, Marrakech in June 2018. These learning events were to a large extent demand driven: 'local' Oxfams and partners indicated their capacity needs, and events were planned accordingly. During the learning events the *technical/thematic aspects* of F4D took centre stage: budget analysis, fiscal justice, Gender Responsive Budgeting etc.

In some of the cases that were assessed (most notably Vietnam, Uganda), Oxfam country offices and their partners have seriously increased their capacities on complicated tax and budget issues. This has gained them serious influence on shaping the national agenda on tax matters.

### On relevance

Potentially the outcomes that are reported can contribute to the long-term outcome of citizens benefitting from enhanced, more pro-poor fiscal systems. The steps through which targeted outcomes produce real changes are not always clear.

Nevertheless, the relevance of most outcomes is high, as indicated in the 'reflection paragraphs'.

The relevance of changing the Davos-narrative can perhaps be taken with a grain of salt. The fact that the 'narrative' around and in Davos has changed is interesting, but does not necessarily constitute actual change. It is not clear how the SP envisions that a changed narrative can lead up to policy and practice changes. Insofar as the external evaluators could verify, the SP monitoring system has not identified cases where the changed Davos narrative has resulted in (movement

towards) actual (sustainable) policy change on a global level.

### Reflection on the Theory of Change

This reflection concerns the generic F4D ToC, not the FAIR/EiU ToC.

The main conclusion can be that capacity strengthening as an early outcome is a valid and important pathway towards policy outcomes. Most outcomes support the validity of assumption #A1 as included in the F4D ToC: "As the influencing capacity of CSOs is strengthened, more will engage in the topic of financing for development, joining forces around a shared agenda."

The outcome of the changed narrative on inequality in Davos can plausibly be (partly) contributed to campaigning by the SP and its partners. Interventions include: capacity development of CSOs, publishing of evidence, opinions and demands, and seeking a space on international level for civil society actors.

The interventions have contributed to early outcomes as defined in the F4D ToC: increased media coverage; enhanced space to operate, strengthened CSO capacities to influence and increased political will in the public and private sector. The changed narrative in Davos, can be placed under the intermediate outcome (as specified in the F4D ToC): 'Increased public and private support for improved policies and practice'.

When assessing the Davos outcome against the logic of the F4D ToC it stands out that this ToC hardly takes advocacy on the international level into account. Also at the early/intermediate outcome level, the placing of topics on the agenda of governments and International institutions is missing.

In the Vietnam case the interplay between Oxfam, the Vietnamese government and the EU is a fine example of how a Worldwide Influencing Network can produce important local level outcomes. The same goes for the DTA case in Uganda. This also illustrates the relevance of assumption A4. The interplay between national and international actors could be better integrated in the ToC.

### Additional observations

- > A narrow tax base is one of the key problems in the tax system. This not only reduces the total revenue of taxes, it also affects the support to tax measures among the relatively small segment of Ugandan society that contributes to most tax revenues. This leads to tax evasion measures by taxpayers. And that, in turn, further corrodes the support of Ugandans to the tax system. One interviewee suggests that Oxfam should investigate ways for governments to tax the informal sector in a way that contributes to formalising the sector and that does not negatively affect the livelihoods of marginalised people.
- > One of the origins of the opposition against taxes is the weak 'social contract' between citizens and the state. Citizens know that paying taxes does little to improve services. Corruption is seen as an important reason for poor service delivery. Measures to make

fiscal policies more fair and pro-poor, cannot go around the issues of corruption and the weak social contract. This relates directly to the unclear positioning of ‘changing norms and values’ outcome area in the Theory of Change. There are no outcomes on changed norms and values in the outcome database. Possibly these can be found in surveys, but these were not shared with the external evaluators.

- > The added value of designing a separate ‘global’ section in a programme that is already very global in character is not clear to the evaluators. The outcomes that are captured as part of the ‘global project’ are not more ‘global’ than other outcomes. A globalised approach and mindset should be (and sometimes is!) the defining character of interventions of the Strategic Partnership. If anything is (or should be) cross-cutting in this partnership, it should be this.
- > The meeting of the Dutch DTA-negotiating team with Ugandan CSOs was a novelty. And although it did not produce concrete negotiating results, it was positively valued by all parties. It is a missed opportunity – certainly in the context of the title of the SP, ‘Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network – that contact between CSOs and the Dutch negotiators in the case of the Double Tax Agreements between Uganda and the Netherlands, was not promoted as an example in all (23) Double Tax negotiating processes the Netherlands are engaged in. The same could be done in other (relevant) cases where Dutch governmental delegations engage with governments in the ‘Global South’: promote and initiate meetings between Dutch delegations and the local civil society.
- > Some of the outcomes that were investigated (Vietnam, Uganda) prove the value of identifying and engaging well-placed *change champions*. This strategy deserves emphasis in the ToC, beyond the intervention level.

projects (Cambodia and Uganda) and the Global F4D project. Within the global and country projects, 8 contribution stories were selected. Research was done through desk study, (semi)structured interviews and a ‘Collective System Analysis’. To accentuate the ‘how’ of the outcomes, a narrative approach was chosen. In this paragraph the evaluation questions are answered for the F4D (sub)-theme. Below the evaluation sub-questions are answered based on the data captured in the outcome database, the data of the CATool, the contribution narrative and the research of the external evaluators into an alternative contribution hypothesis. The answers to the final sub-question include an assessment of the validity of the ToC, the change pathways included in the ToC and the underlying assumptions.

#### Changes in public and private sector policies (effectiveness, relevance)

*Evaluation question 1. What changes in public and private sector policies and practices has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 3. What is the nature of the changes in policies and practices? (e.g. New policies? Amendments to existing policies? Implementation / enforcement of policies? Were they local, national or global level policies?)*

All reported changes in public and private sector policies and practices are captured in an outcome database. This database was handed over to the external evaluators in May/June 2020. Unfortunately at that time the outcomes for 2019 had not yet been collected. In the report, however, the external evaluators tried to include developments that occurred after the outcomes were collected.

## 4. (Sub-)thematic analysis – Finance for Development

### General findings

The main evaluation question for the Finance for Development programme was formulated as follows:

*“To what extent has the Finance for Development programme contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and to new or improved pro-poor fiscal policies and practices of governments? And how did these changes take place?”*

The external evaluation built upon the efforts and data from the internal evaluation process. The data of the Harvested Outcomes, the result of the CATool (measuring progress in advocacy capacity of partners) as well as a selection of Stories of Change and survey results were handed over to the external evaluators.

The external evaluation is based on a sample of the F4D sub-theme (Pro-poor fiscal policies), two country

PART III – FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Table 22: Outcome areas by sub-themes (outcome areas merged by selecting main category)

Outcome areas:	Aid and innovative finance	Civic space CSO development	Inclusive financial sector	Pro-poor fiscal policies	Tax evasion/avoidance	Grand Total
Improved policies (government)	1	9	2	129	34	175
Improved policies (private)	0	0	4	9	5	18
Increased citizens voice	0	5	0	86	16	107
Increased political will	11	43	13	106	60	233
Shifted norms and attitudes	0	0	0	1	1	2
Strengthened CSOs	0	17	2	68	23	110
Stronger & wider alliances	3	30	1	30	21	85
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>730</b>

Table 23: Outcome areas by level (outcome areas merged by selecting main category)

Outcome areas:	Global level	Sub-national level	National level*	Regional level	Grand Total
Improved policies (government)	8	59	99	9	175
Improved policies (private sector)	2	6	10	0	18
Increased citizens voice	2	76	29	0	107
Increased political will	23	50	143	17	233
Shifted norms and attitudes	0	1	1	0	2
Strengthened CSOs	19	30	53	8	110
Stronger and wider alliances	23	6	46	10	85
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>730</b>

\* 1 national/sub-national outcome included under national

Table 24: Outcome areas by selected projects (outcome areas merged by selecting main category)

Outcome areas:	Cambodia	Global	F4D Uganda	Grand Total
Improved policies (government)	16	25	26	67
Improved policies (private sector)	0	5	0	5
Increased citizens voice	22	11	6	39
Increased political will	19	72	8	99
Shifted norms and attitudes	0	0	0	0
Strengthened CSOs	3	28	6	37
Stronger and wider alliances	7	41	2	50
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>297</b>

A few observations can be drawn from these tables:

- > The total number of outcomes (730) is considerable.
- > The highest number of outcomes (233) is on the outcome area 'Increased political will'. These can be categorised as early/intermediate outcomes.
- > The SP has contributed to 193 'improved policies' (targeted outcome).
- > Most of these changes (175) are at government level.

- > There are 18 policy changes at the private sector
- > Most outcomes were harvested at national (380) and local (228) level.

On the quality of the database (based on an assessment of a random selection – N=72 or 10% - of the outcomes as included in the database)

- > The quality of outcomes statements is assessed as 'fair'.
- > 34% of outcomes are better qualified as 'outputs'/interventions
- > 25% of the outcome descriptions are 'vague' (not providing information on the role of the SP; unclear about the relevance vis-a-vis the ToC; incomprehensible outcome description).
- > Only positive outcomes are found. Negative outcomes and outcomes where negative developments were avoided, were not reported.
- > The outcome database does not provide linkages between outcomes. That makes it rather 'static' and difficult to see how outcomes follow the hypothesised change pathways.

*Based on study of the outcomes, some observations can be made:*

- > In 3% of the outcome descriptions the involvement of SOMO was mentioned.
- > Fewer than 2% of the outcomes target increasing the tax base (a narrow tax base was identified as one of the key challenges in Uganda and is a common challenge in many countries in the 'Global South').
- > Of the 175 policy changes at government level, 75% are new policies or amendments of existing policies. 11% of the reported policy changes can be qualified as implementation (no outcomes were found that can be labelled as 'enforcement'). The other outcomes that were reported as 'policy changes at government level' could not be clearly labelled. Of the 175 policy changes fewer than 3% were clearly initiated by the SP. In most of the cases the SP reacted to government initiatives.

### **Findings, conclusions and observations**

Based on the assessment of the harvested outcomes, the contribution narratives as produced by Oxfam Novib and the in-depth research into the sampled outcomes, the following findings, conclusions and observations stand out.

The SP has contributed to many (730) outcomes. The sampled outcomes are relevant, albeit that a relative high number of outcomes are better qualified as output. This probably has to do with the fact that capacity strengthening is identified as one of the two key areas of change (next to influencing governments and companies). The outputs that are presented as outcomes in the outcome database refer in majority to capacity strengthening interventions.

Few outcomes refer to policy changes of the private sector. The private sector is not included in Uganda's and Cambodia's country ToCs. This can partly be explained by the nature of the theme (finance for development/taxes is a topic with obvious high government involvement). The sampled sub-theme (pro-poor fiscal policies) accounts for half of the private sector outcomes.

Many of the policy change outcomes (as presented in the contribution narratives) are changes of government initiatives (e.g. draft laws, proposed budgets). Only a few interventions focus on own initiatives (e.g. the development of alternative sources of tax revenue).

Based on this, the evaluation team concludes that interventions are mostly reactive rather than proactive. According to Oxfam Novib staff this is a deliberate choice prompted by budget constraints.

In several cases Oxfam and partners have achieved advocacy results by building reliable contacts with progressive individuals and offices at government level (champions strategy). An example is the tax exemption case in Vietnam.

Only a limited number of outcomes (less than 2%) target an increase of tax revenues by developing new, direct taxes. A 'narrow tax base' is a common challenge in many countries in the global South, and was identified by Oxfam in Uganda as one of the main challenges. 'Innovative revenue generation' is one of the targeted outcomes of the Uganda ToC.

The outcome database does not include the negative outcomes or the cases where interventions did not produce results. There has been, for example, a big campaign to stop the social media tax in Uganda. This campaign was not successful. It was not reported upon in the MEAL system. Not including negative outcomes in the MEAL-system may limit organisational learning.

Several advocacy outcomes relate to increasing the budget of social sectors (health, education, agriculture etc). The relevance and the effectiveness of these outcomes depend on the spending of the budgets. The effectiveness and relevance of budget increases is strengthened if the advocacy for increasing the budget is accompanied by efforts to increase pro-poor spending of the budget. In Cambodia, for example, some interviewees questioned the relevance of an increase of the education budget because the increase was almost entirely spent on higher salaries and not on improvement of the quality of the teachers and the system. Although it can be argued that higher salaries can also contribute to better education.

Concrete impact of policy changes often takes several years to materialise. Furthermore, monitoring of implementation and enforcement is quite labour-intensive.

### **Contribution / added value SP (effectiveness, coherence)**

*Evaluation question 7. What was the contribution of our SP to these changes in relation to other actors and factors?*

*Evaluation question 8. Which factors/strategies were most important to achieve or contribute to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

### **Findings, conclusions and observations**

Based on the in-depth assessment of the sampled outcomes, on average, the contribution of the SP to the reported F4D outcomes is ‘medium’. In some cases, alternative contributing actors and factors were not (sufficiently) taken into account by the contribution narrative as presented by Oxfam. In other cases the effect of the interventions by the SP was not as high as presented; or the contribution of other actors was much higher than presented. In one case the reported outcome (increased education budget in Cambodia) was mainly the result of an earlier government decision. In another case (information disclosure in Cambodia) it was not

government. This adds to the importance of forging alliances with actors that have a place at the ‘negotiating table’.

In none of the assessed cases the SP (Oxfam/SOMO and partners) was a *sufficient* actor of change. This is not surprising. Advocacy usually involves other actors, not in the least the influencing target. This confirms the importance of alliance building. It seems that alliance building in some cases can be taken to a next level by seeking ad-hoc or structural partnerships with ‘unusual’ partners. Examples where unusual partnerships have resulted in remarkable success are the support of

Table 25: Contribution assessment

	global	global	global	global	global	global	Cambodia	Camb	Camb	Uganda	Uganda
<b>Contribution assessment</b>	Increased influence on MoF Uganda	DTA Uganda/ Neth.	Reduced GST in Pakistan	Vietnam tax exemption	Vietnam Rejection VAT increase	Davos Case	information disclosure	increase in educ. budget	Core groups	increased social sector budgets	Mobile money tax
<b>Evidence</b>											
<b>Evidence output</b>	Medium/strong	Medium/strong	Strong	Medium/strong	Medium/strong	medium	Medium/strong	Medium	Medium/strong	Medium	Strong
<b>Evidence contribution</b>	Weak/medium	Weak/Medium	Strong	Weak/medium	Weak/Medium	Weak/medium	Weak/medium	Weak	Strong	Medium	Medium/strong
<b>Perceptions interviewees</b>											
<b>Was the programme necessary for outcome?</b>	Yes	no	Probably	Probably yes	Maybe not	Maybe	Probably not	No	Yes	Maybe	Yes
<b>Was the programme sufficient for outcome?</b>	No	No	Probably not	Probably not	Probably not	No	No	No	Almost	Probably not	Maybe
<b>Overall assessment</b>	No assessment possible	Low (but strong regarding the dialogue between Dutch negotiators and Ugandan CSOs)	Medium/strong	Medium/strong	Medium	Low/medium	Low/medium	Low	High	Medium	Strong

clearly indicated that the output contributed to the SP was in fact commissioned by another organisation (although the SP did contribute to later advocacy and dissemination). In this case also an outcome from 2016 was claimed where it was doubtful that the SP could have contributed.

The strengthening and growth of NGO-alliances and networks, facilitated by the SP, has greatly contributed to effectiveness (according to several interviewees). Coordinated advocacy and ‘speaking with one voice’ added to the influencing power of NGOs.

In many cases, the contribution of the SP to reported outcomes is not as high as hoped. This is in most cases due to the limited civic space. National NGOs and CSOs are hardly accepted as dialogue partners by their

chambers of commerce in Pakistan for a reduction of VAT and the cooperation with mobile money vendors in Uganda to abolish the mobile money tax. This confirms the assumption A7 (see ToC) that ‘a critical mass of citizens is needed to influence decision makers’. Forging alliances with the private sector, for example, could in some instances lead to more ‘critical mass’.

Interviewees both in Cambodia and in Uganda confirm that there is added value in coordination and engaging with the locally established international donor community (the so-called ‘development partners’). In both countries the international donor community has contributed to the effectiveness of NGO-lobby (e.g. by facilitation contact between NGOs and government, by promoting the presence of NGOs during dialogue on development issues etc). This is in line with assumption

A4 of the F4D Theory of Change ('Donor countries and International institutions gave influence'). Engaging the 'development partners' (or other international actors) is not included in the ToCs of Uganda and Cambodia.

In the F4D outcome database only four outcomes mention the involvement of the Dutch embassy. A representative of the embassy in Uganda indicated that there would have been opportunities to involve the embassy in advocacy (e.g. by facilitating contact with actors at government level and by putting issues among on the agenda of the international donor community). This relates to the assumption that 'while governments are the main determinants of fiscal policies, donor countries and institutions also have influence'. Not involving the Dutch embassy where this might have had impact, is a lost opportunity.

The DTA-case in Uganda shows the added value of promoting direct contact between national NGOs and international actors and bilateral donors. In the DTA-case it apparently was a novelty to establish direct contact with a Dutch negotiating team (from the Ministry of Finance) and Uganda CSOs. This model deserves further development: stimulate in all possible cases direct contact between official Dutch delegations and relevant national CSOs. This increases sensitivity of Dutch delegations towards the public sentiments and it may strengthen the position of national CSOs vis-à-vis their government.

#### Capacity development for influencing (effectiveness, relevance)

*Evaluation question 2. What changes in civil society's influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society's influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)*

*Evaluation question 9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacities?*

*Evaluation question 10. Can the changes in civil society's influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

(The evaluation questions regarding capacity development will be addressed with more detail in part V of this report).

#### Findings, conclusions and observations

In most outcomes the increased capacities of (partner) NGOs was identified as an important factor contributing to the change. The programme has succeeded in increasing the knowledge of CSOs on fiscal and budgetary matters. And this contributed to their influencing capacities.

Through networks and alliances, the capacity development has benefited not only country Oxfams and its partners, but also partners of partners, often at sub-national level. There are also examples where capacity development was extended to government officials; for example in the case of the Core Groups in Cambodia,

officials of communes are capacitated in Gender Responsive budgeting.

Lobby targets and other external interviewees agree that the success of F4D advocacy by Oxfam and partners is strongly related to their increased thematic capacity (e.g. the level in which they are able to understand and analyse complicated budgets and tax issues). The CATool, however, does not address thematic capacities and knowledge. The effectiveness of efforts to strengthen thematic capacities cannot really be assessed.

Among Cambodian NGOs, high staff turnover is indicated as a major factor in loss of capacities. According to interviewees, NGO staff mainly switches to governments and the private sector as these sectors provide more safety and security. The result is that effectiveness/sustainability of capacity development is not very high. High staff turnover is also reported in Uganda, but there it did not seem to have had major effects on total capacities. A common argument to put the negative effects of high staff turnover into perspective is that the increased capacities are not completely lost when staff leaves to another organisation or to the government of the private sector. It does however constitute a serious loss of effectiveness if interventions to increase the capacity of specific organisations only results in increased capacities of other organisations. When high staff-turnover limits the effect and sustainability of capacity development, it can be worthwhile looking at alternatives. Obvious alternatives are: 1) More focus on institutional capacities, rather than individual capacities, 2) More focus on the dissemination of gained capacities and 3) More focus on hiring staff with the required capacities (rather than invest in capacitating staff).

As the CATool was not applied to local Oxfams, the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen capacities of local Oxfams could not be assessed.

#### Are the outcomes sustainable?

*Evaluation question 6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?*

#### Findings, conclusions and observations

The sustainability of most outcomes is markedly improved by the capacity development efforts that are prominent in the SP-approach. Even if outcomes are later reversed, or if commitments by government officials are broken, or if new policies are not enforced, the increased capacities of CSOs makes it possible that they readdress the issues and re-engage policy makers. An increase of capacities on and awareness of fiscal and financial issues will increase the overall inclination of both citizens and CSOs to engage in efforts to make the fiscal system more attentive to people's needs (see also assumption A1).

The majority of outcomes are in the area of 'increased political will.' Political will is an important early step towards outcomes higher up in the results chain. By nature these outcomes are not very sustainable. Political



will is volatile. An increase of political will only be relevant if there is follow up. In most outcome statements it is unclear whether results involving political will are followed up by efforts to capture the political will into more sustainable changes. Unfortunately, the outcome database does not identify ‘vertical’ linkages between outcomes. That makes it hard to assess if low-level outcomes are followed by higher-level outcomes following the hypothesised change pathways.

Many outcomes relate to policy changes. A policy change can be expected to be more sustainable, especially when taking into account the efforts needed to change official government policies. The effectiveness and relevance, however, depend on the implementation and enforcement. The number of implementation outcomes is markedly lower. Possibly because the outcome database that was available for the evaluation does not include 2019 and 2020. Implementation, however, is not clearly included in the ToC.

The sustainability of government budget increases (education budget in Cambodia and the budgets for social sectors in Uganda) is limited, at least if the budget increase outcome is limited to one fiscal year. In both cases the increased budget was not sustained in later years. In both cases the argument to increase social sector budgets was partly based on international targets and benchmarks (e.g. the SDGs), such references can result in longer term governments commitments regarding social sector budgets. But such commitments, again, often prove to be volatile.

In several campaigns and advocacy efforts, contacts were built with MPs. The sustainability of these contacts can be questioned if these MPs are not re-elected.

### Towards a systemic change (relevance, impact)

*Evaluation question 5. Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?*

How does the F4D programme and its outcomes in the end contribute to the impact statement ‘More citizens enjoy their basic rights and financial inclusion and experience equal opportunity in more democratic societies’? Is the programme working on root causes of the problem and targeting the right actors and right issues?

### Findings, conclusions and observations

The CSA-workshops revealed that some of the root causes of ‘unfair’ fiscal systems are on the level of norms and values (like ‘corruption’, ‘lack of respect for laws’, ‘political capture’ and ‘a belief in trickle down economics’). The interventions that were researched do not address these issues. In the outcome database, only 2 outcomes (out of 730) relate to changes in ‘norms and attitudes’. Outcomes on norms & attitudes are also not identified in the contribution narratives, produced by Oxfam. Possibly such outcomes are reported through endline surveys, but these were not shared with the external evaluators. Although changing norms, beliefs and attitudes is notoriously difficult and ‘long-term’, it would merit more attention in the SP. Changing norms and values is recognised as an Outcome Area, but it is not included in any of the F4D ToCs.

There is a disconnect between the outcomes on policy level and real change on a practical level (are policies enforced? Are taxes paid? Do budgets reach the grassroots level and are they spent in a pro-poor fashion?). Non-compliance with tax laws (e.g. as a result of corruption, or as a result of tax evasions) is identified during the CSA-sessions as an obstacle to a fair fiscal system. Compliance, however, is hardly addressed in the activities of F4D (it is not included in the ToCs): 11% of the changes in government policies refer to implementation of existing policies. There were no outcomes registered at the ‘enforcement level’ of policy changes. The lack of outcomes at implementation level (i.e. leading to concrete changes in finance for development for citizens) can also be a result of the fact that the MEAL system developed for the SP does not facilitate reporting on concrete impact for citizens.

CSA-sessions learned that laws and regulations are often not taken seriously, because of limited enforcement capacities (i.e. in Uganda) and sometimes as a result of corruption. One can question the relevance of putting time and resources into a lobby for policy change, while knowing that the lack of implementation will prevent the policy having impact.

### What does this mean for the ToC?

*Evaluation question 11. What do the answers to the above questions mean for our Theory of Change?*

The term (and final goal of the SP) ‘a Worldwide Influencing Network’ has not been defined or operationalised. What is it? In the programme document the term Worldwide Influencing Network is not mentioned in relation to the three themes. It is not included in any ToC. The evaluation of the F4D ToC came across several positive examples of how a supposed ‘Worldwide Influencing Network’ (WIN) provided a leverage for national advocacy (i.e. tax expenditure in Vietnam, DTA in Uganda). The ways in which local, national, regional and international levels can enforce each other, however, needs further analysis and strategizing. The F4D ToC only marginally makes reference to global dynamics influencing local issues (and vice versa). In the country ToCs of Uganda and Cambodia the global level is completely absent. Apparently the global level is not identified as a relevant path or force for change in F4D (at least not at the time when the country ToCs were developed). The term ‘Worldwide Influencing Network’ does not seem to be ‘sticking’. In practice, the Oxfam jargon refers to ‘local to global and vice versa’.

Civic Space is not integrated in the ToCs of the countries researched (Uganda and Cambodia). When the ToCs were developed, civic space was not integrated in the general ToC that countries had to base their ToC on. Civic Space was identified as a cross-cutting issue, alongside ‘Gender Justice’ and ‘Conflict Sensitivity’, but it is not clear how this was operationalised. The cross-cutting themes are also missing in the assumptions under the F4D ToC. Research into these cross-cutting issues, however, was not included in the external evaluation.

In the country ToCs and in the whole programme set-up there is little attention for the implementation of and compliance with new policies. The relevance of advocacy

for new policies is low if these new policies are not enforced or even taken seriously (as many official laws and regulations are, like for example in Uganda).

In ToCs, strengthened capacities are often presented as a 'targeted outcome', at the same level as 'changed government policies'. This is not very logical. Capacitating CSOs are a means to influence policies, ergo they are lower in the change pathway. This does not take away from the fact that capacity development is one of the two 'key areas of change' (next to influencing governments and companies). Creating a strong civil society is indeed very important, and the SP rightly aimed for outcomes in this change area. But in a ToC that includes policy change, strengthened capacities are an early outcome.

The F4D country ToCs are notably different from the 'generic' F4D ToC. The F4D ToC in Uganda even works towards different long-term outcomes and impact. There is friction between, on the one hand, the desire of country teams to design a Theory of Change that takes the local context into account and addresses issues and strategies that are locally considered as relevant, and the value of having an overarching change theory that provides a coherent instrument to plan, monitor and evaluate efforts in different contexts working towards the same impact. In the case of the F4D theme, there are too many ToCs to consider, making planning, monitoring and evaluation incoherent.

In the overarching F4D Theory of Change the two key areas of change of the Partnership ('Empowerment of people' and 'Influencing Governments and Companies') are clearly incorporated. Four of the five Targeted Outcomes refer to the 'Influencing Governments' change area. Only the Targeted Outcome at the far left of the ToC refers to the 'Empowerment of People' change area. As stated earlier, this does not seem logical. Civil society holding governments and the private sector to account is a means towards these actors changing their policies. The ToC, however does not reflect this hierarchical relationship.

### Assumptions

The generic F4D ToC is built on eight assumptions:

*A1. As the influencing capacity CSOs is strengthened, more will engage on the topic of financing for development joining forces around a shared agenda*

This assumption is not very clearly formulated: the second part does not necessarily follow from the first part. The intention of this assumption is not clear. That being said, it can be concluded that increased capacities have notably contributed to fair fiscal policies. More local CSOs have engaged in 'finance for development', but it could not be verified that this was caused by increased influencing capacities.

*A2. As champions in the media and public advocate for change, the terms of the debate shifts creating an enabling environment for policy change*

The 'champions strategy' was found to be effective in a number of cases. In general, however, this approach was not clearly strategised by country ToCs.

*A3. Political support for change will motivate the private sector to change and vice versa.*

This assumption was not tested as no outcomes involving the private sector were investigated

*A4. While governments are the main determinants of fiscal policies, donor countries and institutions also have influence*

This assumption holds true. It stresses the added value of linking national and international strategies

*A5. Evidence based debates on aid effectiveness can increase public support by responding to concerns and highlighting the international spill-over effects of poverty*

This assumption was not relevant in the cases researched in this evaluation.

*A6. The financial sectors voice in financial sector reforms and regulation has not been sufficiently balanced by CSO voices*

This assumption was not relevant in the cases researched in this evaluation

*A7. A critical mass of citizens and CSOs organised in networks is needed to influence decision makers*

This assumption holds true. CSOs primarily owe their influencing 'power' to a) their technical capacities and b) the credibility/size of their constituency.

*A8. Fair and effective taxation and pro-poor budget allocation will only be achieved when civil society is involved*

This is, in essence, the same assumption as A7.

### Change Pathways

In the *global project* only the pathway 'capacity development of CSOs' was focused upon in the contribution stories. In most of the cases researched, the increased capacities of CSOs have indeed strengthened their advocacy power as a result of the capacity development interventions of the global team. It is unclear, however, to what extent this pathway adds to the 'global character' of the global project. What makes the global project 'global'? Other pathways (valid for the targeted outcomes beyond the sample) could not be assessed.

For *Cambodia*, the pathways of change are (following the Cambodian ToC):

- > Pathway 1: Capacity development of CSOs
- > Pathway 2: Stronger and wider alliances.
- > Pathway 3: Empowering People.
- > Pathway 4: Improved policies and practices of the government.

It is remarkable that three out of four pathways relate to strengthening the civic voice. Logic would dictate that these three pathways lead to the fourth pathway. As it is, there is a sizeable gap between the three first pathways and the long-term outcome (*More women, youth and other citizens benefit from higher quantity and quality of finance for development, an enhanced fiscal system and a sustainable and inclusive financial and corporate sector, tackling extreme poverty*).

It seems a missed opportunity to not target the private (financial) sector in order to make their practices more sustainable and inclusive. As it is, the only pathway towards ‘a sustainable and inclusive financial and corporate sector’ leads through the government.

For *Uganda*, the pathways of change are (following the Ugandan ToC):

- > Pathway 1. Strengthened Systems for Fair Fiscal Revenue Mobilization
- > Pathway 2. Increased Public Spending on Social Sectors
- > Pathway 3. Enhanced Accountability and Transparency
- > Pathway 4. Innovative Revenue Generation

Here all pathways lead to government policy changes. No mention of the private sector. In fact, the change pathways target only one ‘Outcome Area’ (i.e. the Outcome Area ‘Improved policies of governments and global actors’).

As indicated before, the Ugandan ToC has identified a different long-term outcome and a different impact as compared to the ‘generic’ F4D ToC. As a result, a sustainable and inclusive corporate sector is not a projected long-term outcome in the Ugandan case.

### Key findings

- > The SP has contributed to many changes in government policies. The evaluated outcomes are very relevant.
- > The strengthening and growth of NGO-alliances and networks has contributed to effectiveness. Coordinated advocacy and ‘speaking with one voice’ added to the influencing power of NGOs.
- > The evaluation of the F4D ToC came across positive examples of how a ‘Worldwide Influencing Network’ (WIN) provided a leverage for national advocacy (i.e. tax expenditure in Vietnam, DTA in Uganda). The ways in which local, national, regional and international levels can enforce each other needs further analysis and strategizing.
- > Some interviewees in Uganda and Cambodia questioned the legitimacy of CSOs (who do they represent? For whom do they speak?). This doubt on legitimacy is possibly a result of an anti-NGO narrative by government spokespersons, as is the case in Uganda and also in Cambodia. Doubt on legitimacy limits the effectiveness of advocacy. This relates to the assumption that ‘a critical mass of citizens is needed to influence decision makers’. This ‘critical mass of citizens’ will only be effective if it is acknowledged by decision makers.
- > Some interviewees (in Uganda) indicate that financial transparency of NGOs is not always optimal. Review of partner-websites confirms this.

This makes NGOs vulnerable to the anti-NGO narrative of the government. It goes without saying that the demands from NGOs for more government transparency (and transparency of the private sector) are more convincing if NGOs themselves practice and show maximum transparency.

- > The outcome database does not include the negative outcomes or the cases where interventions did not produce results. There has been, for example, a big campaign to stop the social media tax in Uganda. This campaign was not successful. It was not reported. This may limit organisational learning.
- > There is a disconnect between the outcomes on policy level and *real change* on a practical level (are policies enforced?).



Photo by Prince Akachi on Unsplash

# Part IV: Conflict and Fragility

## Part IV – Conflict and Fragility (C&F)

### Introduction

Working within alliances and with partner organisations within the Conflict and Fragility part of the SP, activities in the field of capacity development and influencing have been implemented in eight different country projects, two regional programmes and one global programme. Oxfam Novib and SOMO's work in the Conflict and Fragility programme is centred around a global Theory of Change (ToC) with three focused sub-themes of Women, peace and security (WPS), Security Sector Reform, and the Private sector and conflict sensitivity.

### Theory of Change (ToC)

The Conflict and Fragility ToC (see figure below) was designed as the overarching global framework for the programme, which partners and project teams contextualised and refined. The ToC aims to contribute to the overall impact of: *The basic rights of people affected by conflict and fragility are respected by national and international duty bearers and human security is improved.*

Within the so-called sphere of influence, the programme aimed to work towards the following long-term outcome: *Marginalised groups have a say in policies that affect their lives; governments and international institutions support inclusion of women and promote protection of marginalised groups in security and peace building; and the private sector contributes to peace and development.*

To achieve this long-term outcome, four interconnected pathways were created around four sets of actors. These pathways are:

- > Civil society empowerment and engagement
- > International community engagement
- > Engagement with government authorities and informal leaders
- > Private sector engagement

The three pathways related to international community, government and private sector at the intermediate level should together lead to four targeted outcomes (equal to the long-term outcome), written under the headings of 'INCLUDE, PROTECT, CLAIM, COMMIT'. The first three are about inclusion, protection, and participation of women and vulnerable groups, the fourth is about behaviour of the private sector. A fifth targeted outcome is linked to the civil society pathway and is about CSOs increasingly advocating for meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups.

#### *Pathway 1: Civil society empowerment and engagement*

The early and intermediate outcomes are: increased CSO capacity to represent, to engage, and to link local and global agendas, including building international, regional and national alliances. Another aspect that falls under this pathway is about civic space: governments increasingly provide space for civil society to engage in influencing activities and give more priority to the protection of marginalised groups.

#### *Pathway 2: International community engagement*

The early and intermediate outcomes are: awareness and political will of international community actors about the value of inclusion and protection of women and marginalised groups, and awareness of their own roles and responsibilities in FCAS. Flowing from this awareness and political will to engage with stakeholders in FCAS, they are increasingly urging governments to set sustainable gender- and conflict-sensitive investment agendas for the private sector and they hold multinational corporations and large national companies accountable.

#### *Pathway 3: Engagement with government authorities and informal leaders*

The early and intermediate outcomes are: formal and informal government decision makers understand that inclusive policies are needed to create stability and peace, relevant government authorities collaborate in the development of effective policies for inclusion and protection, local and national governments engage in dialogue and cooperate with CSOs and communities, and governments have increased capacity to implement mechanisms to deal with conflict and promote peace.

#### *Pathway 4: Private sector engagement*

The private sector sub-theme also makes up the fourth pathway of the Conflict and Fragility ToC with the primary targeted outcome: 'Private sector actors do no harm, behave conflict-sensitively and are accountable to citizens and communities'.

Early and intermediate outcomes: To get to the targeted outcome, private sector actors should first become aware of their impact on the conflict and respect relevant (inter) national norms and standards. Instigated by increased awareness, private sector actors should then begin to engage with the international community and other national actors (governments, civil society or local communities) to explore how they can avoid exacerbating current conflicts or creating new ones. Once this has happened, private sector actors are then expected to start to include conflict-sensitivity considerations in their strategies and policies.

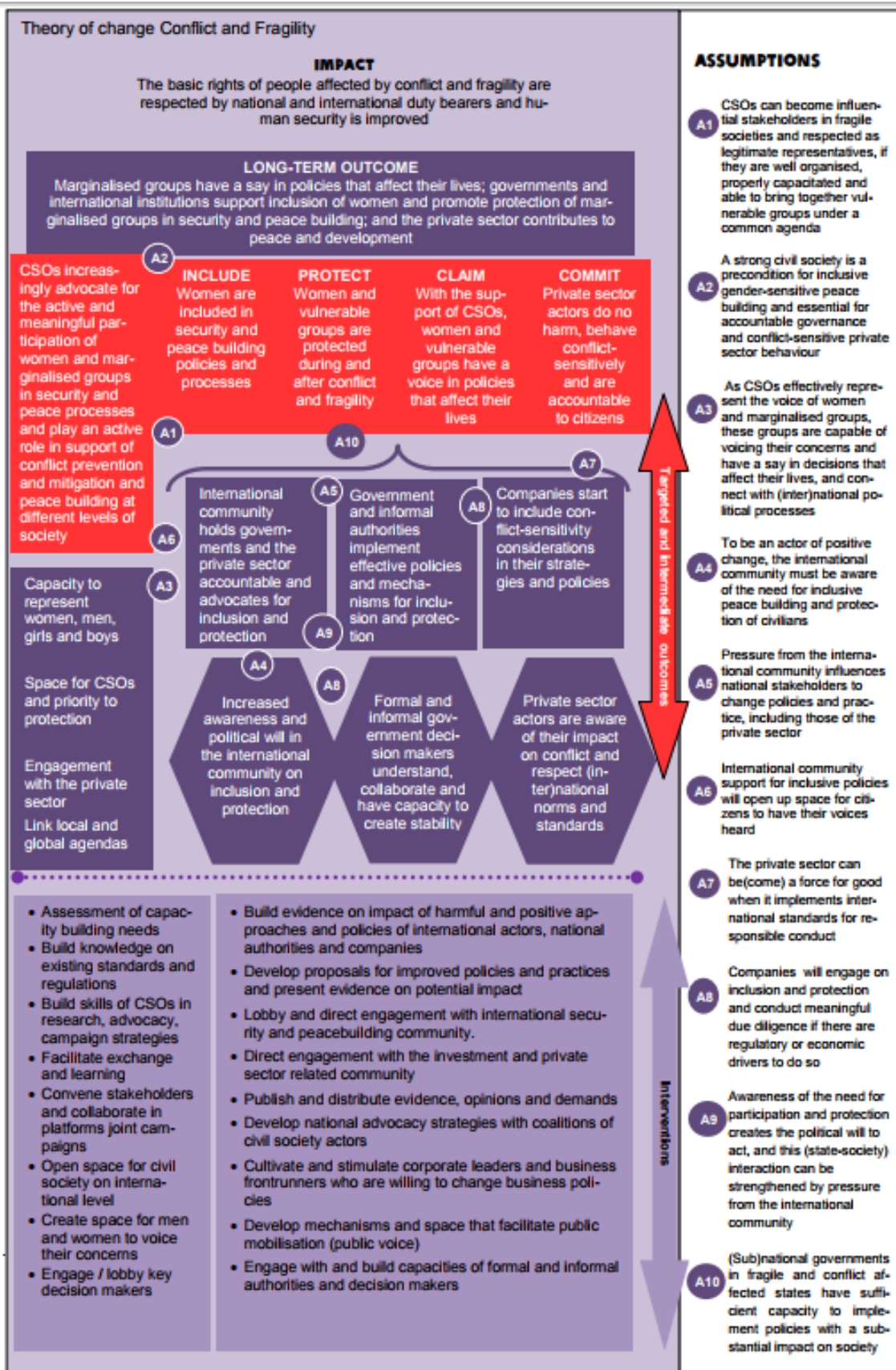


Figure 6. Theory of Change Conflict & Fragility

## PART IV – CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

The private sector sub-theme was included as part of the ToC due to the increasing acknowledgement by the international community that the private sector is an agent in peacebuilding and state building in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).<sup>81</sup>

All four pathways within the Conflict and Fragility ToC interconnect from an influencing point of view, and therefore, whilst the sub-theme is focused on pathway four (private sector actors), the international community, civil society and government actors also feature strongly within this pathway. Their engagement is vital to achieve the primary targeted outcome.

The role of CSOs is to ensure constructive engagement with the private sector and link local and global issues with respect to private sector in conflict. The role of the government actors should be to regulate and monitor national and multinational corporations operating in their country, in terms of their duty to protect and the companies' responsibility to respect human rights in FCAS. The assumption was that both the international community and civil society actors should be strengthened in their capacities to hold private sector actors to account for the sustainability of this outcome.

### The evaluation of C&F

For the evaluation of the Conflict & Fragility programme, the external evaluation team selected, based on a range of criteria, the following sub-theme and projects:

- > Sub-theme: 'Private sector and conflict-sensitivity'
- > And within the sub-theme three projects: Myanmar, Nigeria and Global

Based on this selection, the internal evaluation team wrote contribution stories for the three projects, in which they explain (per country/project) the problem statement, the Theory of Change and expected results, the context and the contribution story with evidence of outcomes and outputs, and lessons learned.

The external evaluation built upon the efforts and resulting data from the internal evaluation process. The external evaluation is based on a sample of the C&F sub-theme (Private sector in conflict), two country projects (Myanmar and Nigeria) and the Global C&F project. Within the global and country projects, 8 sets of outcomes were selected, based on a number of criteria.<sup>82</sup> The criteria included: the level of the outcomes (higher-level outcomes were preferred), complexity, balanced representation of the various pathways, and other criteria such as feasibility and risks. In so-called Creative Sessions a first assessment was made of the selected outcomes, and alternative actors and factors explored that could have contributed to the outcomes as well.

The external evaluation team further reviewed the selected outcomes, explored the contribution of other actors and factors and collected additional information to substantiate the Contribution Stories produced by the internal evaluation team.

The external evaluation team furthermore answered the 11 evaluation questions by critically assessing the findings of the internal evaluation team, combined with collecting additional external information and providing an external view.

For the C&F part of the external evaluation, desk review was combined with online interviews. For Myanmar, a local consultant was recruited to conduct interviews for two cases at the national/local level (Shan State and Sagaing State). The other case, at Myanmar and global level, was done by the international evaluator. Due to COVID-19, all interviews were done online.

Table 25. Number of interviews per group and project

Interviews	Global	Myanmar	Nigeria	Total
Oxfam/SOMO/ Partner staff	10	12	7	29
Externals	6	8	6	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>49</b>

## 1. Myanmar Contribution stories

### Introduction

In Myanmar, the extractive industries are one of the most lucrative sectors, but the revenues do not, by and large, benefit local communities - nor Myanmar as a whole. The sector is plagued by elite capture, opaque deals between foreign investors, local ethnic armed groups, and government actors leading to lack of beneficial governance of natural resources. The new government's dependency on foreign investors and particularly the Chinese, makes them highly vulnerable. Positive reforms to improve governance in the sector, such as decentralisation of mining laws, are offset by a narrowing of civic space and the internationally condemned atrocities committed against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State in 2017 (with decades of persecution prior to the mass exodus in 2016 and 2017). There is a big gap between government and civil society. Relations between the State/Regional (sub-national level) and Union (national) governments are complex and characterised by ethnic affiliation, personal interests and power dynamics.

The first phase of the C&F programme focused on four cases (specific companies) in four different states/regions. In Phase 2 of the programme (from 2019) there was a refocus on the extractive industry. Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM) and partner MATA (Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability, a national network of over 450 civil society actors) believe that sector-wide engagement in the extractives industry can have a larger impact than selecting companies case by case. The

<sup>81</sup> Oxfam Novib, internal contribution story Global C&F

<sup>82</sup> For Global, one of the three cases (DRC) could not be explored in-depth, as there were no externals that could be interviewed and repeated efforts to get in contact with them failed. The interviews

with SOMO and SOMO's partner organisation has, however, been taken into consideration. For Nigeria, the two (early) outcomes were in line with each other and are thus developed as one contribution story.

increased risks for civil society actors was another factor to change course, as well as the need for broader MATA members' engagement (not just members in the selected states/regions).<sup>83</sup>

### Selecting outcomes for research

For the C&F Myanmar project the internal evaluation team delivered 6 contribution stories (main outcomes). Outcomes cover both Phase 1 (until approximately 2019) and Phase 2 (from 2019 onwards). The outcomes are divided over three pathways/targeted outcomes (central in both phases/ToCs):

*Strengthening civil society / Engagement with private sector actors*

- > The Border Guard Force and the Square Power Group<sup>84</sup> in Kayah state agree to cooperate with civil society to determine the way forward for a cement factory
- > Elevating civil society for global influencing in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI)

*Government actors engagement*

- > Union Minister pausing the coal-fired power plant in Karen State
- > Ministry of Health and Sports urging assessment of the Tigyit coal-fired power plant in Shan State
- > The Chief Minister of Magway promises to return land confiscated by a company to original owners
- > A conflict-sensitive mining law in Sagaing State

The external evaluation team selected three contribution stories and reviewed the claimed contributions of the programme, and researched effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, capacity development and system change from an external point of view.

The following three stories were selected based on criteria mentioned earlier:

- > Supporting the draft of a regional mining law in Sagaing State (Phase 2)
- > Addressing civic space in the context of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (Phase 2)
- > Advocacy around the Tigyit Coal Fired Power Plant in Shan State (Phase 1)

### 1.1 Contribution Story 1

## Moving beyond copy-paste in mining laws

*Outcome: On 10th October 2019, the Sagaing Parliament agreed to enact the draft mining law prepared by the Agriculture, Livestock, Resource and Environmental conservation Legislative Committee.*

This is a high-level outcome harvested in Phase 2. Oxfam's internal contribution story sees in this outcome a demonstration of the strategic growth between MATA and Oxfam in terms of engagement with government actors.

Myanmar's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector is a major contributor to the country's economy. Experts estimate that the sector is worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually and supports the livelihoods of millions of people. However, most miners operate without legal permits from the government and the sector is associated with serious environmental, social and governance challenges.<sup>85</sup>

In September 2018, the Sagaing Regional Parliament (regional/sub-national level) was to pass a mining law based on the national (Union level) government. Following amendments to Myanmar's constitution, the 2015 Myanmar Mines Law and 2018 Mines Rules set in motion a dramatic shift in how the government manages the sector - as part of an effort to decentralise and devolve power to sub-national authorities. State and regional-level government authorities were now able to create their own mining laws and policies for small-scale and artisanal mining, to issue permits and collect revenue.<sup>86</sup> The Sagaing Parliament agreed to MATA taking on an advisory role on formulating the law, ensuring conflict sensitivity was embedded. MATA's logic in helping support this initiative is that, by enacting more fair and transparent mining laws and policies, the military's control of the natural resource sector would decrease, as would their funding stream, and wealth could be shared more equitably across Myanmar.<sup>87</sup>

The internal contribution story states that three key activities have led up to the outcome: 1) research that MATA Sagaing members carried out on artisanal and small-scale mining in spring 2019 with technical (research) support from Oxfam; 2) Oxfam connected MATA with an international lawyer with expertise on mining laws in Myanmar, and provided funding; and 3) MATA facilitated public consultation meetings held from March to July 2019.

MATA engaged MPs and the Regional-level government in the research and recommendations from the beginning. MPs accompanied MATA members in the data collection process. It is mentioned that this likely

<sup>83</sup> Oxfam Internal document: Context analysis CF-RI Myanmar 19 November, 2018

<sup>84</sup> The *Border Guard Force* (BGF) is a militia which is aligned with the national military. These are traditionally extremely unaccountable. *Square Power Group* is a Myanmar company which was allegedly planning a local investment with the support of the BGF.

<sup>85</sup>

<https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/documents/unpacking-decentralization-improving-myanmar-artisanal-small-scale-mining-permits.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>87</sup> Oxfam Internal document: Context analysis CF-RI Myanmar 19 November, 2018 and Oxfam Contribution Story Myanmar.



increased their buy-in of MATA's final recommendations, and led them to speak out within parliamentary meetings. Results followed soon. In May 2019, the House Speaker of the Sagaing Parliament agreed to proceed with the recommendations from MATA's report and comments on the draft-law and presented them to the Legislative Committee. And in July of that year, various MPs from different constituencies raised questions about illegal mining companies. In October, the Sagaing Parliament then agreed to enact the draft Mining Law.

Based on the internal evaluations, desk reviews and interviews with external and internal actors, the external evaluator has written the following story.

### **The story revisited**

In 2018, MATA discovered that the draft Sagaing regional mining law they had been asked to review by the secretary of the Agriculture, Livestock and Environmental Conservation Committee (ALEC), was just a copy-paste from the Union Mining Law.

MATA provided feedback to the ALEC secretary - that in their view the law was not developed in a way that reflected the situation on the ground in Sagaing. Despite this, the secretary of the ALEC went ahead and submitted the draft bill to Parliament. In the meantime, MATA had a meeting with the Parliamentary chairperson to stipulate that the voice of the public needed to be reflected in the draft law. In the same meeting, MATA also emphasised the need to carry out research on artisanal and small-scale mining in the region. The chairperson then promised that from their side they would prepare to conduct public consultations, and they requested MATA to assist with the research.

MATA also separately met with the Bill Committee. And so, it happened that with the endorsement from the Parliamentary Chairman and the Bill committee, a parliamentarian (MP) from the Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources Parliamentary Committee and two MPs from the Bill Committee, together with MATA team members, set out to organise the research and the public consultations.

MATA provided both technical and human resources support during the research process, which took place between March and April 2019. For example, MATA prepared the interview questionnaires and the list of interviewees, and conducted interviews with various stakeholders with the support of MATA members in Sagaing.

U Ngwe Linn from MATA explains that in organising the public consultations, MATA coordinated with a member of the Sub-National Unit (the SNU consists of MATA member CSOs, companies and government members who convene in dialogue regarding revenues and environmental and social issues that arise from the local extractive industries) on who and how many of the company owners should be invited to the consultations. MATA also coordinated with the Sagaing Parliament to invite the respective government departments from each of the three districts where public consultations were conducted. To represent the public, MATA invited CSOs and CBOs and the local community members to

participate in the public consultations on the legislation of regional artisanal and small-scale mining.

The interaction with local community members made an impression on U Myint Htwe, a member of the Sagaing Parliamentary Bill Committee. "There are words that are still ringing in my ears from the public consultations. They (some of the present miners) said: 'We do not want to steal (referring to illegal mining). We do not want to act like thieves. We want to pay decent tax. We want to mine with official recognition. Please make the law fair for us'."

"When we reconsider the terminology in the law, we found that the suggestions given by the public are sometimes more beautiful and relevant," said U Myint Htwe. He also noted that they (MPs) need to listen to the voice of the public since they sometimes learn lessons from them. "Though each stakeholder has their own point of view, we learned that considering various views is not wrong. One thing that is for sure is that there will be less mistakes if we listen to the public and other respective groups whenever we make laws".

The stakeholders interviewed confirm that the public consultations were fruitful discussions. A staff member from MATA was satisfied that they were able to organise public consultations, which involved the Parliament (MPs), local government departments, companies, CSOs and civilians - during which MPs responded to questions from the public. This kind of public consultation was a first.

### **Heated discussions**

The MP mentioned that when they shared the results of the findings from public consultations and field observations within the Parliament, it went smoothly. However, when they discussed the findings with government departments, they had long and heated discussions. "We had to fight with No.1 Mining Enterprise and No.2 Mining Enterprise of the Department of Mines as well as the Office of the Chief Attorney, as we were told to write the Regional Mining Rules in accordance with the Union Mining Law." MATA also explains that the Regional Parliament cannot legislate provisions beyond the Union Law provisions. This posed a big challenge to the MPs, who wanted to introduce provisions that actually reflect the conditions on the ground - as observed by them during the research and public consultations.

In response to the question on the extent to which the final Regional Mining Rules (Law) is satisfactory, the MP commented that some things are satisfactory and some things need to be reviewed. "What I find the most satisfactory was that we managed to include the voices of the public as much as we can." He states that the new draft law contains some positive changes. One is that civilians who herd their cattle or whose cattle roam through the restricted mining area will not face legal punishment. A second change is that the law clearly defines how the revenues collected from companies for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund should be distributed. The MP stated that the CSR fund was divided into 60% for the township (local) and 40% for the Region. A third change was that miners could apply for the permit at district level, reducing their travel time. However, the MP also shared his doubt: "I have a

concern whether allowing the District permit scrutiny board to process the application before it goes to the Regional level will cause more delay and misappropriation.”

At least the political will that is shown by the chairperson and the MP might offer some comfort for MATA, who evaluated that “only 30% of the law reflects the conditions on the ground”, meaning that the law is not as ‘conflict-sensitive’ as they had hoped.

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

Table 26. Contribution Assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Strong
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without C&amp;F partners no outcome</i> )	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? ( <i>Outcome is result of programme only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome</i> )	No
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

The external contribution story confirms the claims from the internal contribution story. MATA played a central role in the law revision process. Apparently seen as experts, MATA was requested to review the initial draft law. Having good relations with the Sagaing MPs, MATA’s Sagaing Chapter had entry points to collaborate with them. It is likely that without MATA’s interventions, the mining law revision process would not have taken place, or at least not based on evidence from the ground.

With support from OiM, MATA provided the technical support to conduct the research. The MP indicated that there are other groups that provide training related to mining, but that it was their first time being involved in this kind of participatory research. It was also at the initiative and coordination of MATA that public consultations were held with relevant stakeholders (companies, related government departments, civil society organisations (CSOs), the public, and miners.

### On relevance

Oxfam and MATA’s support for a decentralised mining law was highly relevant. As the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) states, if well managed, decentralisation could make government policy more sensitive to the needs and concerns of miners and the communities impacted by mining activity. At the same time, they see clear risks attached to decentralisation. ‘It

could trigger an uptick in permits without environmental and social safeguards and could create conflicts with large-scale mining’.<sup>88</sup> It is thus good that for the public consultations, MATA not only invited artisanal and small-scale miners, but also mid-scale and large-scale miners. It is important for those involved to closely monitor the implementation of the law.

### On effectiveness

In terms of effectiveness, it can be said that the ‘champion’-approach, closely working with the MPs in a participatory and multi-stakeholder process, was successful in that it created increased political will among the MPs, who then advocated for the community issues to be taken into consideration in parliament. Observing issues and hearing testimonies from community members first-hand was key in this.

However, both the interviewed MP and programme officer from MATA are not fully satisfied with the conflict-sensitivity of the final law. MATA noted that the law reflects the local context only to a limited extent, due to the provisions set out in the Union Law that limit the regional power. The best outcome is that there is an increased awareness among the people present at the consultations about the discrepancies between the Union Law and the regional context, including those with power to act. Considering the relatively new process of decentralisation and the sensitivities between regional and union level governments, it is a good result that MATA and the MPs managed to include at least some positive changes in the law that could potentially contribute to some better conditions for communities and small-scale miners on the ground.

### On sustainability

The fact that the outcome is at the level of legislation – beyond policy and anchored into law – contributes to the benefits of this intervention to last in the longer term. In addition, sustainability of the changes is enhanced by the increased engagement of the Parliamentary Chairman and involved MPs to closely monitor implementation and needed amendments of the law. MATA also expressed that this is not a one-time relationship. The Parliamentary Chairperson showed the willingness to continue the collaboration with MATA during the discussion on research findings. He wanted MATA to continue with technical support in taxation and revenue-sharing related to mining – other issues that arose during the research.

### On capacity development

This project built MATA’s ability to strengthen their relationship and collaboration with MPs. MATA said that for this particular intervention they received some technical support from Oxfam in Myanmar on developing the questionnaire. Oxfam also provided external expertise in the form of a lawyer. For this

<sup>88</sup>

<https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/documents/unp>

[acking-decentralization-improving-myanmar-artisanal-small-scale-mining-permits-summary.pdf](https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/documents/unp)

project, MATA could also capitalise on their enhanced research skills, acquired during the course of the first phase of the C&F project with Oxfam. It is not clear whether MATA would have been able to achieve results without prior capacity development, but it likely strengthened their confidence to engage with the parliamentarians directly. However, building trust in these kinds of relationships does not happen overnight, and MATA Sagaing's good relations were from before the C&F programme started.

The MP said that they learned a lot during the process, so capacity development has included this type of actors. They, in turn, felt they had the evidence-base to discuss the law with other state authorities. MPs learned that they need to amend the laws, and not just copy-paste from the Union Law, that they need to listen to the voice of the public as well as the voice of small-scale miners again (“probably CSOs can do a study and share with us”), that they have to monitor the District level scrutiny board, and that the Parliament can organise public hearings again to listen to the public's feedback.

## 1.2 Contribution Story 2

### Giving a face to civic space

*Outcome: On 4th October 2019, the validation committee for EITI agreed to recommend an overall assessment of “meaningful progress” in implementing the 2016 EITI standard for civil society engagement.*

This outcome is related to influencing at both national and international level in the framework of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an international multi-stakeholder platform, which has established a global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources. This requires the disclosure of information along the extractive industry value chain from the point of extraction, to how revenues make their way through the government, and how they benefit the public. In each of the 55 implementing countries, the EITI is supported by a coalition of government, companies, and civil society: a multi-stakeholder group (MSG). Myanmar has been a member of EITI since 2014.<sup>89</sup>

Among other criteria, the level of participation of civil society in the EITI process in their country is assessed during periodic country validations. In 2018, when Myanmar was up for review, MEITI (the national, Myanmar group) were planning to assess Myanmar's civil society engagement with the extractive industry with the highest result: ‘satisfactory progress’.<sup>90</sup> To classify a country at a level of ‘satisfactory’ suggests civil society across the country can freely speak, assemble, and engage in issues related to natural resource

governance. In reality, however, it is widely accepted that civic space has been shrinking in Myanmar.<sup>91</sup>

Subsequently, MATA and Oxfam in Myanmar engaged in advocacy to try to change the proposed scoring. MATA attended the EITI annual conference in Paris in June 2019. At the conference, where a Board Meeting took place, they lobbied the EITI board members and conducted a silent protest with other actors present. In addition, MATA wrote a letter with the support of OiM to the international secretariat, with the board later stating they cited the letter in their decision. The letter contains evidence of CSO self-censorship and impeding freedom of expression. In response, the EITI secretariat visited Myanmar in August 2019 and met with MATA members who explained the evidence.

The letters MATA wrote to the board are explicitly referenced in the final report of the validation for Myanmar. Oxfam's contribution story states that it can therefore be considered a key catalyst for the final decision, where EITI did downgrade the classification of civil societies engagement in Myanmar to ‘Meaningful progress’.<sup>92</sup>

#### The story revisited

*“(…) Given the serious ongoing repression of civil society in Myanmar, there is a high risk that a satisfactory score could reinforce the government's undemocratic restrictions on civil society and even lead to further back-sliding of reforms. For the above listed reasons, and acknowledging the progress made under EITI at the MSG-level, the validation committee should list civic space engagement as ‘meaningful progress’ rather than ‘satisfactory’.”*

(Letter to Validation Committee regarding EITI Civic Space Status, 7 August 2019.<sup>93</sup>)

MATA explains: “In the initial EITI report, we didn't see a concern about civic space. And we didn't agree. So, we sent a letter to the Board and Secretariat about the recommendations. The EITI secretariat asked to give more evidence. In that time, some of our members faced trials. We made a report and sent it to the Board. Then, some of us went to the Global Conference in Paris. (...) All civil society Myanmar MSG (multi-stakeholder group; EITI at the country level) members decided to do a demonstration (silent protest). Some of the civil society members from other countries (including DRC, Philippines and some Latin American countries) also joined. Solid evidence cannot be denied.”

During a work visit to Myanmar, July Hunter from The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL; a member of EITI) had been in contact with the staff member from OiM, who had informed her of the initial EITI rating. So, she was already aware of the situation, when later she was approached by the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), which works closely with Oxfam. “They mentioned that MATA had done a submission (letter), but they thought it would be helpful

<sup>89</sup> <https://eiti.org>

<sup>90</sup> EITI's degrees of progress, from high to low, are: ‘Satisfactory progress’, ‘Meaningful progress’, ‘Inadequate progress’, ‘No progress’.

<sup>91</sup> See for example: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/myanmar/>.

<sup>92</sup> Oxfam Contribution Story Myanmar.

<sup>93</sup> [https://eiti.org/files/documents/mata letter to the eiti 7 august 2019.pdf](https://eiti.org/files/documents/mata%20letter%20to%20the%20eiti%207%20august%202019.pdf)

to have another submission from ICNL to emphasise these points and to provide a bit of outside perspective from a legal, international NGO voice.” ICNL carried out their own research and wrote their own submission – drawing heavily on MATA – focusing on international legal standards on public participation and engagement on environmental issues.

MATA is also a member of ‘*Publish What You Pay*’ (PWYP), a global movement working to ensure that revenues from oil, gas and mining help improve people’s lives. Through this platform they had contacts with a civil society representative in the EITI Board, Cielo Magno. She turned out to be a good ‘champion’ to advocate on behalf of Myanmar civil society in the Board meeting. Cielo Magno explains that she had active involvement with MATA, but certainly also with the staff member from OiM.

### Being serious about civic space

Cielo Magno on why EITI had given Myanmar such a positive rating on civil society engagement the first time around: “What I discovered was that documentation had been forwarded (by MATA), but that it wasn’t interpreted in English. So, the validator didn’t pay attention to it. More importantly, there is a tendency (in EITI) to narrowly interpret the protocol (1.3) on civil society engagement in EITI. I personally insisted that broader civic space issues *were* part of extractive governance.”

She explains that the silent protest was helpful to realise how serious civil society is about registering issues on civic space. “It sent a strong signal. If it was just me, there would be tremendous pressure (within the EITI Board). While the Government of Myanmar was asking for their result of the validation, I was not pressured to give in.” After the Board meeting, a new validation visit to reassess the situation in Myanmar was decided upon. Cielo Magno sees the eventual change to a more realistic grade by EITI as a ‘landmark decision’.

Without reinforcement from ICNL and Cielo Magno, MATA’s efforts to highlight civil society’s concerns would have been more easily shoved aside by powerful forces within EITI.

Paul Donowitz from Global Witness has worked closely with MATA, also on the EITI process. He says that the process reflected much broader efforts by civil society groups to expand the conversation about extractive governance. “MATA was becoming part of a larger movement and saying, ‘Look, we have members who are being arrested, but they are not sitting in an EITI meeting. So, in the way that you’re interpreting civic space, it is not really meaningful.’ They were showing how a narrow interpretation of 1.3 (engagement of civil society) negatively affects civil society in Myanmar - and more broadly.” Magno says their (OiM and MATA) involvement was very helpful, because it set a precedent for civil society to hold the government to account – in line with the assessment in Oxfam’s contribution story.

### Not amused

The Myanmar government was not amused. The silent protest took place at the EITI annual meeting in Paris, where the government went with some high-level people, expecting that Myanmar was going to get a good validation grade. It was a showcase moment for them. And then the silent protest happened. Magno: “Afterwards, the government was blaming MATA for delaying the validation process.”

The interviewees see as MATA’s key strengths the size of the coalition, and the passion of MATA members. Magno: “They’re very resilient, they did not give in to pressure from the government. It’s a strong coalition. They’re able to champion civic space at the international level, where other people (civil society representatives) get scared. That’s why it worked. The approach was done nicely.” According to her, there should be more voices at the international level to echo what is happening at the local level. Organisations like MATA bring concrete stories to the advocacy at the international level. It legitimises discussions and gives a face to the conversation. “Without the narrative MATA provided, it would have just been me to argue for downgrade. I am just an instrument of their real struggle.”

Paul Donowitz says that MATA developed a key relationship and mechanism to engage with the Board, and specifically Cielo Magno as Board Member, with technical support from organisations like Oxfam and ICNL. “I was impressed by how they mobilised quite an effective technical submission. It was really MATA that caused 1.3 to get downgraded.”

When asked what the significance of the outcome is, the interviewees mentioned that it will place pressure on the government. It informs the government on issues, who then have to remedy that for the next validation. July Hunter thinks that the Myanmar government is sensitive to this type of international scrutiny.

Paul Donowitz is less optimistic. “To be honest, I have not seen specific progress on those corrective actions. Also none on reforms. I guess the government will cherry pick and look for ways to demonstrate progress, while there may not be a response to corrective actions.”

### Reflection

#### Contribution assessment

Table 27. Contribution Assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Strong
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without C&amp;F no outcome</i> )	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? ( <i>Outcome is result of programme only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome</i> )	Yes
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

Overall, the external contribution story confirms the claim in the internal contribution story that ‘the letters

MATA wrote to the board are explicitly referenced in the final report and can therefore be considered a key catalyst for the final decision, where EITI did downgrade the classification of civil society engagement in Myanmar.’

MATA says that without their efforts the outcome would never have been achieved. They state 100% contribution. The other stakeholders agree with a very high contribution of MATA, although (not mentioned in the internal story) the efforts of their allies and targeted champions, such as the letter from ICNL and particularly the support from the Board Member, was instrumental in the result. Vice versa, the board member also stipulates that MATA and others have provided necessary ‘evidence from the ground’ for her to advocate within the Board meetings.

### On relevance

OiM and MATA’s engagement in the EITI platform has been a good way to elevate issues from the ground to a higher stage. It has also inspired some of the other civil society organisations from other countries to hold their governments to account. In line with the intermediate outcomes in the C&F ToC, the intervention has raised more awareness among international actors about the importance of civil society in the extractive industries. Even though EITI does not have enforcing powers, it does provide incentives for companies and governments who care about their reputation to at least be somewhat more transparent about their conduct in the extractive industries. The Myanmar civilian government wants to show that they have a legitimate and a stable investment climate. An interviewee suggested that they want to particularly attract more western investors – as with the Chinese the deals negotiated were not good: inefficient, lack of revenues for Myanmar and lack of ability to compete commercially. Considering the Chinese track-record in conflict-insensitivity, this is a development that Oxfam in Myanmar and partners should indeed foster.

However, the question is how much of the agreements made at EITI is filtering down to relevant government ministries that can make a difference as Myanmar is still very top-down. Overall, interviewees state that the National League for Democracy (NLD) government is less receptive to civil society. One of the weaknesses of EITI in Myanmar is the lack of buy-in from key parts of the government, particularly those with the highest stakes in extractives and the most negative impact on civic space. It is still a long way to actually see a change in the situation on the ground in how companies conduct business and better conditions for communities.

### On effectiveness

MATA and OiM have been effective in getting EITI to reassess their initial rating, which is quite remarkable considering the other stakeholders in the Board, including governments and private sector. What worked well is that MATA and OiM have formed alliances with others (ICNL, other civil society groups, Cielo Magno) to put more weight behind their own research. Having a more neutral, legal expertise institute like ICNL reinforce the efforts was helpful, as they have less of an advocacy, or ‘human rights activist’ reputation.

### On sustainability

Positively, the process with Myanmar has set in motion efforts to change the institutional set-up of EITI, such as the way in which the EITI carries out the civic space assessment. There is ongoing work for Oxfam in Myanmar, MATA and some of the other actors to make sure that the conversation continues in a positive way and that the ground gained is not lost. A wider interpretation of 1.3, engagement of civil society in EITI, will impact more positively in Myanmar and globally in EITI complying countries, as they will allow for more visibility and more concrete tools to hold government and private sector actors to account.

### On capacity strengthening

MATA states that OiM has really helped them regarding civic space in EITI. OiM supported the writing of the report, with knowing how to frame issues, which terminology and which routes to use in the international arena. OiM says that they were initially hesitant to join the EITI process, because there was so much work. They coordinated the work of MATA and liaised with the international actors such as the Board member. Their added value is seen by others in linking the relevant stakeholders and providing technical assistance to MATA.

Additionally, in the early stages of the SP, OiM had received additional funding (through the F4D ToC) to do an in-depth research on shrinking civic space in Myanmar. This research was subsequently shared with MATA, which enabled them to use the findings in the EITI process.

It should be noted that MATA gets support from multiple funders. For example, Global Witness did a training on helping them understand the EITI validation process. The focus of Oxfam was particularly on 1.3 (civil society engagement).

In the process, other civil society groups have been strengthened in their positioning as well, as is seen in their participation in the silent protest. It is unclear whether this will have a longer-term effect, but it is an important spill-over effect.

There is a risk of MATA being spread too thin. Especially since EITI has grown and has become more technical (i.e. environmental reporting, contract disclosures), it is challenging for MATA to continue to play all the different roles.

### 1.3 Contribution Story 3 (investigative story)

## Preventing a toxic legacy

*Outcome: in January 2019, the Ministry of Health and Sports issued a letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation MONREC (copying MATA), urging MONREC and related*

*ministries (including the Ministry of Electricity and Energy) to conduct a state-level review of the Tigyit coal fired power plant and a regional-level public consultation, before deciding whether the plant and mining should continue operations.*

This is an outcome from Phase 1, centered around an environmentally damaging coal-fired power plant in the village of Tigyit, in Shan State. The internal contribution story lists the activities that have contributed to the pause-in-action-outcome, including capacity development of MATA on participatory action research (PAR); field research with ALARM to collect samples on pollution; building an alliance behind the evidence with Greenpeace and Water Keeper Alliance by Earth Rights International (ERI); supporting further research; meeting with MPs; state-level public consultations; sending a letter to the Ministry; liaising with media; and MATA members attended the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) in Geneva to give a presentation about the Tigyit power plant.

However, in August 2019, as reported in a news article,<sup>94</sup> the coal fired plant was given the green light to continue for another three years and no affirmative actions have been taken post-letter. Oxfam's international contribution story mentions that this is testimony to the power of the Chinese investment which Oxfam in Myanmar staff observe as often more powerful than the Ministries involved.

### The story revisited

*"I moved to Tigyit after I married my husband, who is a local there, and so I also became like a local. The village was very pleasant before the coal-mine operation and coal-fired power plant was built. After that, the coal ashes from the power plant fell into the plantations of the villagers and also caused a rise in miscarriages among pregnant women in the village", explains Daw Khin May Than, who has been living in Tigyit for over 30 years. We spoke to her over the phone from Yangon.*

Myanmar's largest open cast coal mine and coal-powered plant is located in Tigyit village of Pinlaung Township in Shan State. Operations started around 2002 by the China National Heavy Machinery Corporation (CHMC) and the Burmese companies Eden Group and Shan Yoma Nagar until 2014. Then, another Chinese company, Wuxi Huagaung Electric Engineering, took over the power plant, while the coal mine continues to be controlled by the Eden Group.

### When ashes fall

Ma Khin May Than (around 50 years old), explains that the villagers work on farming and plantations for their livelihood. They have always used water from the lake in their locality for both cooking and drinking. However, the coal ashes emitted from the operations are not properly managed by the company, thereby leaving these ashes to fall into the plantations of the villagers and into the lake. The villagers develop skin diseases from using

the water. And since the operation of the coal mine and power plant started, the smell of the burning coal is causing villagers to experience dizziness, perspiration, and to feel ill and vomit.

Between 2013 and 2017, the local villagers of Tigyit and a number of civil society organisations have opposed the operations of the power plant and have expressed their concerns about the adverse impacts on the community – yet without favourable results.

Through the connection of a local activist, who at that time had been actively opposing the coal-powered plant, a few villagers, including Khin May Than, went up to Yangon to meet civil society organisation (CSO) Paung Ku, from which they learned about the impacts of coal-burning. In the past they also received training about coal-induced pollution from Pa-O Youth organisation, which published reports with names such as *'Poison-Cloud'* in 2011 and *'The sound of the bell from Tigyit land'* in January 2019. "We held a press conference regarding the second report in Yangon. We also distributed education pamphlets about health consequences that can be caused by the coal-waste. We (the villagers and PYO) also protested to shut down the power plant during a meeting that was held by the company that runs the power plant. It did not invite us, the local villagers, to that meeting and it only invited the local authorities, some local education staff, the military, and the police. The meeting was about resuming the power plant," she said.

### Building on foundations

These past attempts did not bring about responses from any government agency, nor any changes in practices of the company. Khin May Than: "At that time, advocacy with the government was not effective. Only after exposing the proven health impacts and publishing about these impacts with the dedicated support from MATA, we (the villagers) received the first ever medical check-up from the Health Ministry."

MATA remarks that past attempts surely laid out the foundation from which it was able to build further.

In April 2017, the Minister of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) visited Tigyit village, during which he told the villagers that he would close the coal-powered plant if they could provide him evidence about the harms incurred by the plant. However, the villagers had no capacity to collect this kind of data. It was the year that MATA - with the support of Oxfam in Myanmar - decided to fight for the Tigyit coal issue and so MATA promised to help with collecting evidence. With support from and along with MATA, about five to six villagers collected water, soil, and air samples for its contents to be tested. When the test results came out, MATA had a challenge in interpreting and analysing the results and thus MATA reached out to Earth Rights International (ERI) from the Water Keeper Alliance for assistance. ERI then helped MATA connect with Greenpeace, which also analysed the air and water results.

After the analyses were done, MATA explained the results to the community and sent the test reports to

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-continues-coal-plant-plans.html>

Shan State government and respective ministries, including the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) at both national and state levels. In addition, MATA and ERI approached the MPs of Shan Parliament to raise the issues of the Tigyit coal project at the Parliamentary session. The villagers were also able to exert added pressure on the government by organising two large ‘No-Coal’ protests with the support of MATA. Khin May Than: “The second protest was the largest and about 2,000 people, including the locals as well as villagers from surrounding areas joined.”

### Responsible versus responsive Ministries

These varied efforts, along with MATA’s consistent engagements with the respective ministries, drew the attention and reactions mainly from the national-level Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) and the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD). After being informed about the alarming health impacts of coal, the MOHS issued the letter directing MOEE and MONREC to conduct a State-level review of Tigyit coal-fired power plant and regional-level public consultations before deciding whether the plant and mining should continue operations. That was unexpected good news for MATA.

Villager Ma Khin May Than is outspoken: “I am very satisfied with MATA. MATA stood with us and supported us in collecting evidence and in the ‘No-Coal’ campaigns.” MATA analysed that the letter it sent to the State Counsellor and raising the issue during an advocacy meeting with the UN rapporteur must have reinforced the other efforts which enabled to get the attention and reactions from the concerned Ministries.

MATA explains that support from Oxfam in Myanmar had enabled them to build capacity on advocacy, such as how to approach the government, the company, and the community. Utilising this advocacy capacity, MATA launched the advocacy towards the government, members of Parliament and respective ministries, bringing the Tigyit coal power plant issue to their attention. MATA has also been able to mobilise the locals to take the issue into their own hands.

Both PYO and Earth Rights International give credit to MATA for their advocacy efforts. While previous organisations focused on awareness raising about the environmental and health impacts of coal industries, and organised protests and several no-coal campaigns, any direct engagements with the government have been avoided or overlooked. PYO suggests that MATA has easier access to meet with the government and that it is also acknowledged by the government. MATA is also a monitoring agent within the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) process.

According to MATA, ECD is the most responsive agency. Ko Nyein Tun from ERI confirms this - with a bit of frustration. He says that ECD, within its mandate, can issue the order to stop the operations of the coal-powered plant, but it did not. Reflecting on why this was not done, he explains that some ministries are more powerful than others. He says that the MOEE seems more influential as it is the Ministry that generates national revenue, whereas ECS does not. Also, it is impossible for ECD to issue the order to stop the

operations when it is already approved by the national government.

### A huge pile of dumped waste

And the company itself?

After the intervention there were some changes in the company’s waste disposal. Previously, the waste from coal mining was dumped besides the houses of the locals and now the company no longer dumps it next to the houses. However, according to a local female villager, though the waste is not dumped besides the houses, the company still disposes the soil waste near the villages. She expresses her concern that if this huge pile of dumped waste collapses, it could endanger the lives of the villagers as the villages are located in the valleys.

The villagers and concerned CSOs are still far away from their ultimate aim to shut down the power plant and have remedies to address the impact. There has been a lack of coordination between the Ministries and it is doubtful whether the recommendation by MOHS will be taken seriously by other concerned Ministries. Already, the MOEE allowed the extension of the test-run period of the power plant until 2021 - undermining the efforts made by the MATA, the local villagers and other CSOs.

Despite this, MATA is determined to continue. They already have plans to take the issue up in the State level Sub-National Unit and Union level EITI process. And in the end, they are most proud of the trust that MATA has built with the community, who have become more conscious that they must fight for their rights.

In MATA’s words: the campaign against coal is a process and not just a project.

### Reflection

Table 28. Contribution Assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? (Without Oxfam no outcome)	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of programme only/ intervention was sufficient for outcome)	Unclear, but collaboration with others was a key aspect
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Medium</b>

Overall, the external contribution story confirms the claims from the internal contribution story. It could not be verified in the external research what prompted the Ministry of Health and Sports to call for a state level review of the plant, but it is made plausible that the various efforts of MATA contributed to this, particularly MATA’s evidence-based research and collaboration with the community, alliance partners and MPs. The fact that MATA is copied in the letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) is a clear indication. It could not be verified to what

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extent the meeting at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva played a role.

Other CSOs, including allies such as Earth Rights International, give credit to MATA for their advocacy efforts. It was mentioned that any direct engagements with the government had previously been avoided or overlooked. MATA's entry points with and acknowledgement by the government possibly contributed to being more successful in engaging with government actors.

### On effectiveness

MATA was more effective than earlier CSOs in advocating the government on the Tigyit Coal Mine. Evidence-based advocacy has led to a successful influencing of some part(s) of the government. However, this was an outcome that did not last. Very soon, the coal fired plant was given the green light to continue.

The internal contribution story suggested that this 'is testimony to the power of the Chinese investment, which Oxfam in Myanmar staff observe as often more powerful than the Ministries involved.' In addition, the external contribution story has shown that within government, some departments are more powerful than others. One of the interviewees states that the MOEE seems more influential as it is the Ministry that generates national revenue, whereas ECS does not. He also stated that it is impossible for ECD to issue the order to stop the operations when it is already approved by the national government.

### On relevance

The relevance to address issues around the Tigyit coal plant is clear. Unfortunately, the villagers and concerned CSOs are still far away from their ultimate aim to shut down the power plant and have remedies to address the impact. There has been a lack of coordination between the Ministries and it is doubtful whether the recommendation by MOHS will be taken seriously by other concerned Ministries. The internal contribution story stated that 'a stall in positive action (...) may be due to the Chinese investment involved and its importance/influencing capacity with the Ministry'. It also raises the question whether it would have been better to try to influence other ministries or departments. This case has shown how difficult it is to influence large players at the local level. MATA's and OiM's shift away from these local level politics and individual companies towards more sectoral engagement and regulations seems to be a good move. MATA as a monitoring agent within the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) process has been mentioned as supporting engagement with (parts of) the government.

### On capacity development

MATA explained that support from Oxfam in Myanmar had enabled them to build capacity on advocacy, such as

how to approach the government, the company, and the community. Utilising this advocacy capacity, MATA launched the advocacy towards the government, members of Parliament and respective ministries, bringing the Tigyit coal power plant issue to their attention. MATA has also been able to mobilise the locals to take the issue into their own hands. The villagers were involved in two large 'No-Coal' protests with the support of MATA.

### On sustainability

Bearing in mind that this outcome was from Phase 1, the work of MATA has shifted to targeting sectoral regulation and legislation, which will have a bigger change of contributing to longer-lasting changes. It was mentioned that MATA will take the Tigyit issue up in the State level Sub-National Unit and Union level EITI process. And the trust that MATA has built with the community, who have become more conscious that they must fight for their rights. Raising broader public awareness is a step to holding actors to account in the future.

### 1.4 Collective System Analysis – Myanmar C&F

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020, the consultant held a session with Oxfam in Myanmar (MATA could unfortunately not join). Based on this session, interviews, and desk study, a Collective System Analysis was made by the consultant.<sup>95</sup> The system change identified for C&F: a more peaceful, equitable and human secure system in Myanmar. In a matrix (see below) root causes and opportunities are combined with the areas where the interventions took place.

The following issues are identified as *root obstacles* for system change (see in yellow in figure 7), including:

Complex power dynamics exist along all levels of governance and ethnic divisions play a large role. Myanmar still has a very centralised government, with the military as a very powerful force. In general, there is a lack of political will and capacity to govern the extractive sector, resulting in a lack of regulation and legislation, and lack of transparency and accountability. At the local level, various groups are competing for resources (ethnic groups, national, government, and foreign investors) and several parts of the country are characterised by corruption, armed (ethnic) conflict and environmental degradation.

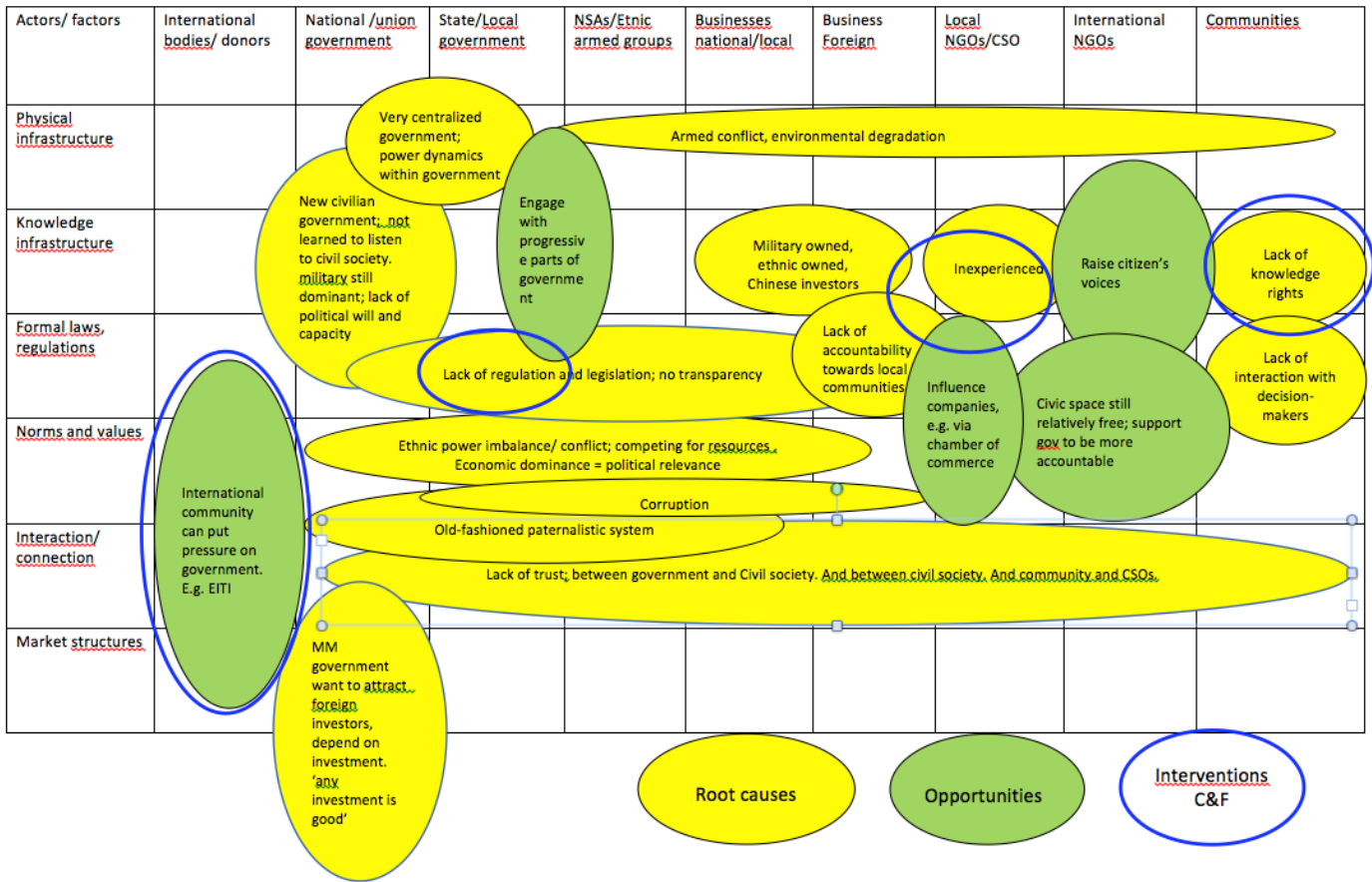
<sup>95</sup> Originally, a workshop to conduct a Collective System Analysis was planned, but due to COVID-19 it was not possible to gather different

stakeholders around the table. It was decided then to ask interviewees about root causes and opportunities.



PART IV – CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

Figure 8. Root causes, opportunities and interventions C&A Myanmar



In line with this, Myanmar is mentioned to be a paternalistic society: the government has not learned to listen to civil society and civic engagement is not a given. Communities are generally unaware of their rights and there is a lack of interaction with decision-makers. As can be seen in the visual below (blue circles), OiM and MATA’s engagement in for example Shan State with the Tigyit coal mine has worked to try to bridge this gap.

Further complicating the transition to a more peaceful society is an endemic lack of trust, even between civil society organisations. Alliance-building by OiM has helped to combat trust issues. And MATA itself comprises various CSOs, and working on a common programme likely enhances the relationship building between members of MATA itself. The programme’s capacity development support (blue circle) for CSOs are important to tackle the inexperience of CSOs.

Some of the opportunities (in green):

The international community can put pressure on the government, e.g. in EITI. The Myanmar government is sensitive to their international reputation. They want to break the dependency on China. This avenue has to a certain extent been included in the C&F interventions (blue circle), through EITI and through linking to UN processes and rapporteurs.

In addition, there are opportunities to engage with more progressive parts of government, for example through MPs at state/regional level. Companies can be influenced via intermediaries, such as the chamber of commerce.

The C&F project so far has engaged companies more directly, with limited result.

Civic space is restricted, but there is momentum to support the NLD government to be more accountable and raise citizens’ voices. As shown in particularly the Tigyit case, local community members have been mobilised. There is potential for OiM to explore more broader, public awareness raising.

Interventions C&F (blue circles):

In sum, the C&F programme’s interventions, visualised by the blue circles, focus on the lack of regulation, legislation and accountability in the extractive sector - one of the major root causes identified. At the regional/state level, OiM and MATA have tackled this to a certain extent with the Sagaing Mining Law. The shift in phase 2 of the programme towards a more sectoral approach, including being active in the EITI processes (see most left blue circle in visual), is highly relevant and an important element of a transition to a more peaceful, human secure and human secure system.

Other interventions have been mentioned above and can be seen in the visual above. They include informing communities of their rights and bringing them closer to decision-makers, particularly MPs. Tackling the distrust and inexperience among CSOs is another aspect.

The visual also exposes some of the areas where potentially some more opportunities exist, including influencing companies via intermediate bodies, using the

leverage of the international community, and raising citizens' voices.

### 1.5 Key observations C&F Myanmar

#### **On contribution by the C&F programme to the outcomes**

The three contribution narratives that formed part of the external evaluation are assessed by the external evaluator as 'medium' to 'strong' in their contribution claim (two outcomes 'strong', one 'medium'). It was found that MATA with support of Oxfam in Myanmar played a key role in all three outcomes. External stakeholders (CSOs, MPs) and in the case of Tigyit also a local villager, confirmed the added value of MATA. In the case of Tigyit, the external evaluation could not assess whether there were other actors or factors that may have also influenced the Ministry's decision to call for a state-level review of the coal mine, but it is plausible that this would not have happened without MATA and CSO partners' involvement.

#### **On effectiveness**

Considering the difficult environment and limited civic space, the C&F partners in Myanmar have been quite effective in contributing to some early and intermediate outcomes, particularly from government actors and at the international level in EITI. An outcome that was at a higher-level and which likely has a longer-term positive effect, is the adoption of the Sagaing Mining Law. Even though this sub-national law is not as conflict-sensitive as MATA had hoped, it is a step in the right direction for improving transparency and regulation of the mining sector. Working via 'champions' such as MPs has been helpful to reach government actors, but not all MPs have influence on powerful authorities. Power mapping remains a key element of OiM's engagement in Myanmar. Working in alliances has proven particularly important in Myanmar, to enable a stronger civil society voice. Continuous trust-building and decentralisation of decision-power to alliance members in regions is important for buy-in of local communities and other CSOs. Legitimacy of CSO at local level is crucial. After initial engagement with multi-stakeholders (companies and government actors), attention to follow-up was not as prominent, particularly with private sector actors.

#### **On capacity development**

In all three contribution stories, capacity development played a big role. OiM's partner MATA has been supported by Oxfam to carry out research for evidence-based advocacy. OiM supported the EITI process as well, such as writing of the report, knowing how to frame issues, which terminology and which routes to use in the international arena. OiM coordinated the work of MATA and liaised with the international actors. OiM's added value is seen by others in linking the relevant stakeholders and providing technical assistance to MATA. Overall, capacity development was mutual: Oxfam in Myanmar learned a lot from MATA on specific context issues and trusted MATA to be in the lead. This

adaptive approach was also appreciated in relation to civic space work.

Capacity building was not limited to MATA members alone; MPs and other civil society organisations have also been sensitised on carrying out research. In the framework of the EITI advocacy, CSOs from other countries joined in the silent protest and learned how to raise attention to civic space concerns.

#### **On relevance**

The C&F programme has addressed a number of root causes that prevent a transition to a more secure, peaceful and human secure society, most importantly through raising awareness among communities about their rights, and by working on improving governance and transparency in the extractives sector. The shift in focus from the first phase (four key companies/sub-national level) to the second phase (extractive sector governance) is a relevant one, because Myanmar is still such a centralised country and much of the power still lies with the union government. At the same time, some early decentralisation processes are there and as was mentioned in the CSA as well, there are opportunities for OiM to support these more progressive aspects, as was done with the Sagaing mining law.

Both internal and external contribution stories find that the influence of foreign investors, and particularly China, on the government thwarts actual change to take place. There is potential to be more strategic on engagement with the Chinese, and mobilise the international community more. EITI is a promising, but not a sufficient platform. The EITI process is not necessarily acknowledged by all relevant parts of the government.

Gender, while an important factor in conflict-dynamics and natural resource governance, was not seen as a necessary key lens through which to develop the interventions to reach the intended outcomes.

#### **On sustainability**

The C&F's programme's attention to building affected communities' voices, building capacity of CSOs, building relations with intermediary actors such as MPs, and raising awareness of international actors (in EITI particularly) will support to hold the government accountable for the changes achieved. However, the achievement regarding the Tigyit coal mine is already reversed, which shows that there are forces at play outside of the scope of the C&F programme. The Sagaing Mining Law is a good example of where the programme's contribution will have a longer-lasting effect, considering a law is not as easily ignored. It is, however, important to closely monitor implementation of the law.

#### **Reflection on the ToC**

This reflection concerns the overall C&F ToC, not the country ToC.

The research into the contribution of the SP-interventions to the selected outcomes to a large extent confirm the validity of the C&F Theory of Change. The first contribution story (Sagaing mining law) links to the third pathway in the ToC, where at the early outcome

level ‘government decision makers understand, collaborate and have the capacity to create stability’ and then at the intermediate level they ‘implement effective policies and mechanisms for inclusion and protection’.

The second contribution story, on EITI, is related to the second pathway in the ToC, where ‘increased awareness and political will in the international community on inclusion and protection’ have indeed contributed to possibilities for the ‘international community to hold governments and the private sector accountable’ through the validation mechanism of the EITI.

The third contribution story, on Tigyit, is related to both the third (government) and the fourth (private sector) pathways in the ToC. Work with the government is in line with the third pathway in the ToC, where there was at least some early indication for effective policies to be implemented when increased awareness led the Ministry to order a review of the coal mine.

For the fourth pathway, the outcome is at the level of early outcomes: ‘private sector actors are aware of their impact on conflict and respect (inter)national norms and standards’, although this only counts for the first part of the statement. The coal companies in question have been informed about the impact on the environment and local community, but this has not led to any sign of increased respect for standards and norms, let alone the higher level outcome ‘companies start to include conflict-sensitivity considerations in their strategies and policies’. The reported change in waste disposal cannot be considered a meaningful change in this respect. From the sampled outcomes, it seems the vision of how change happens in the private sector pathway in the ToC is unrealistic. This pathway in the ToC requires more intermediate steps and clear linkages with actors who can influence the private sector to make changes.

The first pathway, on civil society’s capacity to increasingly advocate for active and meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups, has been a key factor in contributing to the success regarding all outcomes. In all three contribution stories, interventions that were most used were evidence-based advocacy, engaging with and building capacities of formal and informal authorities (such as MPs and ministries), and advocating together with coalitions of civil society actors (alliance-building).

Interventions that have not played a major role include: ‘cultivating and stimulating corporate leaders and business frontrunners who are willing to change business policies’, and ‘developing mechanisms and space that facilitate public mobilization (public voice)’.

## 2. Nigeria Contribution stories

### Introduction

Oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956. Nowadays, Nigeria is Africa’s main oil producer. With 18 operating pipelines and an average daily production of over two million barrels in 2019, Nigeria is the eleventh largest oil producer worldwide. The petroleum industry accounts for about nine percent of Nigeria’s GDP and for over 90 percent of all export value.<sup>96</sup> Yet, Nigeria has the world’s highest number of people living in extreme poverty.

Nigeria is well known to be suffering from the ‘resource curse’, highly dependent on vast oil reserves to fuel the economy with communities still plagued by poverty, inequality, local conflict and armed groups. The oil trade is characterised by a lack of control, regulation and transparency, compounded by weak governance and rule of law. Oil traders exploit these grey areas and make opaque deals with host-states (the oil-producing countries), operating in an unaccountable manner, abusing human rights and partaking in illicit financial flows, all with little public scrutiny.<sup>97</sup>

The C&F project in Nigeria started in 2018 (two years later than the other projects), building on the already existing activities from the Finance for Development (F4D) project, such as the Even it Up! Campaign. In Phase 1, the overall strategy was designed to shine a light on the risks for local communities of companies engaging in ‘conflict-blind’ business, and the possible existence of human rights violations by oil traders through a focused case study on Vitol, an oil trader with roots in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This case study was developed with SOMO, Oxfam in Nigeria (OiN) and CISLAC (Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre). At the same time, Oxfam’s partner Connected Development (CODE) conducted community outreach to build broader awareness and gather a baseline understanding of how oil and gas companies are impacting communities.

In Phase 2, recommendations from the Vitol report and the community outreach were to feed into targeted interventions by Oxfam in Nigeria and CODE, particularly with the three key stakeholders, specifically government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), host communities, and oil and gas companies. While the draft recommendations from the Vitol research report, alongside the community outreach, apparently did inform strategies for Phase 2 of the C&F project, the final release of the report was considerably delayed. The Vitol report came out only in October 2020.

OiN and CODE defined three key objectives (outcomes) for phase 2:

- > By December 2020, prosecution of non-compliant companies, by relevant agencies such as Economic Financial Crimes Commission (*relating to government actors*)
- > Gender inclusion: by March 2020, Community Development Committees (CDCs) includes 10% women representation in local extractive governance (*Increased citizens’ voice*)

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.statista.com/topics/6914/oil-industry-in-nigeria/>

<sup>97</sup> Oxfam Internal Contribution Story Nigeria

- > By December 2020, CSOs advocated for the president to assent to the petroleum industry governance bill (PIB)<sup>98</sup> (*strengthened capacity of CSOs / Increased citizens' voice*)

### Selecting outcomes for research

Oxfam C&F in Nigeria and the internal evaluation team delivered 7 contribution stories (mostly early outcomes or outputs).

Nigeria C&F started in 2018, and considering the short timeframe there are fewer higher-level outcomes harvested. Phase 1 was shorter and primarily included community level outreach and research (primarily on oil-company Vitol).

The Nigeria project ToC does not distinguish pathways leading to intermediate or long-term outcomes. The contribution story by Oxfam reflects the specific SP outcome areas and key actors found in the overall Global C&F ToC. Shaping the evolution of the project, developments such as the Vitol research findings, the advice from influencing staff in the Hague and community outreach resulted in the development of new 'outcomes' (objectives), which represent a shift away from oil companies towards the (local) government as primary influencing target.

All outcomes in the internal contribution story fall in roughly the same period and are interrelated, which makes a clear selection difficult. The internal contribution story says: 'Too few outcomes are available to make concrete recommendations and it is too early to say if commitments translated into meaningful action.' The outcomes related to increased political will by government and private sector actors are at the highest level (first and last outcome). They also have links to community engagement and increased citizens' voice as early outcomes. As the internal contribution story puts it: 'the outcomes are a snapshot of the emerging picture'.

The external evaluator thus decided to write *one* revised contribution story on the basis of the two outcomes related to *political will*, and assess to what extent the C&F project is in line with the intended C&F objectives in Phase 2 and gauge whether it is plausible that they lead to envisaged system changes for C&F.

## 2.1 Story 1

# 'The sound of an airplane taking off'

*Outcomes:*

<sup>98</sup> This is tied to a Nigeria EITI recommendation; the president was initially advised not to push the bill as it was too complex and therefore the bill was broken down into four. One of the four bills addressing admin/operations has been passed.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations General Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs); a framework that assigns responsibility to states and

*On 31 October 2018, during a national policy roundtable on oil and gas, PENGASSAN, NEITI and the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development all demonstrated increased political will through various commitments on bringing awareness to the oil and gas sectors practices:*

- > *PENGASSAN (Petroleum and Natural Gas senior staff association of Nigeria), a Nigerian trade union, committed to partner with CODE and CISLAC to strengthen governance in the oil and gas sector, as well as publishing two position papers on the matter.*
- > *NEITI (Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) committed to integrate outcomes of reports into policy conversations, as well as notifying academia to translate research into actual development.*
- > *The Ministry of Mines and Steel Development committed to collaborate with CODE to reduce hostilities in the Niger-Delta region.*

*On 15 November 2018, in Lagos, Nigeria, during a one-day event for oil community stakeholders, commitments were made by Energia Group (International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy) to investigate the negative effects of the gas flaring from their flow station on Obodo-Ugwa community members. Oil firms (Energia, Shell and Sahara oil) committed to endorse the UNGP NAP.<sup>99</sup>*

The internal Contribution story highlights these two multi-stakeholder events (also: roundtables or town hall meetings), organised by Oxfam in Nigeria and their partner CODE, as they are a case of increased commitment (increased political will) to due diligence in the oil & gas sector by government and affiliated agencies and private sector actors.

According to the internal contribution story, this shows the potential effectiveness of the 'roundtable approach'. 'Through capacity development of CSOs and SP partner CODE, the roundtable provided a productive engagement platform between communities and government institutions, that led to demonstrations of political will.'

The project's claimed contribution to the first outcome is bringing together stakeholders and creating a space for constructive discussion in line with NEITI (national) objectives, through capacity development of the CSOs in attendance, and CODE to organise the roundtable. 'It is likely that within this pathway, a strengthened civil society was the preliminary outcome that led to the demonstrations of political will'. At the same time, the authors are realistic, and say that this does not yet provide enough evidence to suggest that the project has contributed to any change in government actors' willingness to begin to hold oil companies to account.

The second outcome is more related to private sector engagement. Around 20 participants attended the event

businesses to prevent and address business-related human rights abuses. NAPs (National Action Plans) are policy documents in which a government articulates priorities and actions that it will adopt to support the implementation of international, regional, or national obligations and commitments with regard to a given policy area or topic. See: <https://globalnaps.org>.

in Lagos: including CSOs, CODE, Oxfam, SOMO, CISLAC, three representatives from oil firms (Shell, Energia oil and gas limited and Sahara Oil), the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and the National Human Rights Commission.

Similar topics were discussed across all the roundtables, including: background of the Conflict and Fragility project, regulation of the Nigerian Oil and Gas industry and the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. The oil companies and citizens were both given an opportunity to express the challenges they face.

The project's contribution to the second outcome is outlined in the internal contribution story as: 1) community outreach (awareness raising) by CODE and Oxfam in Nigeria, leading to a stronger knowledge base on how oil companies should be operating within the context; 2) a capacity development workshop by CODE with CSOs operating in the Niger Delta in October 2018, about oil & gas accountability and governance; and 3) the event itself, which was organised between CODE, CISLAC and Oxfam based on findings from the field outreach and baseline data collection.

The internal contribution story sees in these demonstrations of political will from oil firms a key success within this project. 'CDCs (community development committees) in the Niger Delta are considered the gatekeepers of the communities and the absence of the government is stark. Oil companies may therefore be more willing to cooperate and their commitments (are) not surprising. To what extent these commitments suggest a willingness to change policy and operate conflict-sensitively is too early to tell.'

### The story revisited

*Nowhere is 'the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty' as visible as in the Niger Delta, the region that hosts Nigeria's oil and gas industry. The Niger Delta is richly endowed with natural resources, and yet, 'hopelessly poor'. The huge revenues generated by oil and gas have not found their way back into the region, which remains one of the least developed parts of the country. As a result, the region has experienced protracted violent conflicts for more than two decades.*

(Paragraph taken from the Vitol Report<sup>100</sup>, October 2020)

Emmanuel Mayah, an investigative journalist, speaks at length about what in his view is happening in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. "The problem of Nigeria is that of 'state capture' by the Nigerian ruling class, where political power equals economic power. Since the civil war, 85% of oil wells are owned by northerners (the Niger Delta is in the south). And it is in their interest for there to be conflict, because when people are trying to survive, people cannot ask questions. Conflict is at the core of the lack of transparency."

In his view, more than companies, the government should be held accountable. "Everyone in Nigeria has demonised Shell. But I ask myself: 'Why is it that Shell is able to do the right thing in other contexts, but not in

Nigeria?' The problem is not Shell, but the political elite. It is not in their interest for Shell to do the right thing."

### Regulators and operators

The October 2018 Roundtable in Abuja, organised by CODE and Oxfam in Nigeria, was meant to bring different stakeholders (oil companies and regulators) together. But Oxfam in Nigeria and partners discovered that many of the operators (oil companies) such as Exxonmobil, Shell, Energia, and Sahara oil, were not present. Participants were CSOs, academia, NGOs, and regulators such as NEITI (the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) and PENGASSAN (trade union Petroleum and National Gas senior staff association of Nigeria), amongst others. A staff member from CODE explains: "That first engagement was really a push for people to have a conversation about what is happening in the oil and gas sector. It was a call to action. Stakeholders were strengthened as regulators in the oil and gas sector. When this activity was concluded, it was imperative that we would also bring the operators to a roundtable (the second meeting, in Lagos) and now have a conversation about what they need to do to take care of host communities."

It was not easy to get oil companies on board. Initially, the communication between CODE and oil company Energia, for example, was not cordial. What CODE did was to find a way to take the frost off through community members that had linkages to the leadership of the companies. "We tried to have informal meetings outside of the official ones. We try to understand the views of oil companies, and explained the engagement in the community, how we wanted them to be involved, and what we expected from them." For that second meeting, the media was not present. "The moment you bring in the media, they won't say a word. Oil companies don't want to speak to the media, sometimes not even CSOs. So that engagement was mainly an in-house discussion among oil companies."

Energia is one of the oil companies that was engaged in the process. They operate in Delta State, in the Obodo Ugwa community. The Public Relations Officer from Energia states over the phone that "NGOs usually look like pressure groups, which makes companies reluctant to engage with them." In his view, other companies than Energia are less willing to change their ways. On the question of how to get those companies on board, he says: "After a Roundtable, you need to engage them one on one. Then they will be more open and willing. Companies need to understand that their operations are influencing peace and the environment. You see, companies look at the volume of revenue to spend on community development, and company managers find it difficult to spend such a large amount of sums. But when it's implemented, the result is tremendous. There are mutual benefits for companies and communities."

The focus of the C&F programme, and particularly CODE, in building capacities of local communities to understand their rights and engage with stakeholders at the local level is generally applauded. CODE had carried

<sup>100</sup> SOMO and CISLAC, 'Big Business, low profile. Shedding light on oil trader Vitol's operations in Nigeria', October 2020.

out two community outreach programmes, one in Mkpnanak community in Akwa Ibom State and one in Obodo-Ugwa Community in Delta State.

### Not violence, but dialogue

An important aspect of CODE and Oxfam in Nigeria’s work with communities was on gender. Women were not involved in local decision-making, because of cultural norms. During the second phase of the C&F programme, there was a re-focus on gender inclusion in the governance structure of oil and gas communities, the so-called community development committees (CDCs). This meant sensitizing traditional community leaders as well. Esther: “People will always talk to traditional rulers first, and establish a relationship with them. Not the women, not the children. And because they (traditional, male, leaders) don’t know any better, they will sign any paper with the oil company.”

Esther is a woman from Mbanak community in Akwa Ibom State, where Exxonmobil is the main oil company (or ‘operator’ as most interviewees call them). She sounds determined on the phone when she explains what she thinks of Oxfam (in Nigeria)’s and CODE’s role in her community. “We are fishermen and women. And our fish and nets have been polluted. Before, we did not know how to do demands from governments and companies. We didn’t know anything. We depended on the company. And with Oxfam engagement we were able to establish our rights.”

Several times during the interview, she repeats what she learned about engaging with oil companies: “Not through violence, but through dialogue”.

### Rome was not built in a day

At the local level, these increased communications between communities, oil operators and government agencies show some positive – albeit small – results, for example in responding to oil spills or gas flaring. Energia is one of the oil companies that affected the community with gas flaring. It was so loud and hot – one interviewee describes the sound of that of an airplane taking off – that people in the neighbouring communities could not sleep. These kinds of issues raise resistance among communities, who sometimes become violent and block the company’s gates. It is thus in the interest of the oil operators to make sure to reduce the impact of their operations on communities.

After communications improved between communities, local government agency NOSDRA (National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency), and the company, the type of gas flaring was changed to make less noise. A similar development happened in Mbanak community, in Akwa Ibom State, where with the help of CODE interactions improved. Chief Cyril: “The local government agency NOSDRA and the operator already had a relationship. Now the host community has come into the equation. Oil spills don’t happen often. And with the one that happened recently, NOSDRA came on hand to try to help. Rome was not built in a day, but we’re hoping for better results in the future”.

Increased funding by companies to local development committees is another positive result, although so far only Energia has supported this.

### And the government?

Emmanuel Mayah, the investigative journalist, laughs when asked why the key piece of legislation that could reform governance in the sector, the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB), has not been passed yet. “You know, the whole thing is about profit. People in government are resisting reforms. The PIB would have been passed a long time ago (it has been pending since 2008).”

In his view, the current status of the PIB at the National Assembly – despite all the good efforts by CISLAC and CODE – is another delay tactic. “The President decides everything. When he refuses to sign the law, you can start over again.”

He adds that he remains hopeful that the PIB will be passed, but he says more pressure should be added. In his view, the C&F partners can use a more aggressive approach towards the government, particularly at the national level. “I remember a forum organised by Oxfam. Brilliant. Civil society and media were there. To talk about tax justice. But after all the brilliant papers, it ended there. We keep talking to ourselves with the same people. The issues raised are relevant, but there is a disconnect in getting information to the public.”

He sees a big role for the independent (online) media in this. Reports like the Vitol report are a ‘goldmine’ to investigative journalists like Mayah. Through the report, people come to understand the issues and players in the industry. It has the power to galvanise citizens’ action. And in Mayah’s view the Vitol report has the power to give more energy to those championing the PIB.

Time will tell. At the moment of writing, January 2021, the PIB process has again been delayed. The latest reason is Covid-19.

## Reflection

### Contribution assessment

Table 29. Contribution Assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium (beyond early outcomes)
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? ( <i>Without Oxfam no outcome</i> )	Yes (roundtables, commitments captured)
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of programme only/intervention was sufficient for outcome)	Yes
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Medium</b>

In line with the internal contribution story, the early outcomes harvested for the C&F programme are too preliminary to give an assessment of their longer-term effects. The external contribution story found no large discrepancies between the internal contribution narrative and additional external research.

The combined efforts of Oxfam in Nigeria and partners CODE and CISLAC have had a pivotal influence on increased awareness among communities and better interaction with other local actors, including private sector actors, at the local level.

At the national level, it is more diluted. Oxfam and partners have been key in getting stakeholders together at the Roundtables, but no concrete changes in policies or practices can be seen yet. There have been other civil society organisations who are working on influencing actors in the space of extractive governance. Yet, it is mentioned that most national civil society actors related to natural resources are increasingly working together. CISLAC estimates that they have more than 60% influence in this space (engagement in the extractive sector).

The respondent from NEITI confirms that the kind of collective teamwork that was done has much more impact in terms of what you can deliver than working in silos. He sees a role for NEITI in making sure commitments are adhered to, while civil society should expose information and wrongdoing.

CODE states that Oxfam as an international organisation has leverage on politicians. They fear international pressure. “With Oxfam as a partner, we get 60% attention from the government. With our own engagement much less.” Oxfam both inside and outside of Nigeria could use this influence more.

### **On relevance**

The C&F project in Nigeria has been working on relevant issues. It worked on bridging the gap between oil companies, government stakeholders and communities. Through the conversations with community members, it becomes clear that they are much more aware of their rights, and even know the meaning of the Petroleum Industry Bill and the international framework on business and human rights. But more is to be done. It seems some of them still have somewhat unrealistic expectations of the role of oil companies in community development, as key providers of social services, where it should be the government. The focus on women’s inclusion in local governance structures is commendable.

Several sources mention the role of corruption in Nigeria. The project’s focus on financial institutions improving compliance of companies, as well as the public radio shows on public spending, are a step in the right direction. The Vitol report is a good document to further work towards binding legislation for *all* actors in the value chain.

### **On effectiveness**

Considering the short timeframe of the project, it is expected that there are no big changes to be reported yet. The work that was done at the local level has improved interactions between the relevant stakeholders, with some positive, but no structural, results.

There is not yet enough evidence to suggest that the project has contributed to any change in government actors’ willingness to begin to hold oil companies to account. The roundtable commitments are no

guarantees that actual changes will take place. So far there is no evidence of an increased willingness among regulators to do a better job. The PIB is still pending after 15 years. The roundtable, multi-stakeholder approach seemed to work in terms of getting people together and having a first step in expressing willingness, but several stakeholders have mentioned the need to (more aggressively) follow-through on those initial commitments. Oxfam in Nigeria mentioned that they did not do active follow-up, except through NEITI. The downside of NEITI is that they have strong linkages to government actors and they are a voluntary framework. It is highly dependent on the willingness of companies and government to comply. It is too easy for stakeholders to hide information.

### **On sustainability**

The increased awareness of communities about extractive issues and their rights potentially enhances sustainability. Their engagement will not end with the programme. The same goes for the involved CSOs, they will continue to advocate for better governance of the oil and gas sector, although COVID-19 has made this a lot more difficult than expected with a lack of real-life meetings. The support of Oxfam in online petitioning (see under capacity development) helps to adapt to carrying out strategic advocacy in changing circumstances.

Due to the short timeframe of the project, most of the follow-up and building on the early outcomes that have been achieved in the C&F programme in Nigeria, will need to be done in the next Strategic Partnership. OiN staff says that “the Power of Voices-Fair for All programme has incorporated most of the left-offs of the C&F interventions for further advocacy and campaigns in the coming years”.

The Vitol report has the potential to leverage further action. The report is a good instrument for evidence-based advocacy on the extractive industries, and not just in Nigeria alone. There were plans for Oxfam Novib and SOMO to take findings from the report up with investors and politicians in The Hague. During the time of carrying out the research, this had not yet materialised, which is not strange considering the report had just recently been published. In February 2021, however, the evaluator is told that SOMO and Oxfam in The Hague have undertaken action: they have sent letters to the three banks that are funding Vitol and have prepared questions on Vitol for a Dutch parliamentarian. Due to the late release of the report this was in December 2020, at the end of the C&F project. [ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY].

In short: some of the groundworks have been laid out for the C&F programme to have a durable effect, but in the end it will depend on the available human and financial resources to sustain momentum.

### **On capacity development**

In the process, civil society organisations and communities at the local level have been trained in oil and gas issues.

CODE mentions that when they started petitioning, Oxfam organised capacity development on digital advocacy. This was helpful, because when Covid-19 came they were able to change to online petitioning (on the PIB). According to CODE, there has been a variety of capacity development support that Oxfam has provided, including report writing, financial management etc. What is mentioned, is that trust matters a lot. It is a mutual, collaborative relationship. The partners mention that they also received training through other donors (USAID, DFID), but Oxfam is a longstanding partner. “When someone becomes too familiar, you don’t recognise it as capacity development anymore.”

CODE in Delta State also mentions that Oxfam in Nigeria has supported gaining access to institutions that they otherwise would not have access to.

The collaboration between SOMO and CISLAC was generally good. However, there were some challenges due to the fact that CISLAC had less experience with researching specific companies, like Vitol. Doing this type of research has a number of implications for both research methods and the importance of documenting research steps and this was challenging for CISLAC. SOMO mentions this as a learning point for them, as it shows the importance of doing a good capacity assessment beforehand, making explicit capacity needs of both SOMO and the partner organisation, and defining a capacity development trajectory to support the partner on specific aspects identified in the capacity assessment. While SOMO and CISLAC did have a conversation on this before starting the research, this was not translated into concrete capacity development activities. In practice, SOMO felt it was difficult to integrate capacity development with carrying out the research and producing research outputs. CISLAC confirms that they were expecting more training on research.

CISLAC says that Oxfam has been a game changer in the advocacy landscape in Nigeria. They supported CISLAC with one of the most result-oriented advocacy strategies. To help shape what resources are there, and who has the power to make change happen.

## 2.2 Collective System Analysis - Nigeria C&F

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020, an online Collective System Analysis was done with the partners of Oxfam in Nigeria, CODE and CISLAC (Oxfam in Nigeria could not join), and one Oxfam Novib staff member. The system change identified for C&F: a more peaceful, equitable and human secure system in Nigeria.

The following issues were discussed as *root obstacles* for system change (see in yellow in figure 9), including:

Natural resources are owned by the federal government, and as such political power equals economic power. They benefit from lack of transparency. There is a general lack of transparency of business conduct and finances. The

country is characterised by elite capture, ethnic strife and corruption among all levels of society. As a result there is no effective regulatory framework and weak implementation of regulations. There is no streamlining among regulators and operators.

At the local level there is a lack of government presence. The federal and state governments are dominant. It was mentioned that at the local level the authorities are a stooge in the hand of the state government. The lack of local governance comes with a lack of basic services, poverty, conflict and environment damaging livelihoods for local communities. It was said that high costs of governance and recurrent debt, coupled with enormous population growth also lead to underfunding for development such as basic social services.

What perpetuates this status quo is that affected communities generally have a lack of knowledge about governance of the oil and gas sector. Communities expect everything from companies. There is a dependency relationship: they find it difficult to hold actors to account. A transition to a more peaceful, equitable and human secure system is also difficult through persistent negative gender norms among communities.

During the session there was not much time to identify many *opportunities* (in green), but they include:

- > A very active civil society, able to mobilise citizens’ voices.
- > Exposing funding streams and improving public awareness via the media.

EITI in Nigeria is one of the most institutionalised. Oxfam in Nigeria and partners can reinforce their efforts via EITI to push for reforms. In addition, the Nigerian government is sensitive to international actors, and OiN’s partners have said that Oxfam’s presence reinforces their message.

The *interventions* in the C&F programme (in blue) focus on some of the key issues identified. It is clear from the visual below that many root causes are found at the level of government. The shift in focus on holding government actors to account in the C&F programme is a sensible move. As opacity in the oil & gas sector and corruption are major root causes for conflict, the Vitol report is an important tool to expose funding streams. Opportunities can be sought to raise more public awareness on this, for example via independent journalists and social media. In addition, the increasing role of China in trading relations with Nigeria could be explored more.



## PART IV – CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

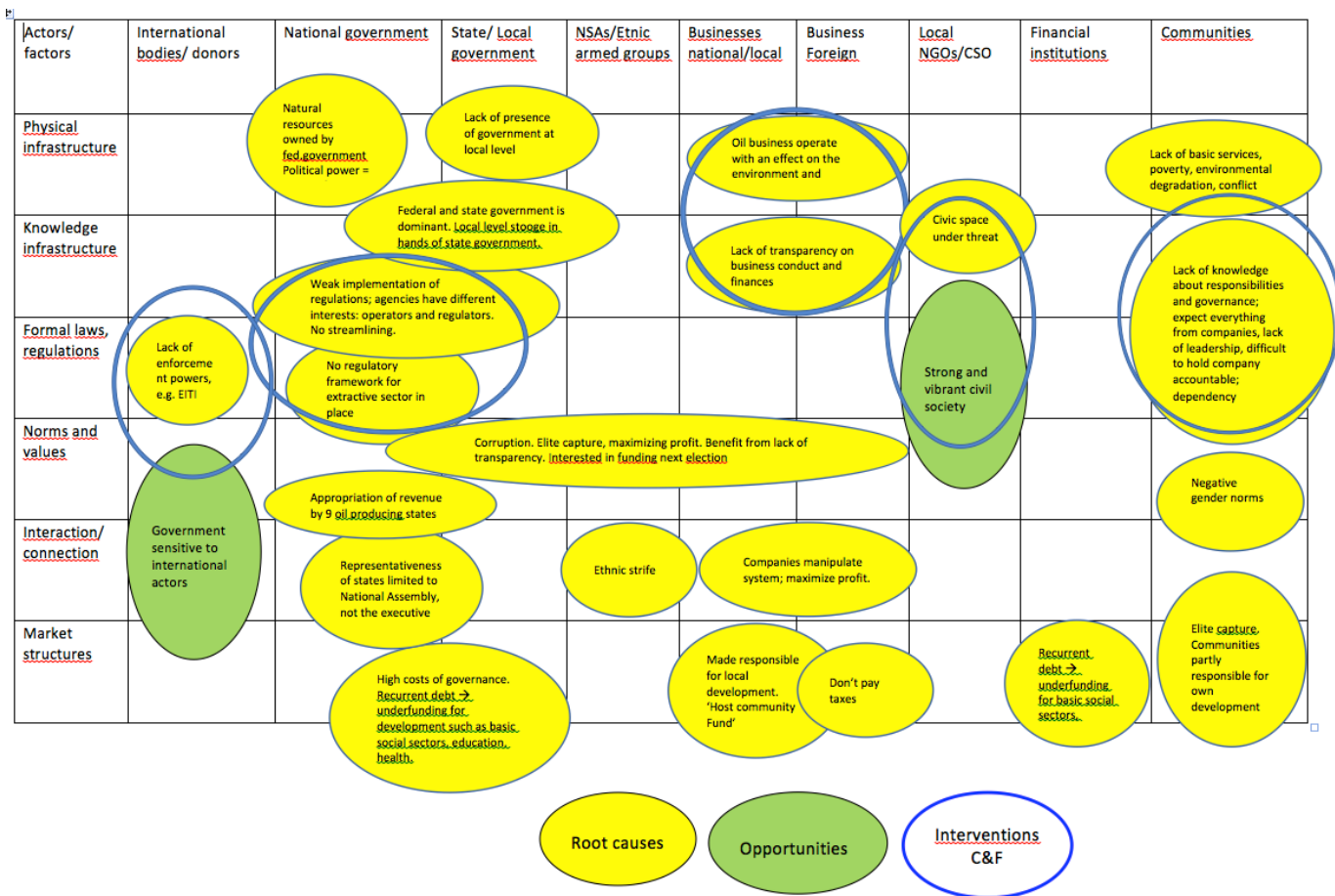


Figure 9. Root causes, opportunities and interventions C&A Nigeria

### 2.3 Key observations C&F Nigeria

#### On contribution

Considering the outcomes in the contribution narrative are at the level of early outcomes, it is not surprising that the contribution of the C&F programme has been strong. However, the external evaluator also assessed what has been the likely contribution of the programme to development of outcomes since the roundtables and expressions of political will, and that is a mixed picture. The C&F programme has been successful in bringing different stakeholders together at the national and at the local level. At the national level, the verbal commitments have not yet been followed by actions to improve regulation and hold companies to account. At the local level, the C&F programme has been more successful. At least one of the present companies, Energia, has moved from commitments to increasing interactions with other actors at the local level, including community members, and to contribute resources to a community development fund.

#### On effectiveness

Working with multi-stakeholders and in alliances has proven useful to at least get stakeholders to interact and raise awareness about concerns. Oxfam in Nigeria's added value was to establish linkages and put more

weight behind CSO efforts. Working in alliances has provided protection for individual CSOs.

Follow-up multi-stakeholder meetings with one-on-one engagement were found important to move from commitments to policy changes, which was less prominent in the C&F programme. There is a tension between a non-confrontational (roundtables) approach versus the need to apply more (public) pressure (Vitol report publications and campaigning). It was mentioned that the private sector (and government) don't like to be publicly challenged by civil society, but this is not surprising and should not necessarily be a reason not to engage in public advocacy.

The programme period was too short to fully capitalise on the Vitol report, which has the potential to feed into these more public advocacy approaches. Pressure via EITI and having Oxfam as international stakeholder are good avenues for exerting pressure on the government. The programme makes use of these.

At the local level, community engagement increased, and women have been included in decision-making structures, which is quite remarkable and at the level of targeted outcomes in the ToC. It would be good to monitor whether there are any unintended, negative side effects (e.g. gender-based violence).

**On relevance**

As was seen in the CSA explanation above, the programme works on a number of root causes that hinder the transition towards a more peaceful and human secure society in Nigeria. The shift in focus on holding government actors to account in the C&F programme can be considered a relevant move.

The research also exposed that Nigeria is sensitive to the scrutiny of foreign governments. There is potential to further leverage this, for example by engaging more with governments of the companies involved. Collaboration between Oxfam and SOMO was good, but due to the late publication of the Vitrol report, joint advocacy around the report materialised only at the very end of the programme.

Online, digital campaigning may become more important in the future, also in light of civic space, and social media narratives. It helped CODE to petition online when COVID-19 hit.

**On sustainability**

The inclusion of women in decision-making structures at the local level is not easily reversed, which means that this outcome will likely have a longer-lasting effect.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on communities, which has the potential to harm sustainability, particularly regarding outcomes at the local level. Workers were sacked by oil companies. Women are disproportionately affected.

**On capacity development**

Capacity development of communities was a central part of the interventions. This enabled them to better understand issues in the petroleum sector and it has increased their ability to engage in constructive dialogue with companies and the government, whereas before communication was lacking or communities had voiced their concerns through aggression.

Oxfam's added value in the C&F programme was in bringing stakeholders together, but also in being able to increase national CSOs' visibility in the eyes of the government.

**Reflection on the Theory of Change**

The Theory of Change for C&F Nigeria is very basic and does not provide insight into necessary pathways of change. The reflection thus reports about the C&F programme in Nigeria in relation to the overall ToC. As the C&F programme has only been implemented for a relatively short time, it is not surprising that the outcomes harvested are only very early ones. Although some indications are there that changes have been achieved at higher levels in the change pathways. For example, at the local level, a private sector actor (pathway 4) has started to include conflict-sensitivity considerations in their strategy, which is a higher intermediate outcome. Direct engagement, through multi-stakeholders meetings, seems to have been a successful intervention for this.

Women's inclusion in the community development committees at the local level is actually at a high level in the ToC, as it relates to the targeted outcome: 'women are included in security and peace building policies and processes'. Interestingly enough, in both these pathways, government actors (pathway 3) does not seem to have played a big role. It should be noted, however, that these changes took place at the local level, where government is generally absent.

### 3. Global Contribution stories

**Introduction**

The Global Conflict and Fragility Theory of Change (ToC) is the guiding framework for the Global project with a focus on the private sector pathway.

The Global project includes a wide geographic spread from the Netherlands, to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Colombia and Indonesia. While based on the same ToC, SOMO and Oxfam Novib (ON) are working in different target countries.

**Selecting outcomes for research**

This contribution story for the Global project includes influencing in the Netherlands (ON and SOMO jointly) and Myanmar (only ON). The Democratic Republic of Congo (only SOMO) was initially selected, but due to lack of availability of external interviewees, the story could not be developed. The interviews with SOMO and the local partner are taken into consideration, where possible.

Stories:

- > A conflict-sensitive lens in MoFa's private sector policy; 4 related outcomes
- > Engagement with Chinese private sector in Myanmar; 1 outcome

#### 3.1 Story 1

## Influencing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' conflict-sensitive private sector policies

*Outcomes:*

*In October 2018, the Economic Development Department (DDE) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a new Theory of Change on private sector development instruments that included a specific pathway on private sector development in conflict areas, which had never been included before.*

*Following this, in November 2018, a set of guidelines on conflict-sensitive private sector development (PSD) was also developed by DDE with the support of International Alert.*

Companies can exacerbate tensions in different ways when they operate in fragile or conflict-affected settings, for example through unequal distribution of benefits, such as job opportunities, or by having a negative impact on the environment. Dutch private sector development (PSD) policies and instruments aim to stimulate inclusive economic development and to support Dutch trade interests abroad. In addition, the Netherlands also aims to play an active role in preventing armed conflict worldwide and strengthening security and rule of law.<sup>101</sup> In order to contribute to a better understanding of how these policy fields (private sector development and peace & security) interact, Oxfam Novib and SOMO wanted to assess the knowledge gaps on conflict-sensitivity in Dutch PSD policies and financing instruments, such as trade missions by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa) and implementing organisations like the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). It was thought that if companies were to have a more conflict-sensitive and proactive approach regarding the challenges they face in complex contexts they could potentially reduce their contribution to human rights violations as well as minimise the risks of operating in conflict-affected contexts.<sup>102</sup>

With support from the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law (KPSRL), a platform initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa) to connect academics, policy makers and practitioners, SOMO and Oxfam initiated a study on Dutch policy and conflict-sensitive private sector development (PSD). They interviewed key stakeholders and released a report (November 2018) that addresses the knowledge gaps regarding how Dutch PSD policies and instruments need to apply a conflict lens.<sup>103</sup> The report also includes a number of recommendations for improving current policies and for further research. During a follow-up trajectory, a number of meetings with various stakeholders were held to disseminate the findings. In November 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the *Guidelines for conflict-sensitive Private Sector Development*,<sup>104</sup> in line with the recommendations of Oxfam Novib and SOMO. This 7-

page document, meant for staff at the Ministry, Embassies, and implementing organisations, outlines the steps to take for PSD interventions in conflict-affected contexts.

The identified key outcome of the project is that SOMO and Oxfam Novib ‘successfully influenced the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa) and the Netherlands enterprise agency (RVO) to create conflict-sensitive policies and frameworks.’ An example of these are the Guidelines for conflict-sensitive Private Sector Development, which MoFa published in November 2019. Oxfam/SOMO’s claimed contribution to this outcome is that the recommendations and evidence collected as part of the report titled ‘Private Sector Development policies and instruments through a conflict lens’ were a likely catalyst for the policy changes.

According to the internal contribution story, ‘the success of policy change in this pathway lies in the complementarity of SOMO’s evidence-based research with Oxfam’s established networks and alliances, building a case around a report that reached the right policy makers which then enabled them to influence other policy makers internally.’ According to Oxfam, the significance of this outcome is that with the subsequent Guidelines, MoFA has the tools to hold private sector actors to account for their business practices in fragile and conflict affected states.

The contribution story makes for a plausible argument of the contribution of SOMO and Oxfam Novib to the development of policies on conflict-sensitive private sector development. Evidence is given that endorses this, including email correspondence by the MoFa staff member. Oxfam and SOMO are even mentioned in the Guideline document itself: ‘The Oxfam Novib/SOMO report Private Sector Development Policies and Instruments through a Conflict Lens describes the development of the Dutch policy for Sustainable Economic Development over the years. [...] This guideline is following up on these recommendations.’

### The story revisited

At the time Oxfam Novib (ON) and SOMO announced their research (carried out with the support of the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law, KPSRL), Fia van der Klugt had just changed departments from the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) to the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was undertaking steps to map conflict-sensitivity in relation to private sector development

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.kpsrl.org/event/dutch-private-sector-development-policies-through-a-conflict-lens>.

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.somo.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/11/SOMO-Oxfam-Novib-Nov-2018-Private-Sector-Development-policies-and-instruments-through-a-conflict-lens-def.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> Oxfam Novib and SOMO (2018) *Private Sector Development policies and instruments through a conflict lens. Addressing the knowledge gap on the role of conflict sensitivity in Dutch PSD policies and instruments*; November 2018. In the report, ON/SOMO describe applying a ‘conflict lens’ as follows: [it] ‘basically involves being

sensitive to the conflict context when private sector development interventions are developed and/or implemented in fragile and conflict-affected situations, in an effort to ensure that negative impacts on conflict and on local stakeholders are avoided and positive impacts are maximised.’

<sup>104</sup> The Guidelines conflict-sensitive Private Sector Development (PSD). See: <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/11/04/guidelines-conflict-sensitive-private-sector-development>

(PSD) in fragile states. She was at the stage where she was interviewing embassies in five countries.

The primary reason for her plans was an incident in Ethiopia in 2015, where Dutch horticulture investments had unintendedly reinforced local tensions.<sup>105</sup> It led people within the Ministry to realise they needed to act more proactively. One of the MoFa respondents says: “It led us to think beforehand about what you are going to trigger in a certain situation.” MoFa respondents and a respondent from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) admit that conflict-sensitivity in relation to private sector development has not really been a priority within their organisations, in contrast to more concrete issues like ‘gender’. The RVO policy officer explains that one of the reasons is that gender can be translated into tangible goals like economic participation of women, whereas for ‘conflict-sensitivity’ this is more difficult. However, early developments to incorporate more conflict-sensitivity in private sector engagement were there.

### Getting conflict-sensitivity on the map in the Ministry

Fia van der Klugt says she was not amused at first when she heard of Oxfam and SOMO’s research plans as she was afraid it would unnecessarily duplicate existing efforts. But once the air was cleared, through conversations with SOMO and ON, and with the involvement of the KPSRL secretariat, she emphasises that the rest of the collaboration was good and helpful. She says it supported her work, as without the raised attention from SOMO and Oxfam her work could have been more easily overlooked within the Ministry. Now, she was able to get conflict-sensitivity more broadly acknowledged within the Ministry, including the drafting of the guidelines for private sector policies. In line with the contribution story as drafted by Oxfam, she confirms that ON/SOMO’s contribution to the development of policy instruments for businesses operating in conflict areas lies mainly in *accelerating* and *bringing together* the thinking about conflict-sensitivity within the Ministry.

Both respondents from MoFa consider the input given by ON/SOMO relevant, particularly to get a clear overview of policy developments over the years and all the existing instruments, and in supporting the Ministry’s thinking about conflict-sensitivity. Fia van der Klugt confirms: “it contributed to more sharply framing conflict-sensitivity within the Ministry.” What helped her was the in-depth knowledge of the involved SOMO and Oxfam staff, as well as the open and good collaboration. During and after carrying out the research, several meetings were organised to get the main stakeholders on the same page. Attendance and commitment from staff from both the Ministry and the implementing agencies such as RVO and FMO was high.

The responsible policy officer from SOMO at the time says that the Ministry’s publication of the Guidelines went beyond his own expectations prior to the process. It shows how the time was right – it aligned with existing political will and developments – and the personal dedication of key stakeholders was crucial.

### A world of other actors

It should be noted that ON and SOMO have not been the only ones to engage on the need for more conflict-sensitive private sector policies. Other actors - mentioned by MoFa policy officers - that engage with the Ministry on conflict-sensitive private sector policies include the International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Alert<sup>106</sup> and Clingendael. A respondent from RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency) states that research from IFC about the need for a good political-economic analysis before engaging in a context has proven particularly useful for policy-makers. A respondent from entrepreneurial development bank FMO also mentioned being particularly enthusiastic about IFC and their ‘Oxford Initiative’.<sup>107</sup>

Within the ongoing developments, it is likely that even without ON and SOMO policy changes would eventually be developed in the Ministry, but it might have taken a longer time. The report by SOMO/ON has accelerated an already ongoing process within the Ministry, who – as also confirmed by many other international actors – had come to realise that there is a need to pay more attention to conflict-sensitivity in its PSD policies and instruments, which was the main conclusion of the ON/SOMO report.

Key to the process has been the dedication of the responsible policy officer at the Ministry to bring this topic forward. The KPSRL in their position as intermediary and facilitator can also not be underestimated. This is also acknowledged by the involved Oxfam Novib and SOMO officers. In a mid-term review of the KPSRL in 2019,<sup>108</sup> an external consultant looked at this case and found that the research conducted by SOMO and Oxfam Novib are good examples of where knowledge supply and demands are brought closer together with the help of the (Secretariat of the) KPSRL. The external evaluator notes that KPSRL’s contribution’ has been significant in funding (part of the) research and mediating a discussion between researchers and policy-makers to overcome initial hurdles/resistance.’

### A balancing act between dialogue and dissent

While ON and SOMO are considered to have played an important role in getting conflict-sensitivity on the map at the Ministry, respondents from agencies that work with companies on the ground provide a mixed picture of how they perceived the approach. There is evidence of an email in June 2018, in which policy officers from implementing agency RVO respond to ON/SOMO’s draft

<sup>105</sup> See for a brief explanation of the incident page 2 of the Guideline.

<sup>106</sup> See for example the International Alert report that is referenced in the Guideline document: [https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Economy\\_PeaceThroughProsperity\\_EN\\_2015.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Economy_PeaceThroughProsperity_EN_2015.pdf)

<sup>107</sup>

[https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_ext\\_rnal\\_corporate\\_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i13-dfi-partnerships](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_ext_rnal_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i13-dfi-partnerships)

<sup>108</sup> [https://www.kpsrl.org/kpsrl-2019-mid-term-review-mtr?mc\\_cid=d84e7921be&mc\\_eid=c1cd3632da](https://www.kpsrl.org/kpsrl-2019-mid-term-review-mtr?mc_cid=d84e7921be&mc_eid=c1cd3632da).

report and indicate that “the report (...) has made us (even more) aware of the effect of investments on conflict and vice versa.” They continue to say that they will add an extra question on conflict-sensitivity in their assessment form for private sector investments. This is clear evidence of the contribution of ON and SOMO to more conflict-sensitive private sector instruments.

On the other hand, another respondent from RVO is very critical about the input delivered by ON and SOMO when the evaluator speaks to him (after the interview and review of the draft story, he reiterates his critique). He explains that the collaboration with the focal points at SOMO and Oxfam was very good during the research phase. Which is why he sees it as a major missed opportunity that when the research report came out it did not reflect Oxfam and SOMO’s own dilemmas in operating in conflict-affected contexts. He says: “We showed our vulnerability, we told them where we weren’t doing enough. I thought they would do the same from the NGO side.” Fia van der Klugt also acknowledges: “The draft report was very opinionated. It was supposed to identify the knowledge gaps, but it became an assessment. The glass was half empty.”

A key point of critique that was given by all three external ‘influencing targets’ is that an influencing strategy is counterproductive when an NGO takes the moral high ground and points fingers at what others are doing ‘wrong’. It was mentioned that NGOs should keep an open mind towards the dilemmas and roles NGOs themselves have in conflict contexts and to be sensitive to the things that government actors are already doing well. They should stay in tune with policy-makers. These statements indicate that ON and SOMO could have been more effective in supporting private sector actors’ attention to conflict-sensitivity if they had avoided any wording indicating ‘to know it better’, but considering their role as NGO to address issues and hold those in power accountable, this is part of a broader discussion on the difficult balancing act between ‘dialogue’ and ‘dissent’. It can also be said that it is remarkable that they met resistance in the first place from their strategic partner The Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Not in isolation anymore**

How sustainable are the efforts of ON and SOMO? What is the relation to the longer-term goal of private sector actors acting more conflict-sensitively? There are hopeful signs of follow-up and integration of conflict-sensitivity within several departments of the Ministry. A concrete example is that key departments within the Ministry (most notably the Security Policy Department (DVB), DSH and DDE) are not working in isolation anymore, for example in their funding instruments. Now, conflict-sensitivity is included as a criterion in all project funding assessments.

The guidelines that have been developed by the Ministry as a result are a work in progress. The respondent from RVO on the importance of the guidelines for implementing agencies: “Honestly, the guidelines weren’t as concrete as hoped. And if you ask one of my colleagues about the guidelines, they will give you a puzzled look. But at the same time, if the guidelines hadn’t been issued, I wouldn’t have been allowed to dedicate time to the topic and make them more suitable for our field of work.”

Overall, it can be concluded that, despite the disappointment and critical tone of one respondent, most interviewees value the input delivered by ON and SOMO and the way it was done. Fia van der Klugt: “The start of the process wasn’t very good, but it was later very well corrected. My compliments for Mark van Dorp and Charlotte Vollaard. From this trajectory we have learned a lot on how to work together.”

**Reflection**

**Contribution assessment**

Table 30. Contribution Assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Strong
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? (Without Oxfam no outcome)	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of programme only/intervention was sufficient for outcome)	No
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

Oxfam/SOMO’s claimed contribution is that the recommendations and evidence collected as part of the report were a catalyst for the policy changes. The external research confirms that the contribution mainly lies in a further *acceleration* of already existing political will and developments in the Ministry.

Conflict-sensitive private sector policies is a topic that policy-makers at the Ministry and financial/implementing agencies were interested in and were having discussions on. The Ministry actors confirm that ON and SOMO’s expertise and intensive collaboration on this topic positively influenced the direction of these developments. It is an example of where the three main actors in the Strategic Partnership have worked together on a joint mission.

Oxfam Novib and SOMO consider this case a success. To a large extent this is true. Concrete policy changes have taken place and the expertise of an open collaboration with Oxfam and SOMO are seen as the key reasons for this.

The additional research by the external evaluation research also provides some nuance: there were already existing policy developments within the Ministry and implementing agencies, and there were other external

actors who supported these developments, such as researchers from the IFC and International Alert, to engage with the Ministry and FMO and RVO. And finally, not all respondents have been fully satisfied with the tone of the research report written by ON and SOMO, despite the appreciated collaboration throughout the process.

### On effectiveness

Through their engagement with the policy officer at the Ministry, ON and SOMO have contributed to getting conflict-sensitivity more broadly acknowledged within the Ministry, including the drafting of the guidelines for private sector policies. There is also evidence of where ON and SOMO have contributed to broader awareness about conflict-sensitivity among implementing agencies.

### On relevance

Initially, the Ministry's policy officer did not consider the intervention by Oxfam and SOMO very relevant, as developments on conflict-sensitivity were already undergoing. Nonetheless, she now values it as relevant, as it contributed to more sharply framing conflict-sensitivity within the Ministry.

The critique on a 'non-self-reflective' tone of NGOs - whether it is correct or not - is something to keep in mind when working with the Ministry and private sector actors. Despite all the meetings and consultations with all stakeholders, some respondents still had a feeling of being judged when the report came out, which might cause some actors to dig their heels in the sand. It is good to keep in mind this sore spot, while maintaining a necessary balance between dialogue and dissent in an influencing strategy.

### On sustainability

Preliminary examples point to some institutional embedding of conflict-sensitivity within the Ministry's policies and instruments, which is partly the result of ON/SOMO's contribution. This indicates that the outcome will likely have a longer term effect. The Guidelines that were developed by the Ministry with reference to the report written by ON/SOMO is the most tangible indication of this.

### On capacity development

Capacity development played no role in this intervention.

## 3.2 Story 2

# Engaging with a Chinese giant in Myanmar

### Outcome:

*On 28th March 2019, during a meeting with Scholar Institute (SI), CITIC (one of the biggest enterprises owned by the central government of China and lead developer of the Kyauk Phyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Myanmar) stated the following:*

- > *CITIC committed to ensuring their project adhered to international standard;*
- > *CITIC requested that SI help with their engagement with community leaders.*

Over the last few years, the Myanmar government has implemented several political and economic reforms aimed at economic growth. A central component is the creation of 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZs): enclaves that are designed to facilitate imports, exports and foreign direct investments.<sup>109</sup> There are currently three SEZs in development, one of which is Kyauk Phyu in Rakhine State. As a result of the development of this township into an Economic Zone, Kyauk Phyu is set to undergo significant changes. CITIC, one of the biggest enterprises owned by the central government of China, is the lead developer of the Kyauk Phyu SEZ, which will consist of a deep-sea port and an industrial zone, covering over 4,000 acres.

Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM) wanted to influence CITIC and the government to develop an inclusive, sustainable and conflict-sensitive SEZ in the area. Given that farming and fisheries are the primary means of livelihood for over 70 per cent of Kyauk Phyu residents, the way in which the land acquisition, resettlement and livelihoods restoration processes are conducted will determine the extent to which some of the adverse impacts on the local communities will be mitigated.<sup>110</sup>

[THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM'S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]. The focus of this contribution story is on the role of a Private Sector Policy Advisor, supported by Oxfam Novib within the Global project on private sector and conflict sensitivity of the C&F ToC. The reason behind supporting a Private Sector Advisor in Myanmar, next to the country project, was recognising the dominance of and need to influence international non-western, predominantly Asian, companies investing in Myanmar to ensure they operate in a conflict-sensitive, transparent and accountable way.

<sup>109</sup> The Special Economic Zone Law was enacted in 2014, and its implementing Rules were published in 2015. See: <https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/special-economic-zones>.

<sup>110</sup> Scholar Institute et al. (2018) *Achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Towards Sustainable, Inclusive, and Responsible Investment in SEZs in Myanmar*. Internal discussion paper, funded by Oxfam.

The advisor joined at the end of the first phase of the project and supported the OiM project team and project partner with developing strategies for influencing CITIC, which includes direct engagement with the company, framing of the participatory action research (PAR) report, and how to build local support for the engagement. At the beginning, the advisor was also the lead in direct communication with CITIC.

According to Oxfam, these developments described in the outcome above demonstrate increased political will and capacity development, a recognition of the importance of the local implementing NGO in the role of facilitator in constructive engagement between civil society and the company CITIC. Oxfam states that this outcome clearly aligns with the immediate outcome *‘Private sector actors engage with international and national actors to explore how they can avoid exacerbating conflict or creating new conflicts.’* Oxfam’s claimed contribution to this outcome is:

- > Private Sector Policy Advisor’s analysis and direct engagement in SI’s strategy development to engage CITIC, as well as monitoring CITIC’s changing attitudes towards civil society;
- > Oxfam’s technical advisory support through the Policy Advisor – advising Oxfam’s partner CSO on how to frame messages and manage risks engaging with CITIC;
- > PAR – Participatory Action Research led by Scholar Institute and supported by Oxfam. This research included concerns and expectations documented from local communities.

It is plausible that the project’s efforts have contributed to the outcome. The road to the outcome, engaging in ‘constructive’ dialogue, is plausibly elaborated on, referenced with evidence. The internal contribution story leaves some questions open in terms of what the contribution of other (f)actors were to more willingness to engage on the part of CITIC, and what the sustainability of the outcome is - will the engagement be consolidated in the longer term and have a positive impact on affected communities? These and other aspects have been explored while drafting the revised contribution story.

### The Story revisited

*Around 2016, the local Oxfam office in Myanmar (OiM) was concerned about the impact on communities of the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) which were being developed – among others in Kyauk Phyu in Rakhine State. A large Chinese investor, CITIC, had won the bid in Khyauk Phyu and was planning to construct an SEZ and a sea port. Oxfam saw an opportunity for more relevant programming on engaging companies. A private sector policy advisor (who coincidentally happened to be Chinese) was appointed by Oxfam Novib to provide strategic advice on how to engage in a constructive way.*

The idea was that Oxfam colleagues in Myanmar would work with partners, collect evidence and concerns from communities around the SEZ through participatory action research (PAR)) would work in Beijing with partners such as UNDP to set up a communication platform. In 2016 and 2018, some high-level players within CITIC in Beijing met with a delegation from

Rakhine State, Myanmar, to discuss the issues around the development of Khyauk Phyu SEZ. These meetings were facilitated by OHK and UNDP China. According to OHK staff, these meetings paved the way for engagement with CITIC actors in the local context of Khyauk Phyu in Myanmar.

### From a non-western perspective

It is clear that the role of the Policy Advisor was invaluable to supporting the relationship with CITIC in Myanmar. An Oxfam staff member in Myanmar explains: “A lot of organisations, including Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM), are used to engaging with western companies. And when they are working with Chinese investors, people don’t understand it. They look at it from a Western perspective, which doesn’t work very well. The policy advisor gave a lot of cultural understanding. Such as that Chinese companies do not understand human rights in the same way as Western companies do and many Chinese companies do not accept international standards on human rights. Therefore, the advisor said we need to adopt different framing. I think that this know-how is missing in a lot of organisations. We learned a lot through her advice.”

This is confirmed by other Oxfam staff and the local implementing organisation. The representative from the partner organisation SI said: “The advisor knows the sensitivities of China and the way China sees business and the culture of dealing with communities. And we are very far away from analysing these guys. The advisor advised on messaging, for example: ‘the Chinese don’t like these wordings, this language.’ And it really, really worked.”

This seemed promising at first. However, since January or February of 2018, engagement with CITIC stalled, likely due to the departure of the main contact point and champion within the company. In response to this, the engagement strategy was adjusted by supporting the local partner to take the lead and remove Oxfam’s branding in the PAR report. This was based on the Policy Advisor’s analysis that the new CITIC team distrusted international NGOs and preferred engaging with local organisations directly.

Policy Advisor: “The fear was to be losing momentum of engaging the company with the officer leaving the company. But also: what can one person do in such a huge company?”

The respondent believes that lack of immediate and concrete follow-up by Oxfam in Myanmar was a major failure in engaging the company. “It took too long, forever! We should have acted immediately after the Beijing meeting (in 2016, prior to the advisor’s position) and ask for regular meetings with the company; have a clear ask of what we wanted and follow-up.”

### Local dynamics

Particularly challenging was the context in which the project took place. During the project implementation, the local dynamics changed. Violent ethnic conflict in several parts in Myanmar flared up, including in Rakhine

State.<sup>111</sup> And this amidst already endemic distrust among local actors. This affected parts of the project, including the engagement of government actors. To make matters worse, in the interviews, questions have been raised on the role of Oxfam’s local partner Scholar Institute (SI). About why this organisation was chosen as the implementing partner, one Oxfam staff member suggests: “In Rakhine, there were not many people who spoke English: donors want these. And also: they are not activists, like many other organisations. They have a more constructive approach.” However, the staff member admits that the local organisation suffers from a ‘capacity deficit’. Another Oxfam staff member: “In this project, they had problems implementing according to plan and strategy. They didn’t always involve other local groups, as was the plan. This partnership issue we could have identified earlier. We struggle with their gender-sensitivity as well. This also affects the message towards the company.” This staff member admits: “We (Oxfam) could have thought about this alliance building better. We may have even worsened local dynamics among CSOs. Oxfam should have been more careful in creating a negative outcome in that. Especially in Rakhine, which is so sensitive.”

A representative of another local CSO who was interviewed confirms having doubts about the legitimacy of Scholar Institute in representing the local community. “I don’t think they represent the community. There was no transparency on what came out of meetings, or consultation on messaging.” The fact that even though they are Rakhine but not from Khyauk Phyu area itself may have played a part in these perceptions.

The Policy Advisor was meant to focus on wider engagement with the private sector in Myanmar, but because of the struggles with the local partner, the majority of their energy was spent on supporting this particular project. Oxfam Novib staff: “It was an enormously difficult position.”

### A meeting at last

On 28 March 2019, CITIC senior level representatives finally agreed to meet with Oxfam’s partner SI. During the meeting, CITIC accepted the draft of the PAR report saying that they would translate it into Chinese and read it.

On why the report was not translated by Oxfam, the Policy Advisor later responds: “The report was just finalised but not yet published when they met. In order to catch up the engagement momentum, SI just printed out a report for the purpose of discussing with the company. Later, OiM tried to hire a translator for Chinese translation, but we did not manage to do it in time because the project was closed prematurely.”

In particular, CITIC agreed with one of the recommendations in the PAR that the Kyauk Phyu SEZ project should follow ‘international standards’. During the meeting, CITIC also asked the SI to help with engagement with community leaders. These demonstrations of increased political will are evidenced in documented meeting notes.

### And then the project ended abruptly mid-2019.

[ THIS TEXT HAS BEEN REDACTED IN LINE WITH OXFAM’S OPEN INFORMATION POLICY ]. Overall, it is unclear if the engagement with CITIC has made an impression in the longer term and whether the Chinese giant will take the local community’s concerns into consideration during further development of the SEZ in Khyauk Phyu.

### Reflection

Table 31. Contribution assessment

Evidence (weak/medium/strong)	
Evidence output	Strong
Evidence contribution	Medium
Perceptions interviewees	
Necessary: Was the C&F programme necessary for outcome? (Without Oxfam no outcome)	Yes
Sufficient: Was the programme sufficient for outcome? (Outcome is result of programme only/intervention was sufficient for outcome)	Unclear
<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>Strong</b>

Without having spoken to the Chinese company, it is difficult to truly come to a definitive conclusion on the contribution of the C&F programme to the outcome. However, it is plausible that the combined efforts of Oxfam Confederation, the project in Myanmar and the added position of the Policy Advisor contributed to the outcome. CITIC’s specific request to collaborate with SI to engage with communities is an indication for this.

When asking after Oxfam’s, and more particularly the private sector advisor’s contribution to the outcome (increased political will by CITIC), stakeholders (internal and external) rate the contribution between 60-90%. It is made plausible that the project’s efforts, i.e. particularly the strategic advice and efforts of the Policy Advisor, have contributed to this outcome. The road to the outcome, engaging in constructive dialogue, is plausibly elaborated on. The added value of the private sector advisor in building knowledge of the local

<sup>111</sup> See for example: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/308-rebooting-myanmars-stalled-peace-process>.



partner(s), but also Oxfam itself, is clear. All respondents acknowledge the Policy Advisor's added value in providing in-depth understanding of the Chinese actors. The implementing organisation says: "Without her, the Chinese company might not have given us the meetings."

### **On effectiveness**

Oxfam's approach of having a specific policy advisor to support with (mainly non-western) private sector actors has enhanced knowledge among Oxfam Novib staff and their local partner on more strategic engagement with the private sector. Early results of this approach are there in the form of some political will shown by the company to explore the conflict dimensions of their investments. Knowing which language/framing to use and having a champion at the company have been the most promising approaches. In addition, the removal of international NGO Oxfam in the branding of the Participatory Action Report has been a strategy that may have yielded more willingness from the company.

However, the project ended and, although civil society in Myanmar continues to be engaged around the Kyauk Phyu SEZ, there has been no follow-up specifically by SI or Oxfam with the company since, and the company's commitments have yet to materialise into something beneficial for the Khyauk Phyu communities.

### **On relevance**

Considering the enormous influence company CITIC has within the context of the Khyauk Phyu SEZ, engaging with this actor has been very relevant. It is commendable that the combined efforts, by Oxfam and partners both inside and outside of Myanmar, have led to concrete commitments from the company.

### **On sustainability**

OiM's partner SI has been strengthened in its ability to explore how they can operate in the context with the private sector – although it seems all capacity development efforts are lost with the end of the project. The project may have also been at odds with other aims, such as civil society strengthening, including alliance building. Insufficient measures were taken at the time to address the rampant distrust within local civil society.

Other CSO representatives, outside of this project, are very critical of this although the evaluator is aware that this may also be related to competing for funding. In addition, the conflict of interest of Oxfam HK receiving funding from the influencing target might be very harmful for the reputation, trust and position of Oxfam in Myanmar – particularly among CSOs and communities who are impacted by the operations of that same company. Oxfam explains that when this information came to light, it was communicated carefully to local CSOs.

This has been the only OiM project that directly engaged a Chinese company, and the advisor had clear added value. The advisor itself is no longer working with Oxfam Novib and with the loss of the position comes a potential loss of expertise. However, there was an internal research paper written by the advisor on lessons learned regarding dealing with non-western investors. This has since been published internally and promoted across the

Oxfam confederation. These learnings have thus to a certain extent been embedded in the organisation and will inform future engagement.

A respondent thinks more could have been done to follow up. He says: "Act fast, and have a concrete ask regarding what is realistic [for the company] to do. You have to produce an incentive for CITIC to do better. Engage, and get support from affected communities. Put pressure on the company."

There is a difficulty in this – not just for Oxfam in Myanmar, but also Oxfam worldwide. The need to move fast in engagement to follow-up on commitments, and on the other hand and the importance of building support from communities and CSOs through wide consultation – which takes time. One Oxfam staff member says that OiM is found torn by these two demands.

### **On capacity development**

Capacity development of partner organisation Scholar Institute was a large part of the project. They worked together with and learned from the policy advisor on how to engage the Chinese company. Despite the questions on whether this organisation was the right one to represent the community, it can also be said that Oxfam placed quite a task and responsibility on one organisation – especially one that was previously focused on education projects.

The expertise of the Policy Advisor has contributed to building knowledge within the wider Oxfam organisation.

## **3.3 Key observations Global Project**

### **On contribution**

Overall, the contribution narratives provided by Oxfam regarding the global project are in line with the findings from the external evaluation. Some nuance has been added regarding other actors that also played a role (in the MoFa story), or how the intervention may have also had the unintended effect of exacerbating tensions and distrust between CSOs in the context (second story in Myanmar).

### **On effectiveness**

Both contribution stories have shown that Oxfam, SOMO and partners have been successful in either achieving policy changes (MoFA story) or increased commitment from a major private sector actor (Myanmar). The first story was an example of how the partners in the Strategic Partnership worked together on getting conflict sensitivity more heavily included in private sector policies and instruments. In the Myanmar story it is, however, a pity that the project was not able to follow-up on the commitments made by the company.

### **On relevance**

It was found that the relevance of the interventions was high. For the MoFa story, the contribution to having more concrete policy and funding frameworks for private sector actors to operate with more attention to the

context is very valuable. The second story was focused on a major private sector actor, who as the major investor in the Special Economic Zone has a huge potential impact on the communities in it.

### On sustainability

The fact that in the MoFa story there were concrete guidelines developed by the Ministry in response to the intervention is a sign of sustainability. For the second story, due to lack of follow-up the sustainability of the outcome (increased political will) is more questionable. However, the lessons that were shared within Oxfam on engagement with non-western private sector actors is a step in the right direction for more strategic engagement in the future.

### On capacity development

Capacity development played a key role in one of the assessed interventions: in the Myanmar story. The local partner SI was supported to engage with the Chinese company, for example in using wording that resonated with the company. In addition, the project has also developed knowledge of Oxfam staff across the federation through the report that was written by the Policy Advisor upon her departure from the organisation.

### Reflections on ToC

The outcomes in the contribution narratives are at the level of early and intermediate outcomes in the C&F ToC. The MoFa story is mostly focused on pathway 3 (government), but also contributes to pathway 4 (private sector), as the implementing agencies that work with Dutch companies have become more aware of their impact on conflict, which relates to the early outcome of this pathway. In the first story, it is clear that the increased awareness and understanding of actors within the Ministry have led to the drafting of guidelines for the private sector, a step in the right direction towards ‘implementation of effective policies and mechanisms for inclusion and protection’: the intermediate outcome in this pathway (3).

The key interventions that have led to the outcomes are related to the expertise of the Oxfam and SOMO staff members, as well as the ‘constructive dialogue’ that was engaged in. In the second story, the ToC intervention of building coalitions was not followed, which may have provided more power behind the efforts, and at the very least could have provided some risk sharing among the CSOs working in the area. With the end of the project with the one partner, other CSOs could have followed-up to not lose the commitments and space that was gained.

The strategy of working with champions – i.e. the policy officer in the Ministry, but also the more open staff member of the company - was found to be in line with the ToC: ‘cultivate and stimulate corporate leaders and

business frontrunners who are willing to change business policies’.

## 4. (Sub-)thematic analysis – Conflict and Fragility

For Conflict and Fragility, the key evaluation question was:

*To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of governments, companies and international institutions in favour of the inclusion and protection of marginalised groups and women in security and peace building? How did these changes take place?*

The external evaluation built upon the efforts and data from the internal evaluation process. The data of the Harvested Outcomes, the result of the CATool (measuring progress in advocacy capacity of partners) as well as a selection of Stories of Change and survey results were handed over to the external evaluators.

The external evaluation is based on a sample of the C&F sub-theme (Private Sector in Conflict), two country projects (Myanmar and Nigeria) and the Global C&F project. Within the global and country projects, 8 contribution stories were selected.<sup>112</sup> Research was done through desk study, (semi)structured interviews and a ‘Collective System Analysis’. To accentuate the ‘how’ of the outcomes, a narrative approach was chosen. In this paragraph the evaluation questions are answered for the C&F (sub)-theme. Below the evaluation sub-questions’ are answered based on the data captured in the outcome database, the data of the CATool, the contribution narrative and the research of the external evaluators into an alternative contributions hypothesis. The answers to the final sub-question includes an assessment of the validity of the ToC, the change pathways included in the ToC and the underlying assumptions.

### Changes in public and private sector policies (effectiveness, relevance)

*Evaluation question 1. What changes in public and private sector policies and practices has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 3. What is the nature of the changes in policies and practices? (e.g. New policies? Amendments to existing policies? Implementation / enforcement of policies? Were they local, national or global level policies?)*

### On the overall C&F programme

taken into consideration. For Nigeria, the two (early) outcomes were in line with each other and are thus developed as one contribution story.

<sup>112</sup> For Global, one of the three cases (DRC) could not be explored in-depth, as there were no externals that could be interviewed and repeated efforts to get in contact with them failed. The interviews with SOMO and SOMO’s partner organisation has, however, been

## PART IV – CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

	Global	Regional	National	Local	Total
<b>Changes in public policies</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>
Policy adopted			8	7	15
Policy damage limited	1		5	1	7
Policy implementation	1		2	10	13
<b>Changes in private sector policies</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
New policy adopted					
Policy damage limited					
Policy implementation					
Policy improvement				1	1
<b>Increased political will</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Stronger and wider alliances</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Strengthened CSOs</b>			<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Increased citizens' voice</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Shifted norms and attitudes</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>148</b>

Table 32: Nature and number of outcomes. Data from C&F Basic Narratives 2019\_1204\_FINAL

The table of all C&F outcomes shows:

- > The majority of outcomes harvested (2019) can be found in Political will and as such in the category of Early and Intermediate outcomes. 4 of the 57 outcomes include a private sector actor;
- > About 23% of all outcomes are related to changes in public sector policies, which is quite an impressive number;
- > Private sector influencing shows only 1 outcome, despite the separate sub-theme on private sector;
- > For the outcomes on increased citizens' voice (23 outcomes), more than half (14 outcomes) were related to the sub-theme private sector (Nigeria, Global, and Myanmar);
- > There are relatively limited outcomes related to strengthened CSOs (9 outcomes), while this seems to have been a part of a large part of the interventions contributing to outcomes in the C&F programme. A reason might be that these outcomes are often seen as early outcomes or 'outputs', or means to get to

higher outcomes, and are as thus not captured by the database;

- > This might also count for the outcomes on stronger and wider alliances (17 outcomes), as relationship building is a long-term process and cannot be written down as a specific outcome in time. The outcomes that fall under this category (none in the sub-theme private sector) all describe an event where CSOs came together to formally collaborate, but strengthened alliances are often also more informal collaborations;
- > Most outcomes, including changes in government policies, are at the national and local levels; global level outcomes are scarce. Outcomes that fall under the 'global' project are at the national or local level.

On the quality of the database:

- > Overall, the outcome descriptions are clear, the outcomes are generally placed under the correct categories, and the quality is assessed as 'good';

- > Outcomes are not clustered around targeted outcomes in the ToC. This makes it difficult to determine which outcomes belong together, e.g. to assess whether the increased political will was followed by policy changes;
- > Except for policy change outcomes, the ‘actor’ that was influenced can only be understood when reading the full outcome description. A separate category on ‘type of actor’ would be helpful to see for example whose political will was increased (private sector, government or international actor). Outcomes regarding an important pathway in the ToC, on the international community, are not clearly categorised as such.

### **On the Sub-theme Private Sector and conflict sensitivity**

The findings below pertain to the sampled outcomes of the sub-theme Private sector and conflict sensitivity that formed part of the external evaluation.

#### *Private sector actors*

Strategic engagement with the private sector operating in fragile and conflict-affected states itself was found challenging, especially for local partners. There are some examples where a local partner was strengthened to contact a company (operating in natural resources) at the local or national level, and meetings were held. Supported by SOMO or Oxfam, the local partners or alliances engaged by sending reports with community concerns and grievances or inviting the company to multi-stakeholder meetings.

There is some early indication of this engagement leading to perceived increased political will (some documented commitments), where the company has declared to take issues into consideration or has requested more input from the local partner (DRC, Myanmar and Nigeria).

The translation to more conflict-sensitive private sector policies or practices so far is low. There are some exceptions, for example in Nigeria, where one oil company has increased its interaction with the affected communities, and has increased its budget for local development. It is difficult to gauge the reasons for the lack of translation of ‘political will’ into concrete policy changes. Interviewees point to a need to apply more pressure (via different channels) on the company, to be concrete about what you want from the company, and follow-up intensively after initial meetings. Engagement with non-western companies seems to require an even different approach. There was still relatively little experience, and thus hesitation, within Oxfam and partner organisations on advocating the private sector, and particularly Chinese companies. This was also because there was a realisation among programme partners that change in private sector actors’ behaviour did not match the assumptions in the pathway in the ToC. For Myanmar, it was also found that investors tend to be close to local mafias and militias, and direct engagement was therefore considered (too) risky.

At the same time, the projects could have benefited more from the expertise of SOMO in this regard, but this complementarity has not been utilised to the fullest. One

of the reasons is that both SP partners focused on different countries, and for SOMO, the SP funded their running projects instead of specific interventions designed for the SP. Another reason was the limited timeline of the projects in countries (Nigeria) where Oxfam and SOMO did try to align, e.g. with the Vitol report being published late. Also for Myanmar, deeper collaboration between SOMO and Oxfam came at a later stage.

The majority of engagement with the private sector was at the local or national context, which places a large responsibility on the shoulders of the partner organisations. For several reasons, applying pressure at other levels (regional, international) did not fully materialise, while the ToC and programme document identify the international community as important and influential in holding private sector actors and government to account. With the Policy Advisor who was based in Myanmar under the Global project, there had been the intention of a focus on international governments - Thailand, China and India -, the home basis of Asian companies in the region. However, the project with CITIC (Global Myanmar story) was so time-consuming that the international focus of the position was reverted towards a localised project.

#### *Government*

Overall, the advocacy regarding the private sector was targeted to the government, to hold the private sector to account. Considering the CSA analyses, this shift towards the government to improve accountability and transparency was in most cases a relevant one. Again, the government was targeted mostly at the local and national levels through meetings, briefings and via media campaigns (in Nigeria). There are examples of increased political will in the form of commitments, but again, the translation to concrete changes in policies or legislation is lagging behind. Reasons for this may be the still relatively short period of project implementation, but also government corruption and general government ineffectiveness.

Influencing of national governments via other channels (bilaterally, EU, UN etc.) or other levels was limited for the sub-theme. An example of where national efforts were reinforced internationally was in the context of the validation procedure of Myanmar in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). Even though not able to enforce standards, it is plausible that the EITI procedures will at least provide incentives for the government and private sector to better adhere to standards in the extractive industry. Another example of efforts to influence a national government with the aim to have an international effect was when Oxfam and SOMO have amplified the drafting of conflict-sensitive private sector guidelines of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### *Citizens’ voices*

The programme has been quite successful in raising local communities’ voices. Almost half of all the 23 outcomes in the overall C&F related to increased citizens’ voice fall under the sub-theme Private Sector. Through participatory research and capacity development with communities, early results are visible in better informed

communities and improved awareness of their rights. The extent to which their decision-power has increased is a mixed picture. In Myanmar, possible reasons for this lie outside the scope of the project, and include the way citizens and civil society are perceived by the still dominant paternalistic government. Nevertheless, communities have been mobilised to raise their voices, for example in carrying out protests and filing petitions. In Nigeria, the partner CSO has achieved clear results in the increased visibility and influence of communities, and also women within them, in dealing with stakeholders and issues that affect their community. This has led to improved communication with and improved response from local authorities and oil companies at the local level.

In general, raising broader public awareness at the country or international level was not a prominent part of the programme on the sub-theme. An exception is Nigeria, where there was a public media campaign regarding oil revenues and public spending, which likely increased the pressure on the government to make commitments regarding the Petroleum Industry Bill – although this bill has been pending for decades and is currently again awaiting adoption. In Nigeria, the Vitol report provides opportunity for more broader public campaigning inside and outside Nigeria, which has been mentioned as a necessary step to further expose and put pressure on influential players who now remain under the radar. Collaboration with investigative journalists and other independent media could be sought.

#### Contribution / added value SP (effectiveness, coherence)

*Evaluation question 7. What was the contribution of our SP to these changes in relation to other actors and factors?*

*Evaluation question 8. Which factors/strategies were most important to achieve or contribute to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

The contribution of the SP to the (early) outcomes has been large. A key success of Oxfam is that partners have strengthened their capacities to carry out evidence-based advocacy. In most cases alliances were formed with relevant other CSOs, which makes it difficult to filter out the concrete contribution of the SP. In most cases the contribution of the SP partners was mostly to *accelerate* existing advocacy efforts by allies for better governance in the extractive industry. The achieved changes largely lie at the level of early or intermediate outcomes ('political will'), with an exception of the Sagaing mining law in Myanmar.

Research, done by SOMO, Oxfam and partners on the ground was conducive to evidence-based advocacy. Particularly having stories from the reality on the ground supported advocacy at international level, as was found for example in the Myanmar EITI case.

While aligning with platforms like EITI and working in multi-stakeholder initiatives, national CSO partners were crucial in bringing local, community issues to the national level. This was a strength of the national partner CSOs in Nigeria and Myanmar: linking community concerns to other stakeholders.

Bringing different stakeholders (government, private sector, media, CSOs) together and taking a 'constructive

engagement' approach, i.e. focused on dialogue and non-confrontational, was found to lead to policy commitments, by government and private sector actors. However, verbal commitments itself are no guarantee that changes will be implemented. Concrete policy changes have not yet been achieved, except for the regional mining law in Myanmar that was drafted. Several actors indicated that less public, one-on-one follow-up is essential to move beyond verbal commitments. In addition, 'constructive engagement' could be at odds with another role of non-governmental organisations: holding those in power accountable, for example via protests or raising citizens' voices via the media and campaigns. Balancing all these different roles (both dialogue and dissent) was found to be tricky for partner organisations. Oxfam and SOMO could have been more strategic in applying pressure via other channels, for example linking the international community or at other levels. Successful examples are there, such as the EITI advocacy, and more recently, the follow-up of the Vitol report.

A clear added value of SOMO and Oxfam was their international network and overview. SOMO's expertise on multinational corporations and conducting in-depth research supported evidence-based advocacy, while Oxfam's international network supported advocacy at the international level, for example linking the Myanmar partner to international actors in the context of EITI and influencing a Chinese state-owned enterprise. At the same time, this potential leverage by SOMO and Oxfam was underutilised in the framework of this sub-theme. Time-constraints and limited staff seem to be the reason for this.

Oxfam Novib's hiring of a staff member who has in-depth knowledge of the Chinese private sector has contributed to having entry-points and engagement with the company in Rakhine State in Myanmar (global story). The partner's capacity was built on how to interact with this company, for example what language to use. After the project ended abruptly, the learning was captured in an internal Oxfam report (November 2020), which suggests that the knowledge built will support cross-country learning on private sector engagement in the future (after the SP ended). Another example of early positive engagement with the private sector was in DRC, where SOMO supported the local partner to file an official community complaint based on Chinese guidelines on CSR, local legislation and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. This seems a promising strategy, but again, there have been no concrete changes yet. The lack of a follow-up strategy was mentioned as a possible reason for this. At the same time, those who use a (Chinese) grievance mechanism are not in control of the speed of the receiving party.

Working with 'champions' as intermediary influencing targets has in several cases proven to support targeted advocacy. An example is to work with MPs, e.g. engaging them in research, at the local level (Sagaing), who have linkages to those in power at the national level in Myanmar. Another example is the policy officer at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the EITI Board Member. The SP's focus on conducting power mapping and stakeholder analyses is thus a key strength of the programme.

There is a tension in the programme: the need to move fast to maintain momentum and follow-up after initial

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*Table 32. Contribution Assessment*

	Myanmar	Myanmar	Myanmar	Nigeria	Global	Global
<b>Contribution assessment</b>	Sagaing mining law	EITI civic space	Power plant Tigyit	Oil & gas sector	MoFa's conflict-sensitive PSD policies	Chinese company in Rakhine State
<b>Evidence</b>						
<b>Evidence output</b>	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
<b>Evidence contribution</b>	Strong	Strong	Medium	Medium (beyond early outcomes)	Strong	Medium
<b>Perceptions interviewees</b>						
<b>Was programme necessary for outcome?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (commitments made at roundtables)	Yes	Yes
<b>Was programme sufficient for outcome?</b>	No	Yes	Unclear, but collaboration with others was a key aspect	Yes	No	Unclear
<b>Overall assessment</b>	Strong	Strong	Medium	Medium	Strong	Strong

commitments, and the importance of building support from communities and CSOs through wide consultation, which takes time.

### Capacity strengthening for influencing (effectiveness, relevance)

*Evaluation question 2. What changes in civil society's influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society's influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)*

*Evaluation question 9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacities?*

*Evaluation question 10. Can the changes in civil society's influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

The evaluation has shown that capacity development played a large role in the C&F programme (sub-theme private sector). Across the board, with support from

Oxfam and SOMO, C&F partners have developed research skills for evidence-based advocacy with government, international community (EITI), and private sector actors. Through participatory action research or consultations, communities, other CSOs, and in some cases also MPs, have also benefited from this. Another aspect of capacity development was bringing various stakeholders together for 'constructive dialogue'. The research reports that were delivered, as well as the meetings that were convened to engage in dialogue with various stakeholders, have shown to have contributed to the changes captured in the evaluation. The partners' more activist approaches, such as engaging in protests and petitions have likely also played a role, but these skills have not been developed specifically by the C&F SP partners.

The partners in the C&F programme acknowledged the collaborative and flexible nature of the capacity development. In many cases, the Oxfam staff member worked alongside the partner. The added value of Oxfam was mostly its international network and linking the partners to the international stakeholders.

See more on capacity strengthening in the cross-cutting narrative (Part V).

### Are the outcomes sustainable?

*Evaluation question 6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?*

Attention to sustainability was found to be a pitfall of the cases that have been assessed by the external evaluator. Overall, it is too soon to adequately assess sustainability of the changes as the programme, and particularly the sub-theme, is relatively young. At the same time, several interviewees mentioned that there was a lack of adequate follow-up on early outcomes. The multi-stakeholder approach was useful, but follow-up in one-on-one engagement with private sector or government was mentioned by interviewees, including influencing targets, as effective for commitments to translate into concrete action. This follow-up was not always given in the three cases studied in-depth. Reasons mentioned are lack of resources, lack of follow-up strategy, or the end of the programme, but also due to external factors such as Covid-19 impeding follow-up meetings.

At the same time, the attention to capacity development of the partners and building communities' voices and increasing their role in governance structures has likely contributed to enhancement of sustainability, for example in Nigeria. In addition, the findings from SOMO and Oxfam's high quality research can be leveraged by disseminating it among the public, e.g. via the media. This has happened to a certain extent, but could be utilised more.

A partner in Nigeria mentioned that Oxfam's support with digital campaigning was found particularly useful for follow-up to get legislation passed after the Corona pandemic prevented real life petitioning.

### Towards a systemic change (relevance, impact)

*Evaluation question 5. Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?*

How does the C&F programme and its outcomes in the end contribute to the impact statement 'The basic rights of people affected by conflict and fragility are respected by national and international duty bearers and human security is improved'? Is the programme working on root causes of the problem and targeting the right actors and right issues?

The C&F programme in Nigeria and Myanmar is working on a number of relevant root causes that hinder the transformation towards a more peaceful, equitable and human secure system: The lack of a regulatory framework or weak implementation of existing laws, the lack of transparency of business conduct and finances, elite capture, and lack of knowledge about their rights among affected communities.

Overall, the projects are grounded in elaborate context analysis and power mapping, increasing the potential relevance of the interventions. The focus on the government to draft regulations and hold companies to account and protect its citizens is highly relevant. However, while the private sector is identified as one of the key players in sustaining or enhancing conflict or preventing development and human security, the

number of other interventions to either directly or indirectly (e.g. via the international community) target them has been limited. The programme largely focused on two pathways: civil society strengthening and influencing national or local governments. Another example is ethnic groups and local elites. These informal players have a great impact on the ground, but it is unclear to what extent the SP partners have engaged with them. In Myanmar, it was mentioned that for security reasons this is done behind the scenes.

Gender-sensitivity, while central to the entire SP, was not always clear in the projects. Results are found in Nigeria, where decision-power of women community members was formalised.

The timeframe of the projects does not match the ambitions: research to inform evidence-based advocacy, and in most cases also participatory action research with communities, and carrying out advocacy at all levels – particularly with a 'new' advocacy target like the private sector. Especially since most of the sub-theme projects started later than other projects in the SP.

### What does this mean for the Theory of Change?

*Evaluation question 11. What do the answers to the above questions mean for the Theory of Change?*

Within the so-called sphere of influence, the programme aimed to work towards the following long-term outcome: 'Marginalised groups have a say in policies that affect their lives; governments and international institutions support inclusion of women and promote protection of marginalised groups in security and peace building; and the private sector contributes to peace and development'.

The private sector sub-theme makes up the third pathway of the Conflict and Fragility ToC with the primary targeted outcome 'Private sector actors do no harm, behave conflict-sensitively and are accountable to citizens and communities'.

A number of assumptions in the C&F ToC could not be tested, because of lack of interventions, for example regarding engagement with the international community, or for lack of higher level outcomes.

### Assumptions

*1. CSOs can become influential stakeholders in fragile societies and respected as legitimate representatives, if they are well organised, properly capacitated and able to bring together vulnerable groups under a common agenda.*

This assumption is found to be valid. Working in alliances and with one agenda has shown to provide important protection for individual CSOs.

*2. A strong civil society is a precondition for inclusive gender-sensitive peace building and essential for accountable governance and conflict-sensitive private sector behaviour.*

This assumption could not be tested, as there have been no significant changes in private sector behaviour. Nonetheless, early outcomes indicate that a strong civil

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society has the power to leverage community concerns toward private sector actors.

*3. As CSOs effectively represent the voice of women and marginalised groups, these groups are capable of voicing their concerns and have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and connect with (inter)national political processes.*

This assumption appears to be true, even though this evaluation could not test whether the voices of women and marginalised groups were effectively represented. There are examples where women were supported in their decision-power at the local level (a village in the Niger Delta in Nigeria), and were brought to bring in their concerns at the national level. In other projects as well, affected communities were consulted – however, real decision-power is still lacking.

*4. To be an actor of positive change, the international community must be aware of the need for inclusive peace building and protection of civilians.*

For the sub-theme Private Sector, this assumption could not be tested as there were too few examples of engagement with international actors. A positive example is found around EITI advocacy, where Oxfam successfully involved international NGOs to influence other international stakeholders.

*5. Pressure from the international community influences national stakeholders to change policies and practice, including those of the private sector.*

As mentioned, for the sub-theme this assumption could not be tested, which is a missed opportunity for this programme. The stakeholder analysis in the programme document states that the international community has a lot of power.

*6. International community support for inclusive policies will open up space for citizens to have their voices heard.*

One example of this is found in the EITI case, where the partner from Myanmar was able to gather attention for civic space in Myanmar at the EITI Board; with an effect on CSOs in other countries as well. However, to what extent this has actually led to increased civic space at the national or local level is debatable. Nonetheless, international scrutiny likely places pressure on governments and private sector actors to take citizens into account.

*7. The private sector can be (come) a force for good when it implements international standards for responsible conduct.*

This assumption could not be tested, but it is likely so.

*8. Companies will engage in inclusion and protection and conduct meaningful due diligence if there are regulatory or economic drivers to do so.*

This assumption could not be tested, but the available information does point in this direction.

*9. Awareness of the need for participation and protection creates the political will to act, and this (state-society) interaction can be strengthened by pressure from the international community.*

The first part of the assumption was found to be true. Engagement, for example in multi-stakeholder meetings did lead to increased ‘political will’ in the form of verbal commitments. However, the strengthening role of the international community was largely absent in the sub-theme.

*10. (Sub)national governments in fragile and conflict affected states have sufficient capacity to implement policies with a substantial impact on society.*

This assumption should be more nuanced. National level governments have more power and capacity (resources) than sub-national governments. Sub-national governments are sometimes unable to enforce or implement policies if they are not endorsed by national governments.

The specific assumption underlying the private sector sub-theme was: ‘Private sector actors should first become aware of their impact on the conflict and respect relevant (inter) national norms and standards. Instigated by increased awareness, private sector actors should then begin to engage with the international community and other national actors (governments, civil society or local communities) to explore how they can avoid exacerbating current conflicts or creating new ones. Once this has happened, private sector actors are then expected to start to include conflict-sensitivity considerations in their strategies and policies.’

This assumption did not work in reality. Awareness does not necessarily lead to a willingness to engage, and furthermore, a change in practices and policies, unless you ensure incentives, interventions and relevant stakeholder engagement. The problem is also that there is no incentive to respect or adhere to relevant (inter)national norms and standards. This was soon realised by the programme partners, and in the second phase there was a shift in focus to government actors – to ensure better governance and that regulations are in place to hold the private sector to account. Those in power to then also hold the government to account have been less part of the evaluated projects. Engagement in the EITI platform is an exception.

At the final stage of the programme some initiatives have been undertaken, for example around the Vitol report with actors in The Hague, and the learning paper from the Private Sector advisor that was disseminated among Oxfam offices. It is a pity that some of these initiatives to influence and engage meaningfully with the private sector, and particularly, non-western actors, have come only at the end of the SP.

Overall, based on the assessment of the sub-theme, it is difficult to come to a conclusion on the validity of the ToC for Conflict and Fragility. The CSO pathway in the ToC is not a clear pathway. At the early and intermediate level,



activities/interventions are mentioned ('engagement with the private sector', 'link global and local agendas').

It is strange that the targeted outcomes are the same as the long-term outcome of the C&F programme. These four targeted outcomes could be rewritten to match the underlying pathways. The long-term outcome should be a result level above the targeted outcomes. The pathway that was found to generally hold true is pathway 3 on government actors.

The private sector pathway is clearly added to the ToC at a later stage. The targeted outcome under COMMIT is placed at the same level as the overall target group of the programme, which is not logical. The private sector targeted outcome about their behaviour and accountability should be underneath the other targeted outcomes (as they are now), as it should have a beneficial effect for women and vulnerable groups. The private sector sentence should thus also be removed from the long-term outcome. A positive change in private sector behaviour is an intermediate outcome to a higher end (i.e. less problems for the affected population), not the end goal in itself. Overall, all pathways could benefit from more clearly distinguishing early outcomes, intermediate outcomes and targeted outcomes. For example, for the government pathway, the development or adoption of policies and mechanisms does not necessarily mean their implementation. Implementation should be placed on a next level (targeted outcome).

The linkages between the different pathways are not made explicit in the ToC.

Finally, the ToC could include a pathway on increasing citizens' voices, as the role of the public is currently invisible in the ToC. This would also give room for including campaigning as one of the key interventions in the ToC.

### Conclusions C&F

- > Context analysis and actor and power mapping is crucial to any intervention in any context, but particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. The C&F programme has done this well.
- > The key strength of Oxfam and SOMO is their evidence-based advocacy expertise and long-term, collaborative relationships with partners. Oxfam's added value at the international level, linking local to global and vice versa is clear, but has been limited to only a few cases for the sub-theme private sector.
- > There is a gap between the ambitions in the ToC and reality. The expectations regarding private sector change were too high. Hesitation (out of fear or lack of knowledge on how) to engage with the private sector directly, and particularly non-western companies, seems to be the main reason at the local and national level. The evaluator was not able to assess whether more or other engagement would have led to more effectiveness with regard to the changes envisioned in the ToC, but more could be done to follow-up on early commitments by companies. Promising initiatives from the programme are to have a non-western Private Sector Advisor (Myanmar global case) and to engage via proxy influencing targets, such as Chambers of Commerce (DRC).

- > While at the national level complementarity between partners is large, SOMO, Oxfam and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not operate as complementary as potentially possible in this Strategic Partnership, particularly when it comes to influencing the private sector, both directly or indirectly (via government or international platforms).
- > Ambitions of the SP, and also the C&F programme, were very high. Goals, themes and interventions spanned a large scope, which at the country level has led to Oxfam staff in countries and partner organisations being spread very thin. There is a high risk of staff turnover, which harms continuity and sustainability of the hard-fought achievements made.

### Overall conclusion

For Conflict and Fragility: *To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society's influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of governments, companies and international institutions in favour of the inclusion and protection of marginalised groups and women in security and peace building? How did these changes take place?*

There are many factors that come into play when operating in fragile and conflict-affected states. There are large – known and unknown, expected and unexpected – economic, cultural and political forces that affect the level of success that can be achieved with advocacy programmes, especially in only 3-4 years. Having said that, seen in this light, it can be concluded that the SP C&F programme has contributed to a large extent to the capacities of civil society to implement advocacy, as well as to mitigate the risks in such contexts.

Overall, these increased capacities for influencing have not yet materialised to concrete changes in more inclusive and gender-sensitive policies - with the exception of the Sagaing law. Yet, there are clear examples of increased political will (commitments) for better governance in the extractive sector, and in some cases improved practices by companies. Without Oxfam (/SOMO) and partners, it is likely that some of these results would not have been achieved, or would have been achieved later. The most successful approaches for this are a non-confrontational style of engagement and dialogue in multi-stakeholder meetings, as well as bringing bottom-up, community-based evidence to relevant stakeholders. Oxfam's particular added value has been to link their country-level partners to actors at the international level. However, to come to changes beyond verbal commitments by government and private sector actors, approaches that apply more pressure on these actors are needed as well, such as public campaigning. In the necessary balance between dialogue and dissent, the balance within the assessed interventions in the C&F programme so far has tilted towards dialogue.

The programme has laid the groundwork, now it is important to follow-up and intensify the leverage of multi-stakeholders, including international actors, to hold government and companies in FCAS accountable, as well as ensuring gender-sensitivity is not lost in the big picture. More attention could be paid to how to engage

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with the private sector, and particularly non-western companies. There have been good first steps in that direction, and this expertise could be built on further.



Baobab with fruits – Photo by Wallygrom

# Part V: Cross-cutting narrative

## Civil Society Capacity Development

## Part V Cross-cutting narrative: civil society capacity development

### 1. Introduction

Civil society strengthening is one of the two main areas of change of the Strategic Partnership, alongside policy change. Oxfam Novib and SOMO's set-up has strengthening of the civil society as an essential cross-cutting element of the SP. For the purpose of the final evaluation, the cross-cutting focuses specifically on the strengthening of the civil society as an influencing actor. Civil society capacity development was intended to be woven throughout the three thematic programmes – Right to Food (R2F), Conflict & Fragility (C&F) and Finance for Development (F4D). Other cross-cutting elements are 'gender', 'civic space' and 'conflict sensitivity'.

According to 'Oxfam Novib's Capacity Strengthening Strategy 2016' civil society strengthening can be divided into four pillars: 1) capacity development, 2) safe and open civic space, 3) stronger and wider alliances/partnerships, and 4) funding.

This part of the evaluation report specifically focuses on the first pillar: capacity development. And as the SP is an *influencing* programme, the pillar of capacity development will focus on how the SP has contributed to strengthening the influencing capacities of civil society actors.

Drawing together information from the sampled sub-themes and projects, the internal evaluation team produced a cross-cutting narrative based on the changes in influencing capacities of CSOs.<sup>113</sup> Within the scope of the evaluation questions of the SP final evaluation, this cross-cutting narrative therefore addresses capacity development on influencing and less on the aspects which touch upon broader civil society strengthening, i.e. civic space and alliances/partnership at intermediate outcome level and funding at intervention level. However, many of the conclusions in this narrative will be applicable for capacity development in general and not only in relation to influencing work.

The evaluation of the cross-cutting issue of capacity development for advocacy aims to provide answers to the following evaluation questions:

- > *Evaluation question 2. What changes in civil society's influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?*
- > *Evaluation question 4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society's influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)*

- > *Evaluation question 6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?*
- > *Evaluation question 9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to the changes observed in civil society's influencing capacities?*
- > *Evaluation question 10. Can the changes in civil society's influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

In the next paragraph the Theory of Change of strengthening of civil society is discussed.

### 2. Theory of Change of civil society strengthening

The Theory of Change of civil society strengthening was developed in 2020 (note that the ToC was produced *ex post*: it was not developed as a planning and monitoring instrument) based on the insights gained throughout the SP. Figure 10 is a graphic representation of the ToC. Note that the ToC represents the whole concept (the four pillars) of civil society strengthening, not just the capacity development pillar.

The bottom of the figure represents the intervention level, where Oxfam, Somo and their partners bring in knowledge, skills, practical insights, access to networks and funds. The capacity development interventions include formal training opportunities, but also opportunities for dialogue and co-creation and on-the-job learning.

The interventions are designed to increase capacities to *operate*, *act* and *connect*; the early outcomes. The capacity to act relates to capabilities to develop and implement influencing strategies, campaigns and increased thematic knowledge. This element is closely related to the task of the evaluation to assess influencing capacities.

The third layer are the intermediate outcomes, where gained knowledge and skills are disseminated throughout the networks of partners leading to a stronger civil society voice.

At the level of long-term outcomes a stronger civil society achieves changes in policies, practices and behaviour of governments and the private sector at local, national, regional and global level. This will contribute to improvements of people's lives (impact). In the document on the cross-cutting narrative, Oxfam rightly states that the ToC should not be interpreted as a linear chain of events. In reality, all elements and layers are interlinked. The precise required capacities cannot be predicted; learning and capacity development is the result of many contributing factors of which only some can be planned. The subdivisions of the concept of civil society strengthening into four pillars is not clearly applied in the ToC. And probably rightly so. In practice, the four elements that constitute the pillars cannot

<sup>113</sup> Strengthening civil society - A cross-cutting narrative on the Strategic Partnership's capacity development of civil society for

influencing. Published by Oxfam Novib and SOMO in August 2020.

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rigorously be separated: civic space, capacity development, funding, and creating alliances are

annual reports. In the next paragraph, a short summary of the cross-cutting narrative is presented.

*Figure 10. Theory of Change Civil Society Strengthening*

intricately connected.



*Figure 1: ToC of strengthened civil society*

When cross-checking with the thematic ToCs (graphic representations of these ToC are included in the beginning of the thematic parts of this report, parts II, III and IV), we see that in these ToCs the capacity development element is included in the left side of the ToC, where the capacity strengthening change pathways lead up to targeted outcomes, at the same level as policy changes. In the civil society strengthening ToC, however, increased capacities at the intermediate level lead to policy outcomes. The latter seems a more realistic and logical representation. This does not diminish the fact that capacity strengthening/empowering people was chosen as one of the two key change areas of the SP.

In formulating the cross-cutting narrative, the internal evaluation team drew from the evidence from all available data sources in the Oxfam’s MEAL system: the Capacity Assessment Tool (CATool), Outcome Harvesting results, surveys, Stories of Change and

### 3. Summary of the internally produced cross-cutting narrative

The internally produced ‘Capacity Development Narrative’ confirms the validity of the hypothesised capacity development pathway, as outlined in the Theory of Change. Based on the MEAL-instruments, it is concluded that, at the intervention level, the capacities of Oxfam country offices and their partners have been strengthened “through the exchange of knowledge and through jointly implementing the programme”. A combination of capacity development strategies (e.g. formal workshops, coaching, dialogues, co-creation and co-implementation of influencing strategies) has been particularly effective in developing capacities. Especially in alliances and other types of partnerships, co-creation provides the trust that is needed to share weaknesses and

## PART V – CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

strengths. “In contexts with limited civic space where the CSOs who choose to speak up might be at risk, connecting CSOs with each other and to governmental and private sector actors has proved to be an important strategy in ensuring protection, strengthened capacities and a strong united influencing voice.”

The capacity development narrative indicates that the efforts to strengthen capacities have resulted in increased abilities to ‘operate, act and connect’. Partners report stronger influencing skills. These skills refer to technical influencing capacities and thematic knowledge, but also to ‘soft skills’, like communication. This has enhanced the confidence and empowerment of CSOs and individuals, enabling them to ‘speak truth to power’ and to engage duty bearers.

The reporting of country Oxfams and partners shows that the acquired capacities are not only applied in lobbying and advocacy for the targeted policy changes, but knowledge and skills are also transferred to other actors, mainly civil society organisations, but also to individual actors at grassroots level and to government agents both at national and sub-national level. The document concludes there is a multiplier effect: “...national civil societies thus also benefit from the contributions of the projects (...) This manifests in expanded and strengthened alliances and partnerships characterised by joint strategising, joint research, collective and/or complementary campaign, lobby and advocacy processes, and (cross-regional and global) exchanges.”

At the level of ‘long-term outcomes’, the capacity development narrative identifies cases where the strengthened CSOs achieve changes in the policies, practices and behaviour of governmental and private sector actors. “Through both the multiplying role and the ability to apply the increased capacities, the influencing actions lead to more substantial policy outcomes at local or national level.” The gained capacities are also put to use in activities outside and beyond the Strategic Partnership. This would be an indication for the sustainability of the increased capacities.

The external evaluation team critically reviewed the contribution narrative as presented by Oxfam, as well as the results of other MEAL methodologies applied by the SP (Capacity Assessment Tool, the Stories of Change and the Outcome Harvesting). Based on the sample (see sampling paragraph in the Background part of this report, part I) we collected additional data from the three ToCs, we investigated the ways (and the extent to which) capacity development contributed to the selected outcomes. The results of these efforts are presented in the next section.

### 4. Key findings civil society capacity development

#### Right to Food – Overall findings capacity development

##### CATool R2F

The R2F CATool analysis 2020 covers in total 19 partners, including 4 partners in Uganda and 1 in Myanmar.

In the analysis of the CATool 2020 (R2F, N=19) the following topics were mentioned most frequently as relevant topics for capacity development: Context and power analyses, Strategizing, Lobbying the government, Building alliances, Gender mainstreaming and MEAL for influencing.

In the CATool all influencing capacities mentioned and measured were strengthened over the course of the R2F programme.

In the CATool analysis the most frequently mentioned third parties whose capacities were strengthened as part of the R2F included other CSOs (83%), community groups (83%), and government officials (61%).

The most effective capacity development strategies that contributed to results included the Co-design of strategies and plans (72%), Trainings and workshops (65%), Co-implementation of activities (64%) and opportunities to connect with other stakeholders (59%).

#### *R2F Uganda project- capacity development*

The SP initiated several capacity development workshops and interventions including digital campaigning training, Lobby and Advocacy, training in Shrinking civic space, Influencing strategies and a number of thematic trainings. Thematic (content) capacities and influencing capacities went hand in hand in the so-called evidence based advocacy/ research based advocacy.

A whole range of capacities was strengthened, but especially context and power analysis, public campaigning and building alliances were mentioned (CATool, 2020).

Within the Global project Land Rights Now (LNR) various R2F countries embarked on the Global Land Program’s land learning journeys. Also in Uganda staff joined the learning journeys. There were various forms of capacity development within the R2F Uganda project, both technical and influencing capacities. As the examples show, thematic (content) capacities and influencing capacities went hand in hand in the so-called evidence based advocacy/ research based advocacy.

A whole range of capacities were strengthened, but especially context and power analysis, public campaigning and building alliances were mentioned (CATool, 2020).

#### **Strategies for effective capacity development**

Peer learning: The most important form of capacity development, as indicated by the partners, was the composition of the coalition with ESAFF, FRA and PELUM. The partners were selected for their added value to the coalition. “In our coalition different organisations came with different expertise. FRA was experienced in working at national influencing processes, ESAFF involved us in their work with their members and through them we were able to expand our

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network, and stakeholders. We learned from each other” (R2F partner).

**Learning by doing:** “We strengthened our capacity by doing things, working effectively on public policies.” “You need to understand we had not worked much on land rights directly. We knew a lot about land use, but not on land rights. It was through R2F that we fully embarked on the theme since another organisation collapsed. So we had to do it.” (PELUM)

**Engaging experts:** Another way of strengthening capacities that was mentioned by the interviewees was the inclusion of lawyers and experts, working with them on understanding the consequences of the Amendments of Article 26.

**Formal capacity development:** The coalition was trained in all influencing strategies. During the interviews especially the Digital Campaigning was mentioned.

### **Dissemination of capacity development**

Many interviewees mentioned how their capacities were strengthened by the R2F and their partners. A Member of Parliament in Uganda states: “Our engagement with civil society was very important because it strengthened our capacity as MPs to debate land legal reforms from an informed point of view. MPs now talk on the floor of parliament with well-researched facts. Secondly, the programme strengthened the capacities of local communities to know their land rights and that any threat to land ownership is a threat to sustainable livelihoods. The citizens now know that land is critical for their survival and whoever threatens their land ownership by supporting enabling land laws does deserve their vote. When you deal with empowered communities who know their rights, fighting bad laws becomes simple.”

**Staff from the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development:** “I personally benefited from the experience Oxfam partners brought especially from other countries. The partners shared information on the good practices of land acquisition, which built the capacity of the Ministry staff. The partners also shared with us good land acquisition policies and legal frameworks. The good practices have informed us when we were drafting and amending the new bill and policy. Oxfam partners also provided us with IEC materials and documentation. As the Lands Ministry, we now have the technical capacity to put together the text of the legal frameworks, human rights and policy guidelines into IEC materials.”

### **Linking capacities and changes in policies and practices**

Interviewees in Uganda acknowledge their strengthened capacities have contributed to achieving results. The most effective approaches that contributed to achieving results (CATool2020) include trainings & workshop (100%), co-implementation of activities (100%) and coaching and expert advice (100%)(100% meaning that all 4 partners mentioned this strategy as approaches that were most effective in achieving results).

### *R2F Myanmar project - capacity development*

#### **Capacity development of partners**

All interviewed staff of the Myanmar partner feel they are much stronger now in influencing capacities, especially in alliance building and influencing.

#### **Strategies**

When interviewing the partners of Oxfam how they strengthened their capacities, they got somewhat agitated: “We are all experienced CSOs, which is why we are members of the Alliance. So there is a lot of expertise, and we share our capacities, instead of getting capacities from outside.” (Partner Oxfam).

Peer learning was institutionalised in the Kachin Alliance. “Whenever the Alliance has their quarterly meeting we reserve a two-hour session for peer exchanges to learn from each other. Some members are very good at the SEIA procedure and share this with the alliance. Other members are good at farm land law, we learned about the Belt Road Initiative China, and on the Chinese Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) during these input sessions.” (BR)

Another way of strengthening capacities was inviting experts to get a better understanding of laws etc.

Where needed partners participated in workshops on advocacy, facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms, power and stakeholder analyses (see stories), Participatory Action Research methods, GIS and Digital Security. Next to that Oxfam coached Metta and worked with them together on their advocacy work.

#### **Capacity development of Oxfam staff**

At the beginning the staff of country Oxfams was invited to join the SP Symposium to get an understanding of what the programme was about. Staff also joined the Land Learning Journeys together with one of the partners. A lot was learning by doing, working with the partners and good mentorship by more experienced staff.

#### **Dissemination of capacity development**

Alliance members and staff received training on GIS mapping and Participatory action research to prepare them for the research, and a Digital Security training on request of one of the members. The Alliance also invited an expert on the farmland law to understand the law better.

Metta provided public policy advocacy training to CSOs and leaders, and FPIC principles to communities and farmer leaders to empower them for investment initiative and land rights, and Participatory Action Research.

All staff of the R2F partner acknowledge that strengthened capacities have contributed to the policy changes.

## PART V – CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

### *R2F Global project - Capacity development*

Due to the selection of cases, the external evaluation paid less attention to capacity development of civil society by the Global project. In the country projects Myanmar and Uganda, the focus on capacity development of CSOs is stronger.

Sugar case: Strengthening the influencing capacities of CLEC, Oxfam's partner, was deemed necessary for supporting the families and for bringing the case to the various courts.

Oxfam Novib supported CLEC, strengthened their influencing capacities and supported them financially. At the same time, leaning on one or two CSOs is vulnerable as well. At a certain moment in time CLEC was weakened by internal strife and disputes.

Through the Global Land Programme Land learning journeys were conducted as strategies for capacity development on land rights in the selected countries. Since none of the cases were directly linked to the Land Learning events and none of the interviewed partners referred to the event. Due to a lack of time no further exploration was done into the Land Learning journeys and as such the external evaluation team cannot make any comment or conclusion on this strategy of capacity development.

### *Key findings R2F*

#### **On strengthening influencing capacities: what topics?**

In the analysis of the CATool 2020 (R2F, N=18) the following topics were mentioned most frequently as relevant topics for capacity development: Context and power analyses, Strategizing, Lobbying the government, Building alliances, Gender mainstreaming and MEAL for influencing.

These topics were confirmed during the interviews of the country projects. Besides the influencing capacities, interviewees many times also mentioned technical topics like understanding legal procedures and laws (see below).

#### **Effective capacity development strategies**

In the CATool analysis 2020 the most effective capacity development strategies that contributed to results included the Co-design of strategies and plans (72%), Trainings and workshops (65%), Co-implementation of activities (64%) and opportunities to connect with other stakeholders (59%).

During the external evaluation partners in Myanmar and Uganda both indicated they have learned a lot from the R2F programme and have strengthened their capacities for influencing.

Some interviewed partners put an emphasis on 'local' capacity development through alliance building and peer learning vis-à-vis capacity development coming from outside. "We (consortium/ author) have selected each other for the added value each organisation brings, that gives us the strength and so we learned from each other" (interviewee Uganda). Formal peer learning was mentioned as well in Myanmar where alliance members

spend a chunk of their quarterly meeting to exchange and update each other on both thematic as well as influencing issues.

Another effective way of strengthening skills and capacities mentioned frequently was to invite experts to train partners on thematic skills, and to do research on thematic issues together. This happened in Uganda with the Amendments of Article 26, the National Seed Policy and the GMO Bill. In Myanmar this happened in Kachin with the Tissue Banana Plantations. Thematic knowledge is perceived as needed for being able to do research and evidence-based advocacy.

#### **Dissemination of capacity development**

In the R2F CATool analysis the most frequently mentioned third parties whose capacities were strengthened as part of the R2F included other CSOs (83%), community groups (83%), and government officials (61%).

In interviews for the external evaluation, all partners mention that they disseminate their capacities through their members, through communities, and farmer leaders. In Uganda specific mentioning was made of Members of Parliament being strengthened, and staff from Ministries. Interviewees from the Ministries and Members of Parliament refer explicitly to the R2F programme for their strengthened capacities.

#### **Linking capacities with changes in policies and practices**

The interviewed partners in Myanmar, Uganda and the Global Sugar case in Cambodia agree that without strengthening their influencing capacities, either by outside or inside interventions, they would not have been able to influence the policies. Many partners had limited experience with influencing and advocacy before the R2F programme started. Thanks to the programme their skills and their performance have increased considerably. Their efforts have, for instance, contributed to blocking the Amendments of Article 26, the GMO Bill and to changing the National Seed Policy in Uganda, and to the Tissue Banana Plantations moratorium and the Standard Operation Practices guidelines in Myanmar. Partners in Myanmar also contributed to influencing the ADS but were less successful in getting the ADS as they envisioned.

### *Finance for Development – Overall findings capacity development*

#### **Finance for development CATool**

Not all F4D partners participated in the CATool and some only participated in one of the two assessments. Oxfam's country offices were not part of the CATool exercise. In total 23 (out of 37) F4D partners participated in the CATool exercise.



## PART V – CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The CATool 2020 clearly shows that influencing capacities of F4D partners have increased. The F4D partners indicate that, since the beginning of the programme, on all eleven elements of influencing capacities their capacities increased from an average of 2,2 to 3,3 (on a scale of 1-4). Highest capacities are on 'Strategizing (scores increased from 2,5 to 3,5) and 'Lobbying the government' (scores increased from 2,4 to 3,5). Lowest capacities are on 'Lobbying the private sector' (scores increased from 1,5 to 2,5)

The following topics were mentioned most frequently as relevant for capacity development: 'Public Campaigning' (77%), 'Context and power analyses' (73%) and 'Lobbying the government' (73%). 'Lobbying the private sector' was considered least relevant (9%).

The most effective topics (in terms of contributing to the outcomes) are, according to the partners, 'Exchange of learning and experiences' (65%), 'Trainings and workshops' (55%) and 'Co-design of strategies and plans' (53%).

All but one partner indicated that the support from the SP enabled them to build stronger connections to citizens.

In the F4D CATool analysis the most frequently mentioned third parties whose capacities were strengthened included other CSOs (85%), community groups (80%), and government officials (45%), social movements (40%). Private sector was least mentioned (15%).

Also the effect of (shrinking) civic space on influencing capacities was assessed: 13 organisations indicated that limited civic space hindered the contribution of increased capacities to the results they were trying to achieve.

By and large these data are confirmed by interviews with partners and outside actors in the sampled cases.

### *F4D Cambodia - Capacity development*

Three of the four Pathways of Change of the F4D programme in Cambodia focus on strengthening civil society organisations. At the beginning of the programme, it was acknowledged that only few NGOs in Cambodia were engaging in budget analysis at the national, sectorial and sub-national level. Capacities on fiscal and budgetary issues were low.

### **Capacity development interventions**

During the programme period a number of capacity development interventions were developed.

In December 2017, the SP-partner NGO Forum facilitated a capacity needs assessment for the member organisations of the Budget Working Group (of which NGO Forum holds the secretariat). The assessment showed that the members of the Budget Working Group (BWG) needed capacity development on budget analysis. In 2018, NGO Forum facilitated a series of trainings on this topic, especially in the education sector. For example: in April 2018, BWG members were trained on budget formulation processes and budget analysis and they were trained by a budget advocacy expert. In June 2018, BWG members followed a training on the equity

budget analysis toolkit and they were trained on budget analysis and budget advocacy.

### **Dissemination of capacity development**

In Cambodia several activities were executed to disseminate knowledge on fiscal and budgetary matters to others, like community groups and government officials at national and local level.

The collaboration of Oxfam's partners Star Kampuchea (SK) and Gender and Development Cambodia (GADC) with the I-SAF programme provided many opportunities at local level to increase knowledge. SK staff provided capacity development to local facilitators on I-SAF tools, the role and responsibility of active citizens, effective communication, national and sub-national budgets, and budget understanding on taxation. The facilitators, in their turn, rolled out capacity development activities to mobilise citizens' participation.

GADC provided capacity development to its partners on budgeting analysis and gender responsive budgeting, particularly at the sub-national level. This occurred specifically through the so-called Core Groups (see investigative story in Part III of this report, §1.3). A series of capacity development meetings was implemented to strengthen the skills and knowledge of youth in relating to gender responsive budgeting and the role of citizens in budget monitoring and public budget processes.

### **How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?**

F4D is a relatively new issue for most CSOs in Cambodia. At the beginning it was identified that building (thematic) capacities of CSOs was one of the key targets. No wonder that three out of four targeted outcomes in the country ToC are directly related to civil society strengthening. All interviewees agree that over the course of the programme, the capacities of CSOs have grown markedly. A (former) staff member of Oxfam in Cambodia clearly states that capacity development was the most important aspect of the programme.

Most partners mention increased technical capacities as first and foremost. In order to do evidence based advocacy, they needed to know more on fiscal and budgetary topics. On a number of topics (e.g. education budgeting) partner organisations are welcomed at the ministry as valued experts.

"What we learned during workshops is evidence based approaches. This is especially relevant for F4D. If you want to raise the budget of social protection, you have to be able to analyse the current budget: the 'killer facts'. Especially about revenue and expenditure. Without evidence and good capacities it is easy to brush us aside: saying that it is a technical issue and that we lack the knowledge."

At the same time officials at the ministry, but also at the EU, declare that national CSOs still lack in-depth knowledge to really be able to discuss matters at a sufficiently high level.

Capacity development on advocacy is hampered by the limited civic space in Cambodia. CSOs are only accepted

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as partners for dialogue at the ministry if their contribution stays on a technical level. In Cambodia CSOs cannot be involved in discussions that are political. All interviewees agree that advocacy is sensitive in Cambodia. A ‘soft approach’, based on solid facts, works best. To provide extra leverage, social media are used, especially Facebook. Also old media are still important, mainly radio is a relevant source of information and a channel for getting messages and information across.

Remarkably, most interviewees do not spontaneously mention capacity development for advocacy interventions. Only when specifically asked they confirm that they participated in training on capacity development for advocacy. They also indicate that most learning happened on-the-job, and when discussing advocacy with others during workshops and training.

As a result of Covid-19 the evaluation did not include many interviews on ‘grassroot’ or community level. The people at the community level that were interviewed (by our local consultant in the story on Core Groups) confirm that capacity training helped them to be more effective in dialogue with local authorities. It especially gave them confidence to address issues of relevance for the community. One Core Group member says that her training on Gender Responsive Budgeting enabled her to advocate for increases in the social fund budget for women and children: from 500 to 10,000US\$ for this year, which accounts for about 15% of the annual budget in her commune.

It is generally acknowledged that the sustainability of capacity development efforts is greatly reduced by the high staff turnover at Cambodian NGOs and CSOs.

The sustainability of the capacity development of ‘third parties’ (like Core Group members or members of the Commune Council) could not be assessed. In general terms it can be assumed that sustainability depends to some extent on their continued involvement in the programme. But even when their participation has ended, some people who have joined capacity development sessions, or workshops will be able to use the skills, knowledge and awareness gained during the programme in a positive manner.

### *F4D Uganda - Capacity development*

Capacity development is included in the lower level of the F4D ToC of Uganda. All change pathways (a.k.a. targeted outcomes) refer to policy changes at government level. Capacity development results are only strategised at the level of early outcomes. At the beginning of the programme, it was identified that there was a need to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to empower citizens to influence unfair fiscal policies and practices. Capacity development has been at the heart of many of the outcomes presented by the contribution stories as developed by Oxfam.

### **Capacity development interventions**

According to the contribution narrative as produced by Oxfam Novib, the F4D project has contributed to enhancing the influencing capacity of the national Tax Justice Alliance. The Fair Tax Monitor has played an important role in Uganda in strengthening capacity to

implement research and advocacy on the national tax system.

An important event, several interviewees agree, was a workshop held in Jinja, in October/November 2018. This workshop, formally not a capacity development event, aimed to develop advocacy campaigns based on the findings of the Fair Tax Monitor research in Uganda. Remarkably, this workshop was not identified by the participants as a capacity development event. The increased capacities were achieved while co-strategising. A total number of 15 participants from Oxfam in Uganda and its partners, joined the workshop. This workshop contributed to several notable policy outcomes.

Notable is also the capacity development on the topic of civic space. Since local civil society in Uganda struggled with complying to new restrictive laws and regulations regarding their freedom to operate, Chapter 4, a new partner of Oxfam Novib, contributed to build the capacity of CSOs to comply with existing and new restrictive laws targeting NGOs. Participants were also trained on physical and digital safety. In 2017 a workshop on civic space was provided by Oxfam Novib, leading to the development of a civic space ToC and workplan.

### **Dissemination of capacity development**

Several activities were employed to disseminate knowledge among other actors, for example among CBOs and selected government officials, both at national and sub-national level.

Partner organisation AFIC, for example, helped to build the influencing capacity of neighbourhood Assembly members and CBOs in 2016. AFIC also trained public officials on the national Access of Information Act and on open contracting. In addition, citizens in districts where the F4D project is active, were trained on the specifics of access to information and open contracting.

Oxfam partner CEW-IT trained Neighbourhood Assembly members in budget processes and advocacy to increase budgets for social sectors.

### **How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?**

Without the strengthened capacities of Ugandan partner organisations, the outcomes of the F4D programme in Uganda would have been minimal, says a staff member of Oxfam in Uganda. It is an opinion that is shared by virtually all interviewees in Uganda. The knowledge of Oxfam in Uganda and its partners on fiscal matters is considered high. That strengthens the advocacy efforts of the F4D programme in Uganda. The in-depth knowledge of staff of partner organisations CSBAG and SEATINI specifically facilitates their access to both governments offices and meetings with international donors.

Unfortunately the evaluation was not able to do many interviews on community and grassroots level, but it was confirmed that the disseminations of capacities – through training – towards the grassroots level, has had a positive effect on the interest of communities on fiscal matters. Also being involved in practical campaigns – like the one against the mobile money tax (see § 2.1 of the F4D part of this report) – has had a positive effect on

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advocacy capacities on a local level, a staff member of a sub-nationally based CSO confirms.

It is also clear that the limited ‘room to operate’ for NGOs in Uganda puts a constraint on the advocacy capacities of civil society organisations. The involvement of citizens in campaigning on fiscal matters is hampered by a level of discouragement about the promise of fair taxes. The trust in fiscal policies as an instrument to level out inequalities in society is low. Especially the problem of corruption has weakened the ‘social contract’ between the Ugandan state and its citizens.

Although the private sector is identified as an obstacle to a fair fiscal system in Uganda, companies are hardly targeted by the F4D team. Over the last period, there has been no specific attention to strengthening the capacities to target the private sector. There is a risk that low capacities on targeting the private sector will hamper the development of activities aimed at influencing the private sector. This could easily turn into a vicious circle.

### *F4D Global - Capacity development*

The work process of the Global Project is described as follows: “Where necessary, Oxfam strengthens country offices and CSOs to research and understand tax systems and public spending practices as well as to undertake thorough power analyses. Support requests are submitted by country offices to the global team in The Hague. SP F4D global staff, regional platforms, country offices, partner organisations and allies are all part of the process, including inputs from leading experts from other organisations and academics. Oxfam Novib’s F4D global project and Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub for Governance & Citizenship support the design of the learning component in a systematic manner.”

### **Capacity development interventions**

Oxfam Novib’s Global Team contributed to increasing capacities of country based Oxfams and their partners in a variety of ways.

Over the course of the SP programme time, several international capacity development events were organised. Among them:

- > A learning event in Johannesburg in March 2017 with 60 participants from local Oxfams and partners. The event facilitated learning and exchange of knowledge.
- > During an Expert Meeting on Inequality & Public Spending (November 2017, Entebbe, Uganda) experiences were shared from several of the F4D countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Vietnam).
- > In a Learning Event in Dakar in February 2018, nine Francophone country teams acquired new knowledge on Influencing, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Tax & Inequality, Fiscal Justice and Civic Space.
- > In June 2018, Oxfam colleagues from 18 countries met in Marrakech, Morocco, where they strengthened their capacity on Gender Responsive Budgeting.
- > In July 2018 a global learning event on civic space took place in The Hague with 55 people (staff and partners) from 23 countries.

- > In March 2019, a Global FAIR/EiU Learning Event took place in Lima, Peru. The event brought together staff and partners to reflect on two years of learning on fiscal justice and inequality and explore how lessons learnt can be used in future programming.

Oxfam Novib’s Global team produced several ‘knowledge products’ to capacitate affiliates and partners on a number of topics. An example is the *F.A.I.R. Even it Up! Handy Resources series*. This series provided partners with access to new knowledge about budget analysis as well as access to the core FAIR/EiU programme documents. The *Quarterly F.A.I.R.–Even it Up Newsletter* enabled F4D teams to share what they are working on and what they are learning from that work.

In addition, the Fair Tax Monitor toolkit was developed in co-creation with the country teams, containing among others the Common Research Framework, Scoring Methodology and Tax and Gender paper.

The Global FAIR/EiU team provided knowledge, and capacity development opportunities on budget and tax issues to country projects. Some examples:

- > In May 2018 a workshop was held at the Oxfam Vietnam office in Hanoi on the subject of tax expenditure (see the story in Part III §3.3).
- > Together with the Cambodia team, the Global F4D team organised a meeting in Siem Reap in November 2019, that included a basic course on taxation and fiscal justice and a specific Fair Tax Monitor (FTM) training.
- > In November 2019, partners from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia participated in a tax training and influencing meeting.
- > Throughout the programme period, local chapters of the Fighting Inequality Alliance were trained on addressing inequality issues in their countries.

### **Dissemination of capacity development**

An interesting initiative to disseminate knowledge in Vietnam are the so-called *happy hours*. As a staff member of Oxfam Vietnam explains: “We do this once a month. We invite experts and CSOs to talk about tax issues and about advocacy. Often also representatives of the media attend. There is much enthusiasm about this. Each time between 40 and 80 people participate off-line. And nowadays even more attend through live streams.”

### **How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?**

The cases that were studied to evaluate the Global Programme, show that capacity development was in many cases vital to the outcomes. A clear example is – again – the workshop on tax exemption and expenditure in Vietnam. This workshop not only contributed to knowledge of Oxfam Vietnam and its partners on complicated fiscal issues, it also was instrumental in forging an alliance with the Tax bureau of the Vietnamese Ministry of Finance and in acquiring a strategically placed ‘champion’ inside the Ministry. This opened up the ministry to the expertise (and the advocacy) of Oxfam and partners, leading to several relevant policy changes of the Vietnamese government.

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Most interviewees confirm that learning about influencing is mostly done ‘while doing’. But exchanging experiences with others is also valued. “Advocacy is very context specific. We have a unique combination of inside and outside influencing. We do not use a confrontational technique. We are ‘critical friends’ to the governments: we provide solutions. For example, we offer our assistance to combat tax avoidance. And in return we get inside information on tax law drafts and have an opportunity to provide comments.” A staff member of an Oxfam country office says that specific training on capacity for advocacy “... is not necessary, we are quite capable of doing that ourselves.”

Next to ‘formal’ learning events and workshops, and apart from more ‘informal’ exchange of experiences and on-the-job learning, one-on-one coaching was a capacity development strategy in the support of FIA. Prior to her visit to the Davos spectacle, FIA Pan Africa Coordinator Njoki Njehu was thoroughly briefed on what she could expect at the ‘billionaires ball’. “I was also coached on how to confront the media. I think without this support I would not have had half as much impact in Davos. It gave me the confidence to speak to some of the most influential people at the gathering.”

### Key findings F4D

- > In most outcomes the increased capacities of (partner) NGOs was identified as an important factor contributing to the change. The programme has succeeded in increasing the knowledge of NGOs on fiscal and budgetary matters. And this has contributed to their influencing capacities.
- > The capacity development interventions have contributed to the abilities of local partners to analyse government budgets and to develop budget alternatives, as well as to design and execute effective campaigns (capacity to act).
- > Through the development and widening of networks and alliances, the capacity development has benefited not only Oxfam country offices and their partners, but also partners of partners, and outside actors (communities, government agents) often at sub-national level.
- > Lobby targets and other external interviewees agree that the success of F4D advocacy by Oxfam and partners is strongly related to their *thematic* capacity (e.g. the level in which they are able to understand and analyse complicated budgets and tax issues). The CATool, however, does not capture thematic knowledge/capacities. The effectiveness of efforts to strengthen thematic capacities could not confidently be assessed, other than by the statements of interviewees.
- > Oxfam-staff and partners’ staff indicate that their capacities are mainly strengthened through co-creation, ‘learning by doing’ and sharing experiences during learning events informal). Specific training on capacity development for advocacy were less mentioned as key factors in increased capacities.
- > Especially in Cambodia, high staff turnover is indicated as a major factor in loss of capacities. According to interviewees, NGO-staff mainly switches to governments and the private sector as these sectors provide more safety and security. The result is that the effectiveness/ sustainability of capacity development is threatened.

- > As the CATool was not applied to local Oxfam offices, the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen capacities of local Oxfam staff could not be assessed.
- > It is obvious that capacity needs vary between countries. In Cambodia, for example, interviewees indicate that thematic capacities need further strengthening. In Uganda thematic capacities are broadly considered as high. Capacity needs to do advocacy are extremely context related. Both in Uganda and in Cambodia, CSOs have learned and developed unique ways to cope with the obstacles the governments have created for CSOs. In both countries evidence based advocacy is a strategy that can sometimes take the wind out of the sails of government repression. In Cambodia, but also in Vietnam, CSOs can develop a useful dialogue with the government by taking the role of technical advisor. These different contexts call for different capacity development approaches and content. Interviewees in both Uganda and Cambodia confirm that the capacity development assistance provided by the Strategic Partnership is needs based.

### Conflict and Fragility - Overall findings capacity development

#### Conflict & Fragility CATool

Not all partners of C&F participated in the CATool. It should also be noted that SOMO uses a separate system to monitor capacity. The findings from the CATool relate to all partners in the C&F programme, i.e. thus including the capacity development in all three sub-themes.

#### Capacity development topics

In the analysis of the CATool 2020 (all partners C&F ToC, N=17) the following topics were mentioned most frequently as topics for capacity development: Context and power analysis (88%), Building alliances (82%), Lobbying the government (71%), Public campaigning (71%), Gender mainstreaming (71%), Strategizing (65%), and MEAL for influencing (65%). According to the data, the partners received 0% capacity development on lobbying the private sector.

#### Capacities strengthened

In the CATool all influencing capacities mentioned and measured were strengthened over the course of the C&F programme.

#### Strategies for results

The most effective capacity development strategies that contributed to results included Exchange of learning and experiences (90%), Co-implementation of activities (75%), Trainings and workshops (73%), and Opportunities to connect with other stakeholders (70%).

#### Civic space

77% of the partners received capacity development support on navigating civic space. The majority of

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partners state that the support enabled their organisation to better adapt to shrinking/shifting civic space, that the support helped their organisation to start addressing the civic space situation in their country, that the support helped their organisation to better protect their staff and partners, and that the support helped their organisation to activate international actors (e.g. embassies, donors, EU) on the civic space situation in their country.

### Dissemination

In the CATool analysis the most frequently mentioned ‘third parties’ whose capacities were strengthened as part of the C&F programme included other CSOs (93%), community groups (93%), and government officials (80%).

### C&F Myanmar – capacity development

Below findings are based on the assessed cases for the external evaluation.

### Capacity development interventions

MATA has been a local partner with Oxfam since 2017. MATA has several donors (including Global Witness), not just Oxfam. For example, Global Witness also provides funding and is a ‘technical’ partner. MATA has one global budget, where different donors contribute. Oxfam is the biggest donor.

Oxfam (in Myanmar) is appreciated for its working together, on-the-job-support. One former Oxfam staff has invested a lot of time in working alongside the partner. They are also considered a very flexible donor - particularly related to funding, but also on having the partner be in the driving seat regarding priorities (example: shifting to the extractive sector in Phase 2).

Specific examples of support that were mentioned are that Oxfam provided suitable resource persons for strategic engagement training related to mining. Oxfam is also supporting, via the dedicated C&F staff member, to advocate for civic space within the EITI process. For example, how to issue international statements, or providing access to an international network in the international community. MATA says: “Oxfam helped with terminology. We don’t know how to use strong words for paper”. Oxfam was helpful for advocacy around Tigyit as well. They supported international advocacy (engagement with the UN Rapporteur).

Other capacity training provided is on outcome harvesting. MATA requested to give more technical training on MEAL.

Oxfam in Myanmar also learned a lot from MATA. “Our relationship with MATA gave us a more nuanced understanding of how civil society was functioning in Myanmar than Oxfam had at all until then. The country director(s), head of advocacy, head of programmes; they have all been educated by MATA”.

### Dissemination of capacity development

Through the projects, other actors who have been strengthened were communities, other CSOs, and MPs. Community members are more aware of their rights and how to voice their demands to other stakeholders. MPs have been strengthened in their ability to carry out participatory research and engage in evidence-based advocacy with other government actors.

In the EITI international arena, there was a spill-over to civil society organisations from some other countries to raise awareness about civic space in their countries.

### How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?

Capacity development of Oxfam’s partners and third parties has played a key role in achieving outcomes in all assessed cases. An example is on how to leverage grassroots issues to the international stage (for example EITI). Without Oxfam, the partner would have not had the access/linkages to international stakeholders.

The partner, as well as Oxfam, struggle with a high staff turnover, which is a risk for the sustainability of capacity development for influencing. Capacity development focused largely on the MATA Secretariat, and to a lesser degree, on the member organisations.

### Other

MATA requested Oxfam’s input on how to decentralise capacity development to member organisations more. “We need to strengthen local organisations/space, which can reduce the ‘colonisation’ from the international community. A lot of development activities are implemented by international organisations, who do not reflect local community/or local CSOs. We need to strengthen local voices. Oxfam and others can provide lessons from other countries, for example on what kind of policies are there, because we don’t know it.” In other words, MATA wants to strengthen more grassroots organisations, but needs the experiences of international Oxfam on how to do this - which is somewhat contradictory.

### C&F Nigeria – capacity development

### Capacity development interventions

According to CODE and CISLAC, there have been a series of both formal and informal capacity development interventions that Oxfam has provided, including on influencing and advocacy as well as reporting (financial management and M&E). The partners mention that they also received training through other donors (USAID, DFID), but Oxfam is a longstanding partner. What is mentioned, is that trust matters a lot. It is a mutual, collaborative relationship. What was also mentioned was that “when someone becomes too familiar, you don’t recognise it as capacity development anymore.”

CODE mentions that when they started petitioning, Oxfam organised capacity development on digital advocacy. This was helpful, because when Covid-19 came, they were able to change to online petitioning (on the PIB).

### Dissemination of capacity development

Capacity development of communities was a key aspect of the interventions of CODE. “We don’t go out to develop, we empower people to develop themselves.” They do this through building capacities of community champions in a train-the-trainer way.

The topics/activities depend on thematic area. Examples: Building capacities to build negotiation power to move beyond CSR, towards stronger laws like having Host Community Funds. Decisions shifted from oil companies to communities. “We supported building capacity to negotiate from the standpoint of their *right*.”

Another issue was the Petroleum Industry Bill: CODE built communities’ knowledge to understand the Bill by condensing the document of 250 pages to a 10-pager, in which is explained which areas affect the host community, which concern government, and which concern revenue generated by the company. “We will no longer be the ones shouting. It will be the host communities.”

### How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?

CODE in Delta State also mentions that Oxfam in Nigeria has supported gaining access to institutions that they otherwise would not have access to. The collaboration/capacity development for example supported bringing different stakeholders together in platforms where commitments were made.

In the process, civil society organisations and communities at the local level have been trained in oil and gas issues.

Strengthened communities were involved to discuss gender inclusion. “Now it’s the community people’s project, not an Oxfam and CODE project. Now that we’re ending the C&F project, the activities will not end. They will have continued engagement with government, companies, communities and media. Ogoni land will organise a press release in Abuja in December, they invited us, not the other way around.”

### C&F Global – capacity development

The cases that were assessed under the Global project mainly consist of SOMO’s project in the DRC with partner Premicongo and a project with a ‘Private Sector Advisor’ and partner Scholar Institute operating in Myanmar. Some findings:

### Capacity development interventions

The partner in Myanmar was supported with working on more responsible business conduct. The private sector policy advisor is Chinese and could particularly advise on Chinese companies. The partner says that the advisor would set up a strategy on how to communicate with the Chinese company in question, and would support them with wording and messaging.

In DRC, SOMO’s partner filed a complaint about a (Chinese) company on behalf of a local community. This

was done on the basis of research. SOMO provided capacity support to the process in the form of:

- > Training on the rights of local communities around a mining project for the local community of Mabende co-led by a SOMO consultant;
- > Assistance in the search for information on the structure of the multinational;
- > The work in synergy for the drafting and improvement of the report, which received the opinions and comments of the SOMO team.

The partner mentions that “the conduct of this study and the report produced at the end contributed enormously to the strengthening of our capacity, in that this work equipped the team members who participated in it with additional skills that enabled them to conduct identical studies in the same field or with other communities or companies.”

### Dissemination

The involvement of the private sector advisor in Myanmar has supported increased knowledge among Oxfam staff on engaging with (non-western) private sector actors.

### How did capacity development contribute to outcomes?

In DRC, the enhanced research skills have improved the quality of the report, which reportedly received congratulations from the company in question (“the company representative acknowledged the high quality of the report twice during his two visits”), and contributed to strengthening the self-confidence of the team members who felt ready to face any situation.

The partner in Myanmar states that “without the advisor, the Chinese company would not have given us the meetings.” However, it is problematic that the partner selected for this task allegedly did not have the capacity to carry out this kind of work with the private sector. They also did not enjoy the trust by other CSOs interviewed, which may be part of the reason why this intervention was not sustainable.

The sustainability of the capacities that the private sector advisor built is doubtful, as the position is now not existing anymore, and the partner is no longer a partner of Oxfam. There is, however, a report that was written and shared widely among Oxfam offices, which could mitigate some of this.

The partner in DRC: “I would have wished for continuity after the report. Civil society organisations have often been criticised for limiting their actions to the production and publication of a report. Whereas in reality, the report is only a tool that should be used by the various stakeholders, including NGOs, to initiate actions that will bring about the desired changes or improvements.” The partner says that after the production of the reports, most civil society organisations are short of resources. They then find themselves unable to continue to take action. And, as a strategy, companies are taking their time and continuing business as usual, “knowing they won’t be disturbed by anyone”. It should be noted that SOMO and partner

Premicongo are still continuing their collaboration and work on this case.

Strategic follow-up after these interventions, also in continuous building of engagement capacities, supported with resources to act, is important to take into consideration.

## 5. Overall conclusions on the cross-cutting issue

The assessment of the cross-cutting theme of capacity development as it was identified in the sampled cases, largely confirms the findings in the cross-cutting narrative as developed by the SP and the change pathways in the ToC:

- > Capacity development has largely been developed in co-creation and co-implementation, by sharing knowledge and skills, through funding, and by connecting to a wider, mostly international, network. This relates to the bottom, intervention, layer of the ToC.
- > The capacity development efforts have contributed to an important increase in the capacities of Oxfam country offices and their partners to connect, to act and to operate, linked to the early outcomes in the ToC. Technical influencing capacities have increased, as well as thematic knowledge and ‘soft skills’ like communication skills. The evaluation has not looked in-depth at the extent to which this has led to maintaining, expanding and safe use of civic space, but examples point in this direction. What is clear, is that the increased capacities to connect have resulted in alliance-building (intermediate outcome), which was found to be one of the most important aspects for a stronger civil society that is able to achieve positive changes in policies, practices and behaviour (long-term outcomes in the ToC of strengthened civil society).
- > The increased capacities have been instrumental to improve the efforts of CSOs to advocate for the policy and practice changes targeted in the respective thematic ToCs.
- > The increased capacities have contributed to more effectiveness of the advocacy interventions. In all sampled outcomes increased capacities have been a vital element of success.
- > In most of the cases the increased capacities of Oxfam country teams and their direct partners have been transferred and disseminated to other actors. The primary actors benefitting from the dissemination are other CSOs. This happened primarily through the strengthened and widened alliances. Other actors benefitting from the dissemination of capacities are groups and individuals at grass-root level and government actors or parliamentarians.
- > The sustainability of capacity development was likely increased through this dissemination process.

In addition to these confirmations of the internal assessment, the external evaluation resulted in other findings and conclusions.

Interviews for all three themes indicate that capacities are mainly strengthened through co-creation, ‘learning by doing’ and sharing experiences during learning events. Specific training on capacity development for

advocacy were less mentioned as key factors in strengthened capacities. Especially regarding influencing capacities, partners emphasise the importance and value of experiential learning, and the sharing of experiences and knowledge among peers. In some cases, partners or country Oxfams have ‘institutionalised’ peer-learning. Examples are the ‘happy hours’ in Vietnam (F4D) and the learning sessions in the Kachin Alliance in Myanmar (R2F). Some interviewees almost ‘dismiss’ the option of outside/top-down advocacy capacity development: “We are quite capable of doing that ourselves.” This emphasis on experiential learning and peer sharing is in line with the highly contextual character of capacities on lobby and advocacy.

In all three themes, lobby targets and other external interviewees indicate that the technical/thematic knowledge of country Oxfams and their partners is highly valued. The SP has contributed to activists and advocates, who – also thanks to the research by SOMO – know what they are talking about, who can enter into high-level dialogue and who can practice effective, evidence-based advocacy.

In some contexts, the sustainability and effectiveness of capacity development efforts is negatively affected by high staff-turnover. Oxfam’s country offices and partners are faced with relatively high numbers of trained staff that leave the organisation for positions within the government, the private sector or international organisations. It was not researched, but the external evaluators find it likely that shrinking civic space is a factor for professionals leaving civil society. It is argued that high staff-turnover is, in essence, not an issue because trained individuals, when leaving the organisation, will promote social justice and equality by applying their knowledge to other positions. Such ‘unintended results’ of capacity development, however, have not (yet) been reported. And within the context of the SP and the specific targeted outcomes at country level, high staff turnover is indeed a factor that prevents effectiveness and sustainability.

Capacity development for influencing was an important (sine qua non) element in the development of many outcomes. In this respect, this ‘key area of change’ did clearly materialise. To the external evaluators it did not become clear, however, what constitutes the *cross-cutting* character.

The position of the cross-cutting theme of strengthening civil society is not coherently integrated in the ToCs guiding the different elements of the Strategic Partnership. In some cases strengthening civil society is identified as a targeted outcome, in other cases the cross-cutting theme can only be found on the level of interventions and early outcomes. The external evaluators have witnessed discussions within the SP on the logical place of capacity development within the change theory. Strengthening civil society is one of the two key ‘areas of change’ of the SP (next to policy change), which should not imply that strengthening civil society is a ‘targeted outcome’ in the change theory. Logic dictates that in the change pathways capacity development is integrated as a means (or early/intermediate outcome) to achieve changes in policy and practice at government level and within the private sector (targeted outcomes). Integrating the strengthening of civil society in a coherent way in all

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relevant ToCs will contribute to the cross-cutting character of this important issue.



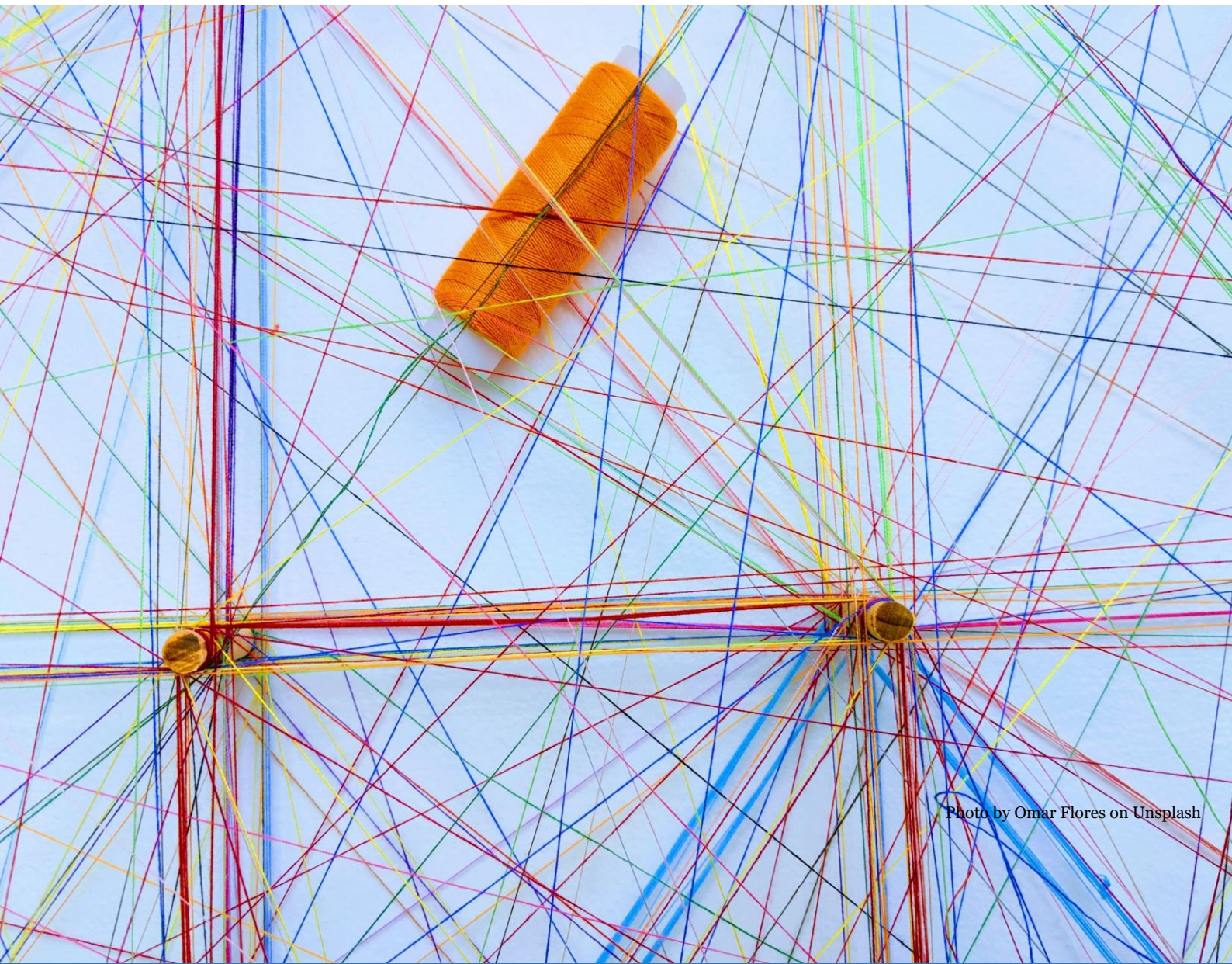


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# Part VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

## Part VI

# Conclusions and recommendations

The overall evaluation question is formulated as:

- > To what extent has the Strategic Partnership resulted in changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and changes in the policies and practices of governments and companies in favour of social and economic justice? How did such changes take place?

This question has been adapted for each of the three thematic areas:

*For Right to Food:*

- > To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of public and private sector actors that protect and promote the prosperity and resilience of small-scale food producers and agricultural workers? How did these changes take place?

*For Finance for Development:*

- > To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of governments and companies in favour of higher quality and quantity of finance for development and tackling extreme inequality? How did these changes take place?

*For Conflict and Fragility:*

- > To what extent has the Strategic Partnership contributed to changes in civil society’s influencing capacity and in the policies and practices of governments, companies and international institutions in favour of the inclusion and protection of marginalised groups and women in security and peace building? How did these changes take place?

These questions have been operationalised through 11 sub-questions (‘the evaluation questions’). Based on the data provided by the internal evaluation team, the data produced by the MEAL-process, document study, (semi-structured and open) interviews and a Collective System Analysis, the external evaluation team has formulated the following key answers to the evaluation questions.

### *Changes in public and private sector policies (effectiveness, relevance)*

*Evaluation question 1. What changes in public and private sector policies and practices has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 3. What is the nature of the changes in policies and practices? (e.g. New policies? Amendments to existing policies? Implementation / enforcement of policies? Were they local, national or global level policies?)*

The SP has contributed to considerable changes in government policies, though most outcomes in the outcome database (finalised early 2019, which was the basis for sampling the sub-themes and projects) can be identified in the realm of ‘political will’. The policy cycle usually takes a longer time to turn political will into new or improved policies, and policies into practice.

Quite a number of interventions in the sampled outcomes concentrated on amending and mitigating harm of existing government policies. These interventions try to reduce the social, economic and environmental damage, but do not necessarily contribute to increased social, economic and environmental justice.

Some of the policy outcomes aimed at reducing harm (e.g. for R2F Uganda) may be short-lived. In that respect, the fact that most alliances are determined to continue after the end of the SP is an important asset. In most cases, alliances built around a shared interest can easily be mobilised when needed in response to negative developments.

Few outcomes involve new, original policy proposals initiated by the SP and its partners. Most policy change outcomes are concentrated in the policy adoption stage. Follow-up outcomes were observed to a much lesser extent. Few cases included policy changes that resulted in actual changes ‘on the ground’. Regarding the level of the outcomes, the great majority of outcomes were achieved on the national and sub-national level. Outcomes on the regional and global level were reported to a lesser extent.

Private sector engagement has received less attention in the sampled projects. This can be partly explained by the sampled sub-theme, as was the case for F4D. However, in the sampled sub-themes of R2F and C&F, the role of the private sector – and especially the Chinese private sector – is important and relevant, but the number of changes in the policies and practices of the private sector are limited. Strategic engagement with the private sector itself was found challenging, especially for local partners in the sampled C&F and R2F countries.

Some good examples of work on the private sector include the R2F Global projects (FMO and ‘Behind the Brands’) where working at the international private sector enabled work at national level on compliance with international standards, or company policy commitments. Another promising initiative was found in the Global project for C&F, where a policy advisor with in-depth knowledge on Asian, and particularly Chinese, private sector actors contributed to having entry points with a large Chinese company. The advisor’s know-how was shared with the local partner and also disseminated in a report among Oxfam offices worldwide.

### Recommendations

- > The global work on the private sector offers lessons for the country programmes on how international work can create space for work on the national level in sensitive areas.
- > Influencing Chinese companies may demand a totally new approach and is strongly recommended, especially considering that Chinese companies have started to play a rather dominant role in the world of business and trade.
- > To contribute to increased social, economic and environmental justice, a balance between ‘reducing harmful policies’ and ‘developing and stimulating beneficial policies’ is needed.
- > The potential of creating leverage at the national level by working at the global level can be harnessed more.

### Capacity development for influencing (effectiveness, relevance)

*Evaluation question 2. What changes in civil society’s influencing capacity has our SP contributed to?*

*Evaluation question 4. What is the nature of the changes in civil society’s influencing capacities? (e.g. which CS actors have been strengthened? In what way?)*

*Evaluation question 9. Which factors/strategies were necessary and/or sufficient to achieve or contribute to the changes observed in civil society’s influencing capacities?*

*Evaluation question 10. Can the changes in civil society’s influencing capacities be linked to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

The SP has been particularly strong in strengthening CSOs and building alliances, with other words, in creating a ‘roaring dragon’. The influencing capacities of CSOs have increased notably as a result of the SP, either through mutual capacity development interventions or through working together and inviting experts and researchers. CSOs have especially increased their capacities to design and implement advocacy strategies and related interventions. Specific training on capacity development for advocacy has received less attention.

The success of advocacy interventions of CSOs is strongly related to their increased thematic capacities (e.g. the level in which they are able to understand and analyse complicated issues). This has also allowed them to expand their ‘lobby toolbox’ with evidence-based advocacy. Often, clever use was made of research reports (e.g. produced by SOMO). In this respect it is important that capacitated individuals do not leave the organisation soon after their ‘know-how’ has improved.

Capacity development interventions were specifically targeted at Oxfam country offices and their direct partners. The acquired capacities were to a considerable extent disseminated to other CSOs. In this respect, the strengthened and widened alliances that Oxfam country offices and their partners participated in were quite instrumental. The external evaluators have also

encountered several instances where the capacities of other relevant actors were strengthened (e.g. local communities, Members of Parliament and government officials, both at national and sub-national level). This can be an important tactic to ensure more clout over national government policy processes.

In all cases that were assessed by the evaluators, the increased capacities have notably contributed to the outcomes. The thematic knowledge of CSOs facilitated their role as dialogue partners of governmental and private actors. Government actors increasingly perceive CSOs as knowledgeable partners, who combine their growing know-how with a very relevant ‘constituency’ and useful connections to the grass-root level. In addition, the gained influencing capacities enabled them to select appropriate influencing strategies, switching from confrontational to more constructive roles.

### Recommendations

- > Presently, the assessment of capacity development only targets a limited part of the SP actors. It is suggested to amplify the CATool with the periodical assessment of thematic capacities and extend the tool to staff of Oxfam country offices.
- > In some countries, the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity development is limited by high staff-turnover. To address this issue, the focus should be more on hiring staff with necessary qualifications and by rewarding staff appropriately. Additionally, the focus should shift more towards increasing institutional capacity and knowledge management rather than individual capacities. Capacitated staff members should be facilitated and stimulated (more than now) to share their knowledge within the organisation.
- > Include the spin-off of capacity development in the monitoring of results and develop strategies to further capacitate and increase engagement of like-minded people inside other sectors as advocates for social causes.

### Towards increased social and economic justice (systemic change, relevance, impact)

*Evaluation question 5. Do observed changes support increased social and economic justice?*

Policy cycles are often long-term cycles without quick results. Therefore, it is still too early to draw conclusions on whether the policy changes supported social and economic justice. Nonetheless, the first steps in influencing policy changes have been taken, and these changes are visible. Especially within F4D, the evaluation team found a disconnect between the policy level outcomes and real change, implementation, and enforcement on a practical level.

The relevance of the outcomes that were assessed during the external evaluation is high. By and large, the SP focused on issues that constitute a concrete obstacle or a

clear opportunity to social and economic justice. During the CSA workshops we identified that some of the root causes were only marginally addressed, such as corruption and the lack of trust between actors. The SP chose policy advocacy as its main entry point towards social and economic justice, in the data that were made available to the external evaluators there was not much proof of activities or outcomes focusing on the existing norms and values that hinder a transition to social and economic justice. The private sector was identified as both an obstacle and an opportunity for change.

The root causes that were addressed include the lack of knowledge and awareness at grassroots level, and the effects of limited and shrinking civic space. As indicated before, many of the outcomes in the database used for this evaluation are limited to the policy adoption phase (and in the case of the sub-theme for C&F often even at the stage before that: political will). Increased social and economic justice can only be expected when ‘fair’ policies are not only formulated and adopted, but also implemented and enforced. Implementation and enforcement require conscious efforts.

In some of the sampled cases, the public policy changes contributed to increasing social, economic and environmental justice by reducing harm. Examples include the returning of the land in Cambodia to the families, the ‘Behind the Brands’ work on the sugar value chain, the rejection of the Amendments of Article 26 (worsening of land rights), rejection of the GMO bill (GMO crops influencing regular crops, the use of chemicals and other risks), the policies to reduce the risks of the Tissue Banana Plantations and land grabbing. The challenge that remains is to move from reducing harm to doing good.

### Recommendations

- > Make sure a next deliberate step is taken to move from reducing harm to doing good by stepping up the promotion of alternative development scenarios.
- > Pay specific attention to activities regarding implementation and enforcement in the ToCs.
- > Include an explicit pathway on ‘changing norms and values/ attitudes’ in the ToCs.

### Are the outcomes sustainable?

*Evaluation question 6. To what extent are the changes observed in civil society’s influencing capacity and public and private sector policies and practices expected to be sustainable?*

Our evaluation revealed that the programme facilitated the creation of a vast network of organisations, alliances and people. Capacities have been strengthened as well. This ‘roaring dragon’ is considered sustainable. The CSOs are determined to continue after the SP programme ends. The ‘roaring dragon’ is considered important for sustaining the policy changes and ensuring the policies will turn into practices.

Sustainability of the public policy changes shows a mixed picture. Some of the sampled policy outcomes (R2F Ugandan National Seed Policy, Tissue Banana Plantation policies) seem sustainable. However, not a single result of the political and legislative process is written in stone, so continued attention is needed. Some other sampled outcomes on public policies and frameworks have the risk of being short-lived, especially the ‘blocked harmful policies’.

Sustainability is, of course, also a matter of whether changed policies are implemented. In some cases, changes are identified that will possibly not (yet) ‘survive’ a withdrawal of the support by the SP. Sustainability is in many cases enhanced by capacitating and engaging local level actors and by promoting their ‘ownership’.

The attention to strengthening the capacities of CSOs contributes to the sustainability of outcomes: capacitated organisations are better equipped to monitor progress and to re-engage if progress is threatened. The sustainability of capacity strengthening efforts is greatly enhanced by dissemination of knowledge and awareness beyond the partners (to partners of partners, to target groups, to government officials, to MPs and influencers etc). The sustainability of capacity strengthening efforts is endangered by high-staff turnover (sometimes caused by the insecurity of working for critical CSOs).

In general, the ‘real’, on the ground results of lobby and advocacy are usually a long-term matter. In most cases, final results will (possibly) only become apparent beyond the time horizon of this SP.

### Recommendations

- > Strategising and planning beyond the time horizon of the SP programme is important. For example, routinely develop scenarios for the time after the programme ends (with and without continued support) and invest in the sustainability of the alliances beyond the project period.

### Contribution and added value of the SP (effectiveness, coherence) and others

*Evaluation question 7. What was the contribution of our SP to these changes in relation to other actors and factors?*

*Evaluation question 8. Which factors/strategies were most important to achieve or contribute to the observed changes in policies and practices?*

Overall, the contribution of the SP to the sampled outcomes was assessed as ‘medium/strong’. The external evaluators mostly concluded that without the interventions by the SP, the change would not have taken place or would have been seriously reduced.

On the other hand: only in a few cases the interventions by the SP are considered as ‘sufficient’. Working in alliances, of course, makes it difficult to single out the

specific contribution of any particular member of the alliance to the outcome.

Sometimes other actors and factors contributing to an outcome were not sufficiently presented in the internal evaluation contribution stories. Specifically, international institutions (e.g. World Bank, IMF, UN, EU) and bilateral donors (e.g. SIDA and Dutch embassies) have been identified as relevant actors (and allies) in changing national policy changes, using their sphere of influence. Campaigning with private sector actors as allies has in a number of cases yielded remarkable results, as in the Behind the Brands campaign.

Bringing different stakeholders (government, private sector, media, CSOs) together and taking a ‘constructive engagement’ approach, i.e. focusing on non-confrontational dialogue, resulted in policy commitments. In particular, mixed approaches (combining policy analysis, engaging the public, organising public rallies, working with the (social) media, and constructive dialogue with government agencies) have yielded remarkable results.

Working in alliances has been identified as effective: CSOs greatly increase their clout by speaking with one voice. In cases where it was used, the international network of Oxfam and SOMO notably contributed to effectiveness. The ‘champions strategy’ in many cases proved effective in achieving policy outcomes. Oxfam country offices and their partners seem to have access to and make use of well-placed individuals in many (mostly) government departments, who are instrumental in placing issues on the agenda at government level and propagate the involvement of civil society. Most results would not have been achieved without the strengthened capacities of Oxfam country offices and their partners.

### Recommendations

- > Opportunities to engage with multi- and bilateral agencies are not always seized. Use existing platforms to enter into dialogue with the government and private sector.
- > Put the partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its fullest use, by engaging more with Dutch embassies. In cases where their response is limited, organise their support via contacts in The Hague.

### *What does this mean for the ToC?*

*Evaluation question 11. What do the answers to the above questions mean for our Theory of Change?*

The change pathways and the underlying assumptions of the thematic ToCs were largely considered valid. Change happens through motivated and knowledgeable organisations that 1) are in a position to engage a large enough ‘mass of citizens’ to rally behind the common cause and that 2) have enough convening power to create

and strengthen alliances involving a broad selection of stakeholders and that 3) are able to involve ‘champions’ like influencers, journalists and other individuals with a large audience, that 4) are well connected with the international level and that 5) have access to policy makers within government and/or within the private sector.

Some elements are (to a varying extent) less comprehensively included in the ToCs. Working towards changes in the private sector is not very clearly strategised in the ToCs. Engaging the private sector often involves other strategies, approaches and partners, as compared to dealing with government.

Although there are clear examples of the added value of the global network of Oxfam and SOMO, the global-to-local leverage (as suggested when choosing the name ‘Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network’ for the SP) has not been used to its fullest.

The long-term outcomes are about benefiting poor and marginalised people with policies that protect and promote their prosperity, decision-power and resilience. So the external evaluation team recognizes the strengthened CSOs and Alliances are as important means to ensure policies and practices are supporting these long-term outcomes. This can be made more explicit in the ToCs.

It was not explicit in the ToCs how the targeted outcomes were supposed to contribute to the long-term outcome and impact. No assumptions were defined at this level. It is also not clear how the shifts in power relations were represented in the ToC and how they could contribute to inclusive policies and system change.

### Recommendations

- > Develop a clear and explicit private sector change pathway within the ToCs, including strategies to influence non-western companies. This facilitates planning, monitoring and learning about private sector changes.
- > Align the national/project ToC with the overall ToC, and make strengthened CSOs and alliances a means for inclusive policies.
- > Capture global-to-local leverage (the WIN) as a cross-cutting tool into thematic ToCs and country ToCs.
- > Make assumptions explicit how targeted outcomes are supposed to contribute to the long-term outcome and impact.

### *And finally ...*

In the many (almost 200) interviews we have conducted, the many (we lost count) documents we have studied, and the (we dare not say how many) hours and days we have spent contemplating, individually or together, we have come across and entertained many ideas, brainwaves, conclusions and recommendations that did not find their way into the report. For a number of reasons: sometimes because there was no time for an

## PART VI – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

extra interview, sometimes because it was a little off-topic, sometimes because we could not find corroborating evidence. (In dialogue with Oxfam/SOMO) we decided to add an epilogue with some of the things that struck us in the course of the past 15 months.

- > We have been privileged to evaluate a highly successful programme, with many remarkable outcomes. It is/was an ambitious programme, especially in the light of the timeframe (5 years). Going through a complete policy cycle (identifying the issue, placing it on the agenda, finding political support, formulating a policy, going through the political approval process, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy enforcement, monitoring the effects) usually takes longer than 5 years. We hope that most of the initiated but unfinished changes will be supported in the programme for the next 5 years. What we did not see often was how follow-up and continuation was assured in the planning in the case of discontinuation of the SP-support.
- > The three themes that are part of the SP (R2F, F4D and C&F) all work towards the same long-term outcome (systemic change: a redistribution of power and a structural change in the behaviour of governments and companies). At some points we witnessed some overlap between the three themes. What we did not see, however, was added value and synergy. Some interviewees talk of 'silos'. It could be worthwhile to look for cross-links between the themes, where added value of the SP can be found.
- > Civil society organisations are the main instrument of social change targeted by the Strategic Partnership. This makes sense, obviously. Making CSOs stronger, more strategic, better funded, more knowledgeable, more aware and better connected is a key area of change of the SP. At the same time in many countries the position of CSOs is challenged. Shrinking civic space limits its room to move. Bureaucratic obstacles are put in place to control its operations. An anti-CSO narrative ('foreign agents'!) is actively stimulated by those in power to take the wind out of CSOs' sails. We have the feeling that the SP (and other donor initiatives) are not always the right actor to protect CSOs against these forces. This sentiment is shared by quite a few people we have interviewed. CSOs have strengthened their role as dialogue partners of governments and have increased their connections to international networks, but this development has been to the detriment of their connection to their constituents. They run the risk of being perceived as 'the elite'. CSOs (not all, not everywhere) need to strengthen (reboot?) their connection to their constituency, to the grassroots level. That is, in the end, where the power of their voice is based on. Some ideas:
  - Promote ownership of a clear and sizeable constituency of the actions and strategies of CSOs.

- Continue to amplify the position and role of CSOs as the megaphone of marginalised citizens.
- Support decentralisation processes of large CSO alliance organisations.
- Enhance maximum transparency of CSOs vis-a-vis the public.
- Intensify local resource mobilisation (among CSOs/CBOs) to complement international funding for lobby and advocacy. This will increase legitimacy but may also strengthen 'ownership'. And it may stimulate accountability towards the grassroots-constituency.