

# Mid-term Evaluation of the Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) Project

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Executive summary of the Mid-term Evaluation Report  
and Oxfam Management response

# Executive summary ELNHA Mid-term Evaluation

Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) is a three-year project being implemented by Oxfam Novib and Oxfam GB, with funding from the IKEA Foundation. The project aims to support local and national actors to increase their capacity and influence in a way that improves the distribution of power and resources in the sector. Oxfam Novib commissioned this mid-term evaluation of the project in order to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project components, to identify lessons learned, and to generate findings that would inform future revisions of the project. The mid-term evaluation also sets out to identify lessons that are relevant for the broader sector.

ELNHA is characterised by its open and flexible design, which has allowed country teams, supporting partners and other Local and National Humanitarian Actors (LNHAs) to adapt project implementation to their different contexts. The project provides a framework for activities in three areas:

- (1) Strength: activities designed to build the capacity of LNHAs. This includes a flexible fund that allows LNHAs to identify and implement activities to strengthen their capacity as well as joint action planning exercises and training workshops.
- (2) Voice: activities that encourage LNHAs to come together, develop a strong domestic agenda, and demonstrate local leadership. This includes activities to convene LNHAs, and an innovative fund that demonstrates LNHAs ability to design, implement and lead humanitarian projects.
- (3) Space: activities designed to create and advocate for inclusion of LNHAs in decision-making at both the national and international levels.

The project design was flexible but complicated. The first 18 months of the ELNHA project has been a period of trial and error, adaption and change as the different project components have been refined and piloted. The project proposal was highly conceptual, and a large amount of time has been invested in helping the country teams, supporting partners and LNHAs to understand how to design activities to reach the project objectives. Much of the first nine months was spent refining and contextualising the concepts developed in the proposal, recruiting staff, convening LNHAs and developing frameworks and guidance for the two funds. Supporting partners were recruited in each country (6 in Bangladesh and 3 in Uganda) to co-implement the project at the district level.

ELNHA was designed as a process that could be captured within a project. Many of the activities – such as convening, coordinating, and planning – do not have a clear beginning and end. This approach is reflected in the Theory of Change, which defines a broad set of outcomes built to increase local strength, voice, and space. The team has developed a flexible MEAL approach and a strong internal learning culture.

A comprehensive team has been recruited to manage key elements of the project and many new relationships were built with district governments, UN agency representatives, and L/NGOs. Supporting partners convened LNHAs, supported the development of joint action plans (JAPs) and influencing activities, coordinated with local and national government, and provided strategic input on the design of the funds. They have successfully identified and convened other LNHAs in their districts. However, the capacity of the supporting partners to provide district level leadership varies. Their leadership of activities was tentative at first, but has grown as their understanding of the concepts behind the project has grown. Given the thrust on partnership, the teams in Bangladesh and Uganda would benefit from a partnership manager who could provide a consistent point of contact across the broad variety of project activities.

The project was initiated by research and planning exercises, including a Humanitarian Country Capacity Analysis (HUCOCA) Report on the humanitarian ecosystem in each country, a validation workshop, and development of Joint Action Plans (JAPs). The HUCOCA provided a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of LNHAs in the humanitarian sector that has provided a valuable foundation for subsequent activities. It outlined collective capacity gaps in each country that were used to chart out JAPs in each district. Supporting partners at the district level used a participatory planning approach to facilitate the workshops. The JAPs provided an important first opportunity for LNHAs to take ownership of the direction of the capacity-building component of the project. However, a one-off workshop was found insufficient to develop a collective agenda and the quality of plans varies between districts. In Bangladesh, LNHAs recommended general capacity building activities with which they were familiar, which did not always address the specific needs of individual actors. In Uganda, a lack of humanitarian experience meant LNHAs struggled to identify the capacities needed within their organisations or the changes they wished to see in the system. Actors that attended the HUCOCA and JAP workshops expected to listen - or at most contribute - but not to be part of an exercise that required planning, shaping and deciding the way forward.

The JAPs were intended to inform capacity building activities delivered through the Humanitarian Capacity Development Fund (HCDF). The fund has two funding streams: an 80% stream that was designed to be managed by the supporting partners and a 20% stream for the ELNHA teams to develop the capacity of the supporting partners, fund cross-district and national-level capacity development activities, and support actors and networks at the national level. The HCDF is unique because it allows LNHAs to look inward, reflect on their needs, and identify their own capacity development activities. LNHAs in Bangladesh were satisfied with the capacity building workshops and coordination activities implemented under the 80% stream but recommended greater inclusion of local volunteers. In Uganda, the HCDF was used to re-establish the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs), which was recommended by the HUCOCA process and has facilitated improved communication between local government and some LNNGOs. It is hoped that forthcoming HCDF projects implemented by national-level NGOs will also contribute towards a stronger humanitarian ecosystem. The process of developing proposals for the HCDF involved back-and-forth exchanges between ELNHA and supporting partners which caused delays between the proposals and awarding of grants. The report makes several recommendations for the HCDF, including that ELNHA provides more guidance to supporting partners to help them identify the breath of capacity building activities that could be included, and that it considers reinvesting some HCDF funds into the Humanitarian Response Grant Facility (HRGF), which has demonstrated experiential learning.

In addition to the HCDF, ELNHA provided a broad spectrum of capacity development initiatives from proposal writing, to real-time reviews, to introductory training on cash transfer programming (CTP). This has been particularly valuable in Uganda where experience of humanitarian delivery among LNHAs is very limited. The report provides recommendations on facilitating practical learning on CTP, which was a key objective of the project but has taken time to establish in Uganda. It also notes the repeated demands of LNHAs for additional training in proposal writing.

The 'voice' component of the project was initiated by supporting partners and ELNHA staff, who convened LNHAs in a variety of settings to build new linkages between them. In Bangladesh, LNNGOs have worked with local government and were invited to participate in the process to revise the Standing Orders on Disasters (SODs). The project also supported national actors to develop their individual and collective influencing work, including advocacy on Haor Flash Floods and activities with the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors Bangladesh (NAHAB). Local actors have also been able to participate in localisation events in Geneva.

In Uganda, a new national platform for LNHAs is being formed through the Uganda National NGO Forum and stronger relationships have been formed between local government and CBOs. LNHAs have been able to identify and influence important issues at the local and national levels. For example, two LNHAs successfully influenced the establishment of a refugee settlement in northern Uganda and another was invited to present to a national level Solidarity Summit. There are opportunities in the second half of the project to build on these foundations through workshops and initiatives that allow LNHAs to consolidate their influencing strategies.

Many LNHAs see the HRGF as the most important and effective component of the project. It has provided LNHAs with an experiential learning opportunity to draft proposals, design and deliver quality response programmes, and demonstrate financial accountability. At the same time, it has allowed them to demonstrate an ability to deliver aid in line with (or at least aiming at) international standards and principles. The HRGF was designed to be flexible to each context, and ELNHA staff and supporting partners have adapted the funds grant sizes and guidance. There were challenges in timeliness of screening and contracting in Uganda. In both countries, LNHAs advocated for a larger fund available over longer time frames. Discussion of these issues has already begun through the learning framework built into the project.

Activities under the space component of the project are designed to encourage donors and INGOs to create more space for LNHAs within their policies, strategies and systems. The Influencing team developed a set of strategic objectives and then sought opportunities to create space at three levels: locally, nationally and internationally. Experiences from the ELNHA project have been fed into a variety of working groups and Grand Bargain (GB) processes.

At the **national level**, ELNHA has sought to identify issues that are important to LNHAs and to create spaces for them in forums. For example, in Bangladesh, ELNHA advocacy initiatives led to one Supporting Partner participating in a panel during the National Convention on Disaster Management, and another joining the National Haor Advocacy Platform. In Uganda, several of the LNGOs played a pivotal role in advocating for the establishment of Palabek settlement. Gains have also been made by LNHAs participating in Inter-Agency coordination meetings in refugee settlements where they are able to demonstrate growing experiences in implementing responses. Nevertheless, the objectives under this component are ambitious and participation in national-level coordination mechanisms continues to be a challenge. The remainder of the project provides an opportunity for LNHAs in Bangladesh and Uganda to begin demanding more space for themselves.

# Oxfam Management response to the ELNHA Mid-term Evaluation

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## A: Context, background and findings

### 1. The context and background of the evaluation

#### *About the ELNHA project*

The ELNHA project aims at a better sharing of power and resources in the humanitarian sector between international humanitarian actors and local and national ones. The underlying assumption is that having local and national humanitarian actors (LNHA) in the driving seat for emergency preparedness and response shall allow vulnerable people in disaster prone areas to benefit from better humanitarian response. To achieve the envisioned systemic change in the humanitarian sector, the ELNHA project is pursuing three main strategies in parallel. First of all, the capacity of LNHAs is strengthened so that they can lead humanitarian action (STRENGTH). Secondly, LNHAs are given the voice to create a strong domestic humanitarian agenda in their countries (VOICE). Thirdly, international NGOs and donors are influenced, based on solid evidence, so that they provide more space and means to LNHAs to lead humanitarian action (SPACE).

ELNHA focuses on two countries, Bangladesh and Uganda, which are both acutely at risk from humanitarian crises. In both countries, activities are undertaken at national level and in selected districts (6 in Uganda and 9 in Bangladesh). The ELNHA project started with an analysis of the domestic humanitarian capacity in Bangladesh and Uganda, using the HUCOCA (Humanitarian Country Capacity Analysis) methodology. This was followed by the joint prioritization by LNHAs of their capacity development needs and the drawing of joint action plans (JAPs).

One mechanism used for building strength is ELNHA's Humanitarian Capacity Development Fund (HCDF), to which local actors can submit proposals to fund capacity development activities. Voice is promoted both at the collective and organizational levels: coordination and collaboration amongst LNHAs are strengthened as a way of fostering collective influence; at the same time, the Humanitarian Response Grant Facility (HRGF) set up by ELNHA provides the opportunity for individual LNHAs to demonstrate their ability to design and implement quality humanitarian projects, hence enhancing their individual voices. ELNHA's influencing and engagement activities at global level aim at having international donors and INGOs adapting their policies, strategies and systems to give more space to LNHAs. So far this has been done through investing in relationships and collaborating with various networks, UN agencies, and donor governments who also support this

systemic change, for instance through being an active member of international workgroups, collaborating on a coordinated research agenda on local humanitarian leadership and co-organizing conferences. ELNHA also strives at acting as a role model, by actively supporting the participation of LNHA's representatives to global debate spaces whenever an opportunity arises.

The ELNHA project is implemented by dedicated project teams in Bangladesh, Uganda and at Global level, made of Oxfam staff. Supporting partners were selected among local LNHA's in both countries, to co-implement the project; there are 6 supporting partners in Bangladesh and 3 in Uganda. In addition, some local actors ("lead actors") have stepped forward in Bangladesh to take the lead on selected capacity development activities facilitated by ELNHA.

### ***About the mid-term evaluation of the ELNHA project***

The ELNHA project was mid-way in its implementation when an external mid-term process evaluation was initiated in August 2017, with the aim of assessing how and in what ways the intervention is working. This analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the project was to be followed by the formulation of actionable recommendations in view of further strengthening implementation during the second half of ELNHA. The findings and recommendations from the evaluation would then feed into the iterative adaptation of strategies and implementation, in order to sustain the most effective and efficient path to achieving the set objectives. In this view, this process evaluation was scheduled just before the project annual learning review, which took place at the end of October 2017 and consisted in an overall review of ELNHA's progress and process, followed by adjustment and planning of activities until the end of the project. The purpose of this mid-term evaluation was threefold:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the ELNHA planning and implementation
- To provide accountability to ELNHA's various stakeholders, in particular to the project supporting partners, other LNHA's in Bangladesh and Uganda (including local and national governments), INGOs and donors in countries and at global level, and ELNHA's donor, the Ikea Foundation.
- To identify lessons learned and generate knowledge to inform revisions for the second half of the project, and to inform the development of future projects that support local leadership in the humanitarian sector; such initiatives are indeed multiplying both within Oxfam and other agencies, and all lessons and recommendations on ELNHA's process shall be of great value for these projects.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- To review the design and implementation of the ELNHA project during the first half of its lifespan, looking at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of its activities, assessing whether the use of resources is proving to be effective and efficient, and analyzing whether the organizational systems and capacities of Oxfam staff and supporting partners are appropriate for achieving the intended project objectives.
- To identify, formulate and share good practices, lessons and strategic, actionable recommendations with the ELNHA teams and supporting partners, on both programmatic and project management aspects, in view of strengthening of implementation during the second half of ELNHA. Suggestions on how the first half of ELNHA could have been done differently shall also be provided (information to be used for the potential replication of ELNHA's approach and process, by Oxfam or other stakeholders).
- To stimulate reflections and learning among ELNHA teams, supporting partners, Oxfam country offices and LNHA, including learning from failures and challenges.

Primary users of the evaluation results are the following:

- Oxfam ELNHA staff (global + in-country) and supporting partners implementing the ELNHA project
- Other Oxfam staff (global + in-country) who are supporting ELNHA
- The Ikea Foundation

Secondary users of the evaluation results will be the following:

- Other agencies / initiatives that are supporting local humanitarian leadership
- LNHA in Bangladesh and Uganda which are involved in the ELNHA project

## **2. Summary main findings and recommendations**

### ***Main findings***

#### Design and process

- i. Overall, this is an innovative project that has allowed Oxfam to test out new modalities that promote local humanitarian action and provide important and sometimes challenging organisational learning.
- ii. Oxfam provides a good enabling environment but has raised high expectations from its LNHA partners. A strong team has been recruited and effective project processes are being established. However, the team articulates a big ambition to increase space for LNHAs. This inevitably leads to high expectations and to frustration among partners when changes happen slowly.
- iii. The ELNHA project benefited from its open, adaptable design. The open design was vital in the attempt to incorporate a complex process into a project. Country teams have been able to define and prioritise key activities, and have included supporting partners in developing strategies and designing the funding mechanisms and guidance. Moreover, the design of the HUCOCA, JAPs and the two funding modalities (HCDF and HRGF) allowed LNHAs to identify their own priorities for capacity building. The importance of flexible design has been demonstrated in the way that the project implementation differs in Uganda and Bangladesh, which has facilitated effective contextualisation and adaptation.
- iv. So far, most LNHAs are yet to drive fully the ELNHA project. Many of the ELNHA processes still need to be led by the Oxfam staff, even with the inclusion of supporting partners and lead actors. It is evident that engagement and ownership is increasing: so far, the supporting partners have facilitated capacity building at the district level and have convened workshops, meetings and supported information sharing. However, a more substantive mind-set change will be needed to see LNHAs at the forefront of activities, with Oxfam playing a complementary role. A donor-donee mindset has evolved in the global South and many of the LNHAs see themselves as secondary to International organisations. The project should continue to encourage assertiveness and allow LNHAs to play a 'challenge function.'
- v. At the country-level, partners must adapt to multiple types of partnership, which can be confusing. In particular, Oxfam Uganda has significantly scaled-up its direct humanitarian operations in response to the refugee crisis on the South Sudan border. LNHAs engaged in ELNHA are often also working on sub-contracts for Oxfam or another INGO. This can be confusing for LNHAs who are engaged in two different forms of working relationship with Oxfam. ELNHA should seek to support country offices embed the values and some of the working practices of the ELNHA project into its broader humanitarian portfolio.

#### Strength

- vi. A substantial amount of time was needed to embed the ideas and practicalities of local humanitarian leadership amongst new staff, supporting partners and other LNHAs. This was initially underestimated. The staff involved in project design had taken significant time to distil and absorb ideas and develop project concepts. The resulting design was flexible but complicated. Within ELNHA much of the first nine months was spent undertaking research and situational assessments, building and inducting the team, conducting organisational capacity assessments of new partners,

and developing fund guidelines, plans, timelines and budgets. Supporting partners spent the time convening, jointly defining their collective capacity needs, and identifying ways to address these. In future projects we would recommend simplifying, and including supporting partners in, the design of the strength component (and specifically the HCDF).

- vii. The HUCOCA, JAPs and capacity building assessments provided valuable information to contextualise the project and supported space to form nascent networks.
- viii. JAPs were effective in bringing LNHAs together to begin discussions on collective capacity gaps. However, the day-long workshops were insufficient to build a collective strategy to address those gaps. Moreover, organisational capacities varied significantly (particularly in Bangladesh) and many organisations struggled to identify and articulate their own gaps. In the short term, supporting partners need clearer guidance to understand the types of capacity building modalities that are available.
- ix. LNHAs have struggled to identify solutions and develop proposals to meet their own capacity development gaps, resulting in a significant underspend in the HCDF. The ELNHA team in Uganda felt the original proposals were weak and contained simplistic capacity building activities that would not address gaps.
- x. The most effective capacity building activities have varied between organisations and countries. The ELNHA project illustrates the diversity of LNHAs in skills, capabilities and readiness to demand leadership. There are opportunities to identify more tailored opportunities for the participating LNHAs, for example staff placements into larger agencies and more 'learning by doing'. This is particularly important for technical skills in Uganda, such as CTP.

#### Voice

- xi. A number of new relationships have been built through the project, which have facilitated linkages, and formal and informal networks between LNHAs. Linkages have been formed and strengthened between the ELNHA teams, district governments, UN agencies, national and local NGOs. Joint activities have also facilitated new collaborations and informal networking between LNHAs, which will be vital for beginning to address system-level challenges. Those interviewed during this mid-term evaluation understood the broad objectives of the project and were positive about their engagement with the ELNHA teams.
- xii. LNHAs have successfully influenced national-level processes in Uganda and Bangladesh and have built stronger relationships with local government. Through their involvement in the project, LNHAs have contributed to revision of the Standing Orders on Disaster in Bangladesh and to the Solidarity Summit and Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework committee in Uganda. They have also established stronger formal and informal relationships with local District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs). There are opportunities to strengthen links between LNHAs and national Government, particularly in Uganda.
- xiii. Most LNHAs are not yet demanding spaces for themselves. Many of the LNHAs have only become aware of the localisation agenda recently. Many would be content to experience slightly better access to funding and more inclusion. There is need for on-going discussions around what is meant by leadership and influencing, especially in Uganda where agencies lack confidence in their capabilities and in what they have to offer.
- xiv. The HRGF is an innovative and flexible approach to capacity development that is also providing evidence of locally designed responses. Research on capacity development has established the value of experiential learning, in which individuals and organisations build expertise through practice. Through the HRGF, LNHAs have gained new skills in proposal writing, structuring activities, and tackling donor demands. The process has also encouraged positive competition between LNHAs. The recommendations provide some important suggestions for strengthening the fund.
- xv. The HRGF mechanism and/or guidance could better account for the smaller LNGOs, who find it harder to compete for funding from the HRGF. LNGOs in Uganda and Bangladesh struggled to compete with larger counterparts in the HRGF. In both Bangladesh and Uganda, most of the HRGF recipients are the relatively more established organisations. These larger organisations are vital for

establishing national humanitarian leadership and comprehensive and timely response. However, the evaluators felt that there is also scope to explore mechanisms that would empower smaller LNHAs – first responders - who don't have financial resources to retain the necessary staff capacity for writing strong written proposals.

- xvi. In Uganda, there is a large group of small CBOs (of 5-15 staff) involved in the project. A mechanism for these actors would need to involve smaller grants, simpler proposal writing and reporting processes, and support for creating and working in consortiums. If this isn't possible then ELNHA should manage expectations of the CBOs so that they do not repeatedly apply for funding that they cannot compete for.
- xvii. ELNHA is carefully managing the risk of supporting partners becoming another intermediary for funding. This is a particular risk in Bangladesh where support partners expressed the desire to deliver their responses through the LNNGOs and CBOs. ELNHA could facilitate additional discussion and develop strategies to address the risk in future JAPs.

### Space

- xviii. The objectives under the 'space' component are ambitious. Access to coordination mechanisms continues to be a big challenge, largely excluding LNHAs. Progress against donor and INGO commitments to the GB have been slow and LNHAs in Bangladesh and Uganda are only beginning to demand space for themselves. There is a need for more work in this area to consolidate the progress made by UN agencies and INGOs so far.
- xix. The project benefits from strong support at Oxfam. ELNHA's long-term impact largely relies on attitudinal change, which is a pre-requisite for addressing the power imbalance. More internal discussion is needed to create a vision of the future role of LNHAs in the humanitarian sector for national staff and to ensure the organisation is 'walking the talk.'
- xx. Advocacy work with donors should continue to address accessibility of funding mechanisms for LNHAs. Oxfam has begun advocating for more space for LNHAs among donors, UN agencies and INGOs. Its position and reputation, and experience of the challenges and practicalities of the HRGF, makes Oxfam uniquely positioned to inform these debates. In interviews, funding, and simplified procedures for accessing that funding were priorities for LNHAs.

### **Acronyms**

LNHAs: Local and National Humanitarian Actors

HUCOCA: Humanitarian Country Context Analysis

JAP: Joint Action Plan

HCDF: Humanitarian Capacity Development Fund

HRGF: Humanitarian Response Grant Facility

CTP: Cash-Transfer Programming

### **Recommendations**

The table in the next pages summarises the recommendations provided by the evaluation team, and to which country it applies.

(Key: BAN = Bangladesh; UG = Uganda; GL = Global):

Recommendation in Evaluation Report	Applicable to		
	BAN	UG	GL
<b>Recommendations for making the most of ELNHA's open and adaptable design</b>			
Consider hiring a Partnership Manager who would develop and document approaches to partnership and develop a cohesive plan for engagement with LNHAs	✓	✓	
Identify a focal point for ELNHA's cash transfer programming (CTP) work to develop a coordinated strategy, form strategic relationships with private sector actors, and to advocate for greater synergies between World Humanitarian Summit commitments on cash and local humanitarian action			✓
Hold discussions in Uganda with ELNHA staff to agree on the extent to which it is appropriate to direct LNHA's activities		✓	
Continue to identify and engage LNHAs willing and able to determine and lead their own activities	✓	✓	
Consider establishing a permanent working station in a primary area of operation for the ELNHA team in Uganda (either Arua or Kampala), which will save time on travel		✓	
Embed the values and principles of the ELNHA project into Oxfam's broader humanitarian portfolio. Advocate for the inclusion of some of the ELNHA ways of working into country response strategies and contingency planning processes	✓	✓	
Consider piloting a lead actor role in Uganda in order to give smaller organisations the opportunity to lead capacity building activities in their strong areas		✓	
Support ELNHA, SPs and LNHA teams in documents management		✓	
<b>Recommendations for ensuring LNHAs become more drivers of the ELNHA project</b>			
Work with supporting partners to outline a clear timeline for year 3, which will allow them to anticipate and plan for the activities under each component	✓	✓	
Include non-applicant LNHAs in HCDF and HRGF proposal screening committees	✓	✓	
Facilitate additional opportunities for LNHAs to reflect on the humanitarian architecture, such as how to lead networks, participate in cluster coordination mechanisms, participate in joint assessments, advocate for simplified reporting, and understand and claim their rights	✓	✓	
Manage expectations of LNHAs on the nature of the project and likelihood of future funding from Oxfam	✓	✓	
<b>Recommendations for maximizing HUCOCA process</b>			
For future projects, plan additional time to conduct the HUCOCA and JAP processes	✓	✓	✓
<b>Recommendations for ensuring that JAPs identify the most important capacity gaps</b>			
In Bangladesh, focus on institutional capacity building over individual capacity building. Work with large LNGOs to identify specific capacity gaps, and seek their support to build capacity of smaller organisations and to provide them complementary support	✓		
Provide LNHAs with support in identifying their gaps, for example through peer-review, structured self-assessments, or more organically through on-going ELNHA mentoring	✓	✓	
Provide support to NAHAB and its members in developing their own national-level JAP in Bangladesh. Align the national-level JAP with district level activities to promote coherence	✓		

Recommendation in Evaluation Report	Applicable to		
	BAN	UG	GL
Select specific participants to attend JAP workshops, or ask organisations to nominate their own focal persons to ensure that the same person attends the meetings to ensure consistency and preparation	✓	✓	
<b>Recommendations for ensuring a smoother development of proposals and capacity development activities by LNHAs under the HCDF</b>			
Facilitate learning exchanges with LNHAs experienced at delivering innovative capacity building activities in other contexts	✓	✓	
Continue to provide supporting partners with guidance on the different types of capacity building modalities available	✓	✓	
Develop opportunities for Ugandan partners to receive training, coaching or secondment at Oxfam to gain skills in delivering WASH programmes (currently being implemented directly)		✓	
Consider reallocating some HCDF funding to the HRGF which provides opportunities for experiential learning	✓	✓	✓
Use the response reviews to inform future JAPs and provide clearer guidance for the HCDF	✓	✓	✓
Consider the use of alternative proposal development mechanisms, such as co-developing proposals in workshops	✓	✓	✓
Work with LNHAs to develop influencing strategies relating to staff retention in LNNGOs	✓	✓	
<b>Recommendations for supporting LNHAs to strengthen nascent networks</b>			
Continue to support convening efforts at the Uganda National NGO Forum and through NAHAB	✓	✓	
Support LNHAs to take ownership of NAHAB and to develop links to local level coordination mechanisms.	✓		
In Bangladesh, explore areas of complementarity by focusing on core competencies. This may help address unhealthy competition and bring LNHAs together under local networks, managed and led by LNHAs	✓		
Continue to support stronger linkages between LNNGOs and local government to ensure sustainability of the project.	✓	✓	
Consider hiring an Influencing Officer at the Supporting Partner or network level (at the same level of expertise and remuneration) as the current officers.	✓	✓	
<b>Recommendations for developing LNHAs' understanding of the localisation process</b>			
Consider co-developing with LNHAs an accountability approach for C4C signatories	✓	✓	
Provide on-going workshops and spaces for LNHAs to discuss local leadership and to develop advocacy agendas	✓	✓	
<b>Recommendations for strengthening the HRGF</b>			
Continue to support LNHAs to reduce response time, minimise operational cost and promote innovation.	✓	✓	
Consider adaptations to the mechanism, including longer delivery times, involvement of other donors, and promoting consortium approaches. Extend the implementing period for projects that require new systems, such as CTP.	✓	✓	✓
Review the guidelines to allow for flexible funding to cater for new emergencies in real time.	✓	✓	✓
Establish alternative ways for HRGF applicants to present project information that doesn't solely rely on proposal writing such as workshops and interviews before selection of proposals.	✓	✓	✓
Review the feedback and grievance redress processes for the HRGF with the ELNHA Oxfam country teams, grantees and those not awarded grants	✓	✓	✓

Recommendation in Evaluation Report	Applicable to		
	BAN	UG	GL
Identify inclusion criteria for LNHAs to maximise the effectiveness of the HRGF and HCDF. In Uganda, encourage smaller organisations to apply in consortiums or, if the HRGF is not suitable for small organisations, encourage them to focus on HCDF activities	✓	✓	
The evaluators in Bangladesh recommended that the HRGF should primarily focus on those LNHAs who are rooted closer to the affected communities, have limited access to other funding sources, and are in position to trigger an immediate response.	✓		
Provide step-by-step mentoring of LNHAs alongside HRGF funding for CTP in Uganda		✓	
Undertake research to gain a better understanding of how CTP interacts with microcredit in Bangladesh	✓		
<b>Recommendations for creating a vision of the future role of LNHAs in the humanitarian sector for Oxfam national staff</b>			
Support internal discussions on the role of LNHAs within Oxfam Uganda and Bangladesh, working through issues relating to funding, sub-contracting, and the future role of INGOs	✓	✓	✓
<b>Recommendations for advocacy work with donors focusing on addressing accessibility of funding mechanisms for LNHAs</b>			
HRGF has the potential to demonstrate a process for a Country Based Pooled Fund (CBPF). Oxfam, as member of START Network, has leverage to influence its policy to make Start funding accessible to LNHAs. The evaluators in Bangladesh recommend that Oxfam could advocate to fast-track inclusion of LNHAs in the network.	✓		✓
Work with LNHAs to understand how the challenge of staff retention should inform the influencing agenda.	✓		

**B: ELNHA's response** to the validity and relevance of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

**3. Summary of evaluation quality assessment**, i.e. quality of the evaluation is strong/mixed/poor and short assessment of the process (e.g. good, wordy report)

Overall, the quality of the evaluation process is felt as mixed. The ELNHA project is a complex intervention, which aims at systemic change in the sector through a set of activities at different levels, engaging diverse audiences. This is not a project that can quickly be understood by external stakeholders, and it obviously was a challenge for the evaluation team to grasp all the levels of the intervention in the timeframe provided.

The timeline in the TORs for the evaluation was of 1.5 months for delivery of a first draft, to have it presented at the project mid-term review in mid-October. This period included a desk review, country visits, analysis and report writing. The timeline was admittedly tight and meeting the requirements would have been only possible with full time dedication of the evaluation team. The time-period was not sufficient for the evaluation team to grasp fully the project in its breadth and depth.

Nonetheless, the short timeframe for the evaluation process was not the only issue. In one of the countries, the ELNHA team felt that the consultants used a different methodology during the field visit than the one agreed upon and that they were not fully acquainted with key project documents. There was also a strong feeling that one of the consultants tended to state or write ideas that were based on his own opinion, rather than the evidence in the field. This put into question the neutrality and evaluation capacity of the consultant.

The evaluation team also faced some challenges when collecting information:

- It was in some instances difficult to disentangle what had been done from what was in the planning. The ELNHA country teams were future looking, which made this distinction often difficult.
- Getting homogeneous perspectives from the persons interviewed at Global level on the Space pillar was difficult. The Space component was harder to pin down, and therefore the findings and analysis in this part are much more limited than for Strength and Voice.

Nonetheless, despite the above challenges, the evaluation team was very cooperative during the various review and feedback rounds and the quality of the report significantly improved from the initial draft to the final report. The evaluation report is well written and clear, and provides some useful findings and actionable recommendations, although not to the level of depth that the ELNHA team had hoped for.

The evaluators also prepared country-specific 3 pagers to make the evaluation findings more accessible to local actors.

**4. Main ELNHA/Oxfam follow-up actions** (detailed follow-up actions should be included in the table below)

The main follow-up actions will be:

- a) Review and adaptation of the HRGF mechanism to incorporate lessons learned and recommendations, with the aim to develop a tested model that can be adapted to different contexts and donors;
- b) Invest in a partnership plan at the district level to strengthen cooperation and complementarity- adopt learning from the experience to inform Oxfam's approach towards partnership;
- c) Support national and district level networks to establish linkages for sustainable engagement and capacity development;

**5. Any conclusions/recommendations ELNHA does not agree with or will not act upon - and why (this reflection should consider the results of the evaluation quality assessment)**

Below are recommendations from the evaluation team that the ELNHA team disagrees with:

- a) Identify a focal point for ELNHA's CTP work to develop a coordinated strategy, form strategic relationships with private sector actors, and to advocate for greater synergies between WHS commitments on cash and local humanitarian action

ELNHA response:

*The ELNHA partially disagrees with this recommendation.*

*Rather than having a focal person for ELNHA's CTP at global level, the team feels there is an opportunity to strengthen the links between Oxfam's Global Humanitarian Team (GHT) CTP team (just recently staffed with a coordinator), and the regional advisers (who have been engaged from the start). The Global team has conducted initial discussions in January with the GHT CTP team, and there are now direct discussions between them and the countries to make best use of their strategic and technical inputs.*

*The ELNHA country teams shall revive their existing contact with Oxfam's CTP regional advisers.*

- b) Consider establishing a permanent working station in a primary area of operation for the ELNHA team in Uganda (either Arua or Kampala), which will save time on travel

ELNHA response:

*The location of the ELNHA office in the Karamoja region is strategic, as it is one of the ELNHA districts. This allows for easy communication with supporting partners and other actors in that district. It is recognized that the connection between Karamoja and the other ELNHA districts is difficult and time-consuming, but with the recent establishment of new Oxfam Offices in Lamwo and Arua (the other ELNHA districts), the team expects to have support from the teams there, in terms of monitoring, facilitating and supporting in the responses. At the core lies the need to strengthen communication, coordination and engagements between the ELNHA team and the humanitarian response teams, aspects that the Office has been consciously investing in in the past months.*

- c) Consider piloting a lead actor role in Uganda in order to give smaller organisations the opportunity to lead capacity building activities in their strong areas

ELNHA response:

*The context of Uganda differs from that of Bangladesh- there are much fewer humanitarian organizations at the district level so less of a need to distribute roles beyond the supporting partners; and there are even fewer organizations with the capacity to manage and coordinate activities. Therefore, the implementation of the HCDF requires a different approach, where larger organizations in the district coordinate implementation and national level actors provide capacity.*

- d) Include non-applicant LNHA's in HCDF and HRGF proposal screening committees

ELNHA response:

*In light of the evidenced dynamics among local actors, power relations and competition, it is seen as more appropriate to have Oxfam review and evaluate proposals. This conclusion is based on an external review of the HRGF mechanism, as well as local actors' inputs, who have expressed feeling more comfortable with Oxfam reviewing proposals rather than local actors, as Oxfam is perceived to be more neutral.*

- e) In Bangladesh, focus on institutional capacity building over individual capacity building. Work with large LNGOs to identify specific capacity gaps, and seek their support to build capacity of smaller organisations and to provide them complementary support

ELNHA response:

*The project capacity development activities follow a systemic approach: rather than engaging in individual institutional strengthening trajectory, it identifies organizations in the system and works in collaboration with these various organizations and the government to bring in synergistic changes. Resources are insufficient to carry out individual institutional strengthening trajectories for a significant number of LNHAs, and doing so would mean moving away from a systemic change approach. Nonetheless, some specific project activities, such as the CTP leadership programme (during which organizations identify their own internal gaps, such as the absence of CTP in their contingency plans), as well as the implementation of HRGF-funded humanitarian responses, partially contributes to this. In addition, ELNHA will work with the district level NGO networks (i.e NAHAB district focal organization), who are just starting and will be facilitating coordination between LNHAs in the districts (including in terms of capacity offers and asks).*

- f) Develop opportunities for Ugandan partners to receive training, coaching or secondments at Oxfam to gain skills in delivering WASH programmes (currently being implemented directly)

ELNHA response:

*By the time of the evaluation, VEDCO and PAG were implementing WASH activities in Lamwo and Arua districts, with mentoring from Oxfam. Therefore, WASH programs were being delivered by local organizations directly. The team will continue to support local organizations to deliver WASH responses on their own, and provide them with coaching and mentoring as required.*

- g) Consider hiring an Influencing Officer at the Supporting Partner or network level (at the same level of expertise and remuneration) as the current officers.

ELNHA response:

*In Bangladesh, the ELNHA team within the supporting partners will be increased by one staff member (project officer) from January 2018. This additional staff member will work among others on MEAL and influencing activities. In addition, 3 technical coordinators have been recruited in October / November 2017 to provide support in quality assurance, coordination and influencing. In view of the already strengthened capacity as well as the independent role that LNHAs are increasingly taking in influencing, the ELNHA Bangladesh team feels that no additional capacity is required for the moment at supporting partner level for influencing.*

*In Uganda, from the perspective of project sustainability and ownership, we do not believe that additional staff within the partners would strengthen the influencing work in the long term. We believe that stakeholders will find the time and space to lead on influencing, when/where this is seen to be most impactful. With the support of the ELNHA influencing staff, and now the new established partnerships with national networks and organizations to drive the influencing agenda, the team believes that the structures are being set in place for a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to influencing.*

- h) Establish alternative ways for HRGF applicants to present project information that doesn't solely rely on proposal writing such as workshops and interviews before selection of proposals.

ELNHA response:

*This is a valid point but not appropriate at this stage. The ELNHA is a project that tries to change ways of working- one way is to have local actors access more funding, the other is to have donors relax their reporting and compliance processes. The change from the donor side will take longer than the project timeline- therefore in the meantime, if our aim is to have local actors access more funding from donors, they will need to be able to comply with the requirements that donors impose. The HRGF is thus seen as an opportunity for local actors to practice and implement programming in the way they would be requested to if they received funding from other donors. Therefore, the step of proposal writing will be*

*retained. However, the team has included a two-step process in the HRGF which allows local actors to have better preparation and understanding of the process and procedures prior to application.*

- i) Undertake research to gain a better understanding of how CTP interacts with microcredit in Bangladesh

ELNHA response:

*Microcredit and CTP are two different groups of activities, and the ELNHA team does not see any direct link between them. More appropriately, the ELNHA Bangladesh team is investing in research to gain a better understanding around CTP practices- to this end it has commissioned a study on suitable payment mechanisms (started in august 2017 and to be finalized in January 2018), which also looks at microfinance institutions. This study shall be followed by another one that shall identify the real time pros and cons of the selected suitable payment mechanisms.*

**6. Additional reflections** that have emerged from the evaluation process but were not the subject of the evaluation.

In terms of the evaluation process, the team recognizes the need to extend the time for the evaluation. It is also advised to have one evaluator that conducts the evaluation both at global and in the countries, with the support of local evaluators for the interviews in the field. This is a measure to ensure standardization and consistency in methodology and findings.