



**TOWARDS A WORLDWIDE INFLUENCING NETWORK  
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE AND DISSENT**

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2020 FINAL REPORT**

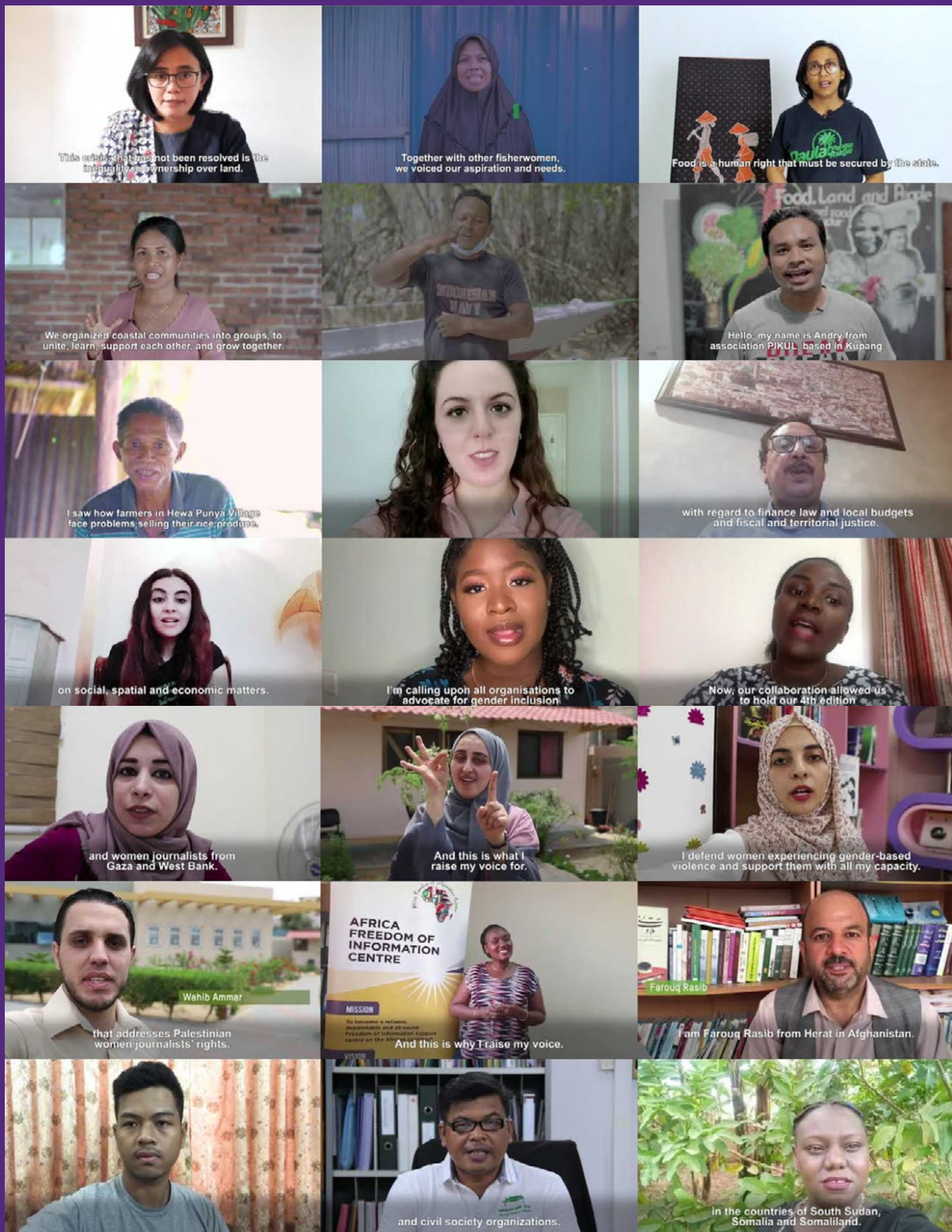
**REFLECTION ON THE PROGRAM**



**OXFAM** Novib







The SP WIN would not have been possible without the commitment and support of brave activists. We wish to honour and thank them by placing once more the The Wall of Voices with a few voices added.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>2. How it all started and what we set out to achieve</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>3. Annual Report on the worldwide influencing network in 2020</b>	<b>07</b>
◦ Covid-19 and civic space	08
◦ Gender and generational inclusion	10
◦ Sustainability and closure	10
• <b>Right to Food</b>	11
• <b>Finance for Development</b>	15
• <b>Conflict and Fragility</b>	19
Final Report Reflections on the Program	
<b>4. Reflecting on the ToCs</b>	<b>24</b>
• Right to Food	27
◦ Context and ToC specifics	28
◦ Influencing strategies	29
◦ Continuing stories	30
• Finance for Development	31
◦ Context and ToC specifics	31
◦ Influencing strategies	32
◦ Continuing stories	34
• Conflict & Fragility	35
◦ Context and ToC specifics	36
◦ Influencing strategies	37
◦ Continuing stories	39
• Civic space	40
• Conflict sensitivity	43
• Gender and generational inclusion	45
<b>5. Reflection on partnerships</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6. Lessons learned</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7. Conclusion: this is our legacy</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Acronyms and abbreviations</b>	<b>55</b>





Community gathering Even it Up campaign in Uganda.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report comprises both the annual reporting on 2020, the final year of the Strategic Partnership, and our conclusions, lessons learned and future plans based on the whole five-year program. Looking back, our annual reports subsequently focused on how we tried and made errors, adapted and made significant progress to strengthen civil society, through evidence-based influencing (2016-17), capacity development (2017-18), network approach (2018-19), and mobilizing citizen's voice (2019-20). So now it's time to look at our achievements with regards to our second key area of change: policy changes that improve people's lives. Did our assumption hold true, that a strengthened civil society increases the chances of achieving such policy changes?

We reflect on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in this final reporting year, and specifically refer to the related shrinking civic space and the impact on women and girls. Also, in this final year, we report how we made sure to close the program in a responsible way.

In the final report section, we extensively elaborate on the challenges, achievements and influencing strategies of each of the three Theories of Change and their subthemes, and specifically dwell on the developments and learnings regarding civic space, conflict sensitivity, and gender and generational inclusion.

Finally, we reflect on the different partnerships within this Strategic Partnership, and on our main lessons learned; including how we organized and adapted our ways of learning. We used these lessons learned in order to improve our program, tackle emerging challenges and benefit from emerging opportunities. Furthermore, we have taken these learnings on board in the design of our new Power of Voices partnership FAIR for All.

A financial account, covering both 2020 and the full program period, indicating a nearly full budget utilization, accompanies this narrative report, which is supported by the program data published daily on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' dashboard and in [Oxfam's project browser ATLAS](#), in accordance with our commitment to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).





The Usawa March,  
organized by the  
Fight Inequality  
Alliance in Kenya.

© Kenyan Mwangi/Fight  
Inequality Alliance

## 2. HOW IT ALL STARTED AND WHAT WE SET OUT TO ACHIEVE

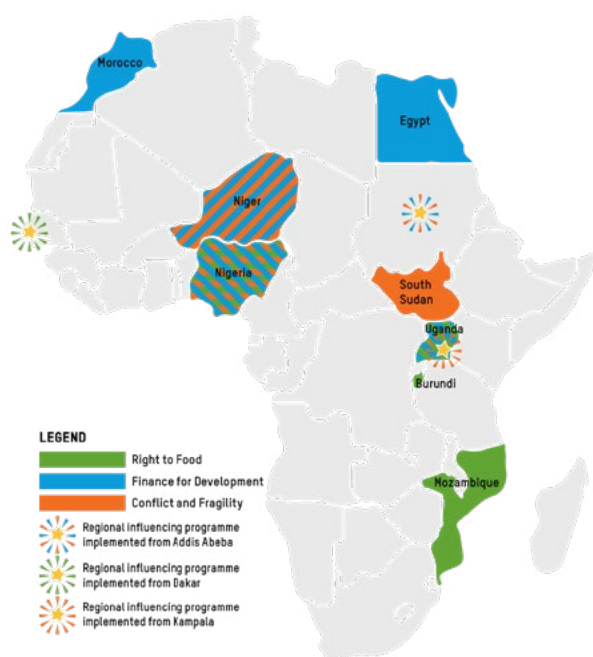
In 2016, Oxfam Novib and SOMO jointly entered into a Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its Dialogue and Dissent policy framework. This Partnership 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network' covers three themes, each with its own Theory of Change (ToC):

- **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:** Marginalized groups have a say in policies that affect their lives; governments and international institutions support inclusion of women and promote protection of marginalized groups in security and peace building; and the private sector contributes to peace and development.

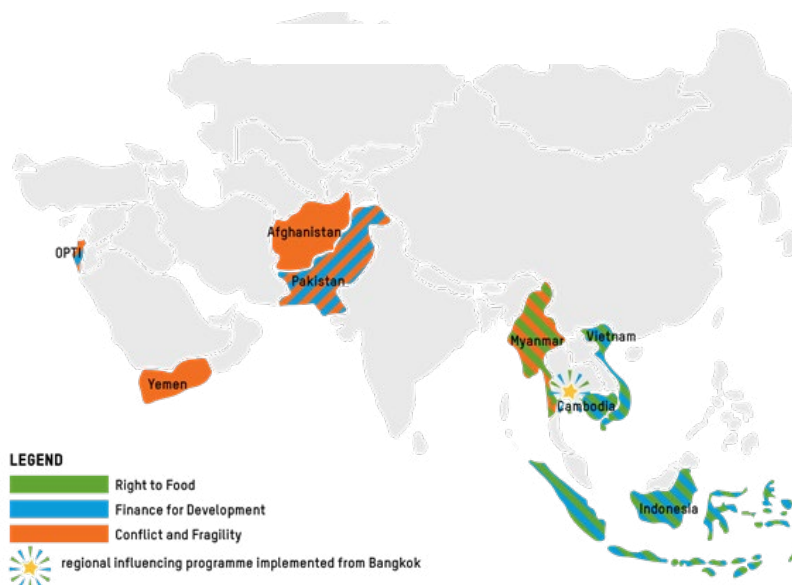
For five years, we supported and worked with the brave activists and civil society organizations who empowered communities, created influencing space, and organized campaigns to raise and amplify the voices of people living in poverty. We joined forces as part of a worldwide influencing network to challenge and improve the policies, practices and behavior of governments and corporations. Together with more than a thousand civil society organizations (CSOs) from 17 Asian and African countries, we implemented 24 country projects, 8 regional projects and 7 global projects.

## THEMATIC FOCUS PER COUNTRY

### Thematic focus per country - Africa



### Thematic focus per country - Asia



A strong civil society is crucial for any democratic, inclusive, prosperous and just society. Therefore, our Strategic Partnership set out to develop capacities, connect people, enable learning, and advocate for increased civic space, to strengthen civil society's influencing ability. As the very positive end-term evaluation concluded, we managed to 'create a roaring dragon' of organizations, alliances and people with stronger and more effective influencing capacities.

We aimed for a worldwide influencing network that could influence institutions and power holders, in order to contribute to systemic change. In this global network all play their part and seek to mutually reinforce each other in the fight for a more just and sustainable world. Unique and crucial in this locally-driven effort is the ability of the Strategic Partnership to multiply local results via Oxfam's and SOMO's global networks; and vice versa, use global advocacy outcomes to achieve policy changes at local level.

We deliberately involved longstanding partners, such as Metta in Myanmar and Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), providing a solid base to work from and expand the network. This already illustrates what we realized from the outset: the struggle of civil society to have a voice and influence decisions that impact their lives and livelihoods, has started long before our program and will continue after it has ended. Our program WIN is not more – but also not less – than a contribution to civil society's journey, which is also our journey.

Throughout the program, unintended results have been part of our everyday influencing, which requires continuous anticipation and strategizing in the ever changing playing field. In particular within the C&F projects, but to a lesser extent also within the two other ToCs, contexts often changed unexpectedly, bringing new challenges and opportunities. So, adaptive management has been key for all ToCs: be conscious of the context, identify opportunities and, through agile management and flexibility in project management, enable civil society to adjust.

Through this strategic partnership, thanks to the relentless and capable efforts of numerous people and organizations, this five-year program has greatly improved the possibilities for civil society to influence policies and practices which impact the lives of millions of people. Stronger CSOs and grassroots, connected in a worldwide influencing network, are now better capable of advocating for their rights and challenge power imbalances.





People's march to demand transparency in the government's spending to fight Covid-19 crisis, Nigeria

©Oxfam Nigeria

## 3. REPORTING ON THE PROGRAM OUTCOMES IN 2020

### INTRODUCTION

In at least three ways, the reporting year was very different from the previous four years of our strategic partnership. Globally 2020 was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely impacted our projects. Furthermore, it was our final program year, in which we drew lessons, shared and created knowledge, and conducted the final evaluation. Additionally this final reporting year counts only 9 months (where we had a 15 months-reporting year in 2016-17 due to Oxfam's adjusted fiscal year) of which the last 3 months were focused on responsible closure and sustainability of the program outcome.

In this relative short period of time, and despite lockdowns and restrictions, we managed to reflect, learn, and adapt, while building on previous influencing results and strengthening our worldwide influencing network. Our 2020 annual report, which covers the period from April 1 to December 31, 2020, focuses on policy changes that improve people's lives and livelihoods. We include both policy changes that are in the making and policy changes that our partners have already achieved.

**In 2020, we have strengthened 99 alliances and worked with 970 civil society organizations. Together we achieved 241 public policy changes and 77 policy and practice changes by private sector actors, in part thanks to the support of 208,690 people.**

In 2020, we have strengthened 99 alliances (DD4) and worked with 970 civil society organizations (DD6). A total of 585 organizations increased their influencing activities (DD5), and together we achieved (DD2) 241 public policy changes and 77 policy and practice changes by private sector actors. These results are in part thanks to the 208,690 people who raised their voices, supporting CSOs to successfully create space and political will for our policy asks in 262 cases (DD3).

## Covid-19 and civic space

Covid-19 brought death and devastation to millions of people around the world. Yet, the pandemic also confirmed the need for the kind of systemic change the Strategic Partnership aims for. It laid bare how billions of people lost their livelihoods, while the world's richest individuals and largest companies saw their profits skyrocketing. For the most vulnerable of this world, Covid-19 was a crisis on top of other crises which it exacerbated, ranging from hunger and poverty to the impact of climate change.

Across the world, governments used the pandemic to curb democratic freedoms and people's voices, raising serious concerns about a further shrinking of civic space in the long term. For example, 57 countries have introduced measures that affect the freedom of expression and almost 150 countries took measures that curb the [freedom of assembly](#).

The 'Covid year' also made it clear just how resilient, strong and well-networked our partners have become, partly as a result of what we were able to jointly achieve within this program. Despite more and more restrictions, partners in Morocco, for example, continued to stimulate public debate on the lack of government pandemic responses that benefit the poor. In Nigeria, our partners '[followed the money](#)' from corona intervention funds, and Tax Justice Alliance in Uganda urged for exemptions on water and electricity tax and called for safety nets for all. Oxfam and partners employed their campaign structures at the regional level by [advocating for suspension of debt repayments for African countries](#).

Still, we foresaw that we could not implement all activities as planned. At the same time, there was an urgent need to respond to the devastating impact of Covid-19. So we reduced our 2020 plan and budget by €1.5 million, which we were allowed to spend on a targeted Covid-19 response outside of this program. With the remaining budget, our partners continued to further the Strategic Partnership goals while adapting to the context by focusing on Covid-19 when applicable. This included the reallocation of budget (€80,000) to influence related civic space trends. In Vietnam for instance, we advised the government – at their request – on data and privacy protection, given the poor data security practices that became apparent in the health sector. Interesting was the increased cooperation this project created, between CSOs working on economic and governance topics, and human rights organizations. A separate paper on unintended outcomes will be shared with this report.

Another example is the effective influencing by Oxfam of three key EU policies and grants to better protect and enable civic space, including the EU action plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. This action plan now prioritizes actions to reverse the global shrinking civic space trend, and includes longer term support to 'spontaneous civic movements'.



# CASE



IDP camp in Kachin  
State, Myanmar

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Oxfam Novib

## LOCAL-GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST INTERNET SHUTDOWN

In March 2020, the Myanmar government shut down all internet access in five Rakhine and Chin states townships, and blocked 221 websites including important ethnic media outlets, accusing them of spreading fake news. Since this left communities in conflict areas without information, and prevented CSOs from coordinating and communicating, our partner Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability, MATA used its experience with private sector engagement to target telecom companies to open-up access. Supported by Oxfam, MATA researched these international companies, and drafted letters, including to the home countries' ambassadors, asking them to engage in discussions on how to challenge the shutdown. Meanwhile, Oxfam involved the International Commission of Jurists, increasing pressure on the companies, and lobbied multilateral finance institutions that support the telecom operators, such as the International Finance Corporation. Eventually, the companies agreed to an industry-wide dialogue in Myanmar, which unfortunately did not take place due to shifting priorities of CSOs related to the upcoming elections.

## Gender and generational inclusion

Covid-19 restrictions hit women and girls the hardest. Gender-based violence increased up to a (reported) 33% in some countries. Women were disproportionately pushed out of employment and saw their already huge care burden increase dramatically due to school closure and illness. Oxfam raised the alarm in reports such as [Care in the time of coronavirus](#), and we intensified our gender transformative work on the ground.

We also continued to put gender at the heart of the program. In Cambodia, partners shared their lessons from changing gender norms in communities, while in Vietnam partners analyzed the gender mainstreaming approach's results in the Mekong Delta. Metta in Myanmar developed both short-term and long-term gender action plans. Oxfam Novib, partners and Oxfam country offices mapped 66 cases about gender integration in R2F, as a basis for our learning document [Gender Visible](#), which we published in December 2020.

In 2020, we also took stock of our youth involvement for their often key role in successful influencing efforts over the past years. In four case studies – out of 25 projects – we reflected on how we included young people and supported them. Did we grant them true ownership or was their role merely instrumental? We concluded that these examples definitely showed room for improvement (see page 43).

## Sustainability and closure

Sustainability of the programs' results, institutional sustainability and learnings was central to our 'end of program' activities in 2020. For example, we enabled partners to finalize and report in 2020, to avoid pressure on their reserves after the project's end date. Also, we designed, developed and implemented three CSO capacity strengthening trajectories, on fundraising, risk management and safeguarding, in which 49 partners from 15 countries participated. By using a blended learning approach, including e-learning, webinars, coaching sessions, and resource databases, we ensured maximum effect. Moreover, our training of trainers in this approach further increased the sustainability of learnings.

Besides closing ceremonies set up by partners in different countries, we also organized an online joint 'Strategic Partnership Celebrations' in the beginning of 2021 (in which we even danced the Jerusalem together). During this event and throughout 2020, we reflected on the program: what influencing objectives did we achieve, where do we stand now and how can we move forward? We set up networks and strengthened alliances. We concluded learning trajectories by updating our monitoring data with 2020 results, resulting in reflections on the ToCs and many lessons learned; some of these are published, such as the [case study](#) on integrating women in the Afghan police and a series of podcasts. Moreover, we organized workshops to evaluate the worldwide influencing network approaches, analyzed endline project survey data, and harvested track records and outcomes to feed into future projects. In the chapters 4, 5 and 6 we highlight some of the lessons learned and conclusions from these reflections.

## Impact Talk Oxfam Novib podcasts



### **PODCAST #1**

Why Mobilize the Voices of Citizens?



### **PODCAST #2**

Integrating Women into the Afghan National Police Force



### **PODCAST #3**

Tax Justice and the Fight Against Inequality



### **PODCAST #4**

Demanding the Right to Food in Cambodia and Nigeria



## RIGHT TO FOOD

### RESULTS VERSUS PLANNED TARGETS IN YEAR 5 AND CUMULATIVE



#### **LAWS, POLICIES, NORMS/ ATTITUDES INFLUENCED (DD2)**

Result year 5:	151 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	630
Target end 2020:	449



#### **TIMES CSOS SUCCEED IN CREATING CSO SPACE (DD3)**

Result year 5:	69 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	223
Target end 2020:	124



#### **# ADVOCACY INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT BY CSOS (DD4)**

Result year 5:	23 initiatives
Accumulative results 1-5:	348
Target end 2020:	122



#### **CSOS INCREASED LOBBY & ADVOCACY CAPACITIES (DD5)**

Result year 5:	388 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	755
Target end 2020:	536



#### **CSOS INCLUDED IN SP PROGRAMS (DD6)**

Result year 5:	1,181 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	2,592
Target end 2020:	1,907



#### **CITIZENS RAISED THEIR VOICES**

Result year 5:	44,111 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	2,362,533
Target end 2020:	565,775



#### **CITIZENS CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDES**

Result year 5:	540 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	31,692
Target end 2020:	27,550

This chart represents the indicators and results of the Strategic Partnership program in its fifth and last year of the project, covering the period from April 2020 to December 2020. It also presents the cumulative results over the last five years of the project. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we made good progress across all the indicators in year 5 and superseded our cumulative target over the project period. Cumulatively, we influenced 630 laws and policies, moving us closer to our quest to ensure Small-scale food producers and agricultural workers, particularly women and their communities benefit from local, national and global public and private sector policies that

protect and promote their prosperity and resilience.

The publication on the IATI platform is an accumulative status of the results updated daily. The results represented here concern the translation of the SOMO and Oxfam Novib indicator framework to the Dialogue & Dissent framework. The registered results on indicators DD4, DD5 and DD6 often relate to the same organizations and sometimes include members of network or member organisations, so they cannot be aggregated over the years. The number of unique civil society organizations identified as strengthened since the beginning of the program is 228 in Year 5 while 187 were included in the program.



Coffee pickers in Brazil portrayed anonymously for the Behind the Barcodes campaign.

© Tatiana Cardeal  
/ Oxfam Brasil

## RIGHT TO FOOD

### Context

Covid-19 not only deepened the hunger crisis, interrupting food value chains and leaving hundreds of millions to be food insecure; it also enabled governments to push through disputed measures. In Cambodia for instance, the government rapidly confiscated community lands from indigenous people, and converted these into 54 'protected' areas (against 23 in 2019), which now cover 41% of the country's territory. Worldwide, we witnessed an increase in land grabbing, forced evictions and weakened enforcement to guarantee land rights.

Value chain work had to deal with e.g. delayed compliance reports from supermarkets in our Behind the Barcodes campaign due to Covid-19, while global platforms for policy influencing on agri-investments and climate change, such as COP 26, were postponed. To continue conversations with key stakeholders, we convened several webinar series in three African regional economic communities, among others, and with Dutch ministries through AgriProFocus. And we welcomed the European Council decision to raise its CO2 reduction target for 2030 from 40% to 55%, as a clear win for the climate and for the millions of people that we support to adapt to the devastating impact of climate change.

### Joint influencing to change policies (or prevent backtracking)

Supported by the increased influencing capacities of 388 CSOs under the Strategic Partnership, and the growing number of citizens raising their voice, we achieved important policy changes, prevented the nullification of others and established monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of laws and regulations. In cases where we did not succeed (yet), our partners continue to prepare for future policy wins.



Cambodia also brought good news in 2020: the government incorporated some 90% of our input into the final version of the environment and social risk management framework of the Land Allocation for Social and Economic Development. This will most likely translate into improved land tenure security, access to infrastructure, and agricultural and social services, for landless and poor smallholders and indigenous communities.

In our [annual report 2019/20](#), we showed a video of Naso king Reynaldo Santana, presenting more than 25,600 signatures in support of indigenous peoples' land rights. Land Rights Now, the Indigenous Peoples organization of Panama COONAPIP, Oxfam and others had jointly campaigned intensively for the result: legal recognition of indigenous land rights in protected areas. In November 2020, [the supreme court of Panama](#) emitted a landmark ruling, which recognizes the rights of the Naso Indigenous People to their land as a semi-autonomous territory.

In Myanmar we did not succeed to prevent the passing in Parliament of an amended Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land law. Yet the added value of the Strategic Partnership became apparent in civil society's response: we had created a unique alliance of grassroots, national, international and legal organizations. Together, they research and monitor the law's implications for land tenure security, and strengthen evidence for advocacy purposes.

With regards to the private sector, two successes result from our previous efforts to change policies and practices. In 2016/17, the [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil \(RSPO\)](#) adopted Oxfam's proposition to develop a smallholder strategy, and included a reference to gender in its new standard. By 2020, we managed to shift RSPO standards from gender blind to gender specific, resulting in a gender guidance for companies in the palm oil supply chain. We also successfully promoted the creation of special seats in the Board of Governors of RSPO for unions and smallholders, in addition to the seats for social (#2) and environmental (#2) NGOs, out of a total of 16 seats.

Another result is Aldi's [new human rights policy](#) published in December 2020, following increased pressure from consumers in our Behind the Barcodes campaign which is built on the experiences of partners across the countries we work, and online meetings between Oxfam and Aldi.

In Europe, the European Patent Office (EPO) had to stop patenting native traits of plants, following our 2019 win (the ruling of EPO's enlarged board of appeal) which allows smallholders and breeders to use any such plants for further breeding. Following targeted research and lobby by Oxfam and European coalition [No Patent on Seeds!](#), we were encouraged to get our proposal - allowing smallholders to share and sell seed of a protected variety - on the agenda of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), in September 2020.

The West Africa Milk campaign (see our [annual report 2018/19](#)) slowly but surely progresses towards policy change. Working simultaneously with smallholders, consumers, national and regional level politicians in six African countries, and with civil society organizations in Europe, our partners saw their policy ask incorporated in ECOWAS's strategy. It's only because ECOWAS decided to postpone an increase of milk powder import tariffs to 2023, that the ask did not materialize in 2020. Meanwhile the growing support for the milk campaign resulted in another 38,000 [signatures](#) collected between June and October 2020 and encourages the alliance to maintain pressure in the coming years.

# CASE



A ceremony to recognize administrative and traditional authorities for their efforts to grant land to rural women, N'Djamena, Chad.

© Mahamat /  
Oxfam in Chad.

## SMART LAND RIGHTS CAMPAIGN IN CHAD

The story of a major land reform in Chad starts in 2015, when there is little international support on land issues in the country. Inspired by a land reform campaign in Burkina Faso, Oxfam and two Chadian partners (CELIAF and CNCRPT) organize a campaign on women's land rights which obtains the support of Chad's First Lady. Authorities increase their investment in women's land rights: our first advocacy success is a reality.

Encouraged by this success the campaign moves on, including women's access to credit and their political participation. A coalition of 15 CSO formed, and in turn connects to (international) initiatives such as Land Rights Now. They organize a study trip to Burkina Faso's land reform-in-practice, which greatly helps to build the necessary trust between government officials and CSOs.

Our coalition celebrates a big success with the set-up of multi-stakeholder caravans that travel to rural areas, in order to engage with rural women, religious authorities, and customary leaders. The latter are extremely difficult to influence on women's rights but in 2020, some chiefs broke the taboo and start giving land to women groups, for the first time in the history of Chad.

### Major land law improvements

Two advocacy strategies contribute to this crucial success. Oxfam and partners immediately seize the opportunity when the government institutes a gender quota in 2018; this opens up space to discuss broader land reform issues such as gender. Adapting the campaign message is another important move: as soon as the coalition notices that customary leaders are more open to youth land rights than to women's land rights, they add youth to their discourse and coalition.

This lays the foundations for the final victory in December 2020: the revision of the land law into a version that is in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs). A commission that includes CSOs reviews the law, in a process enabled by the Strategic Partnership program, at the request of the Ministry.

Among the major improvements to the law are provisions for positive discrimination of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Another win is that local communities can regulate their territories according to their own systems. Following this policy change, donors feel encouraged to invest in Chad land work. The Dutch government allocates the biggest land-specific intervention ever in this country – €1.6 million – and takes up the Chad land work in its LAND-at-scale program.



# FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

## RESULTS VERSUS PLANNED TARGETS IN YEAR 5 AND CUMULATIVE



### LAWS, POLICIES, NORMS/ ATTITUDES INFLUENCED (DD2)

Result year 5:	114 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	437
Target end 2020:	272



### TIMES CSOS SUCCEED IN CREATING CSO SPACE (DD3)

Result year 5:	109 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	267
Target end 2020:	278



### # ADVOCACY INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT BY CSOS (DD4)

Result year 5:	33 initiatives
Accumulative results 1-5:	291
Target end 2020:	122



### CSOS INCREASED LOBBY & ADVOCACY CAPACITIES (DD5)

Result year 5:	987 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	3,605
Target end 2020:	1,542



### CSOS INCLUDED IN SP PROGRAMS (DD6)

Result:	931 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	5,499
Target end 2020:	2,601



### CITIZENS RAISED THEIR VOICES

Result year 5:	118,766 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	1,994,630
Target end 2020:	1,047,455



### CITIZENS CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDES

Result year 5:	207 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	261,292
Target end 2020:	337,600

This chart represents the indicators and results of the Strategic Partnership program in its fifth and last year, covering the period from April 2020 to December 2020. It also presents the cumulative results over the last five years of the project. The last year of the project had less months (9 months) coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic we see the impact of lower outreach in the voice and attitudes indicators. Cumulatively, we influenced 437 policy or practices after putting tax avoidance and its devastating consequences firmly on national, regional and international agendas. The publication on the IATI platform is an accumulative status of the results updated daily. The results represented

here concern the translation of the SOM0 and Oxfam Novib indicator framework to the Dialogue & Dissent framework. The indicators DD4, DD5 and DD6 often relate to the same organizations and sometimes include members of network or member organizations, so they cannot be aggregated over the years.

The number of unique civil society organizations identified as strengthened since the beginning of the program is 289 in Year 5 while 606 were included in the program.



March in Soroti, Even it Up campaign Uganda.

© Emmanuel Museruka/  
Oxfam Novib

## FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Context

For the first time since records began, inequality rose in virtually every country on earth at the same time, in Covid-year 2020. As Oxfam revealed in its flagship 'Davos' report [The Inequality Virus](#) (launched in January 2021), the 1,000 richest people on earth had recouped their Covid-19 losses within just nine months. In contrast to these happy few billionaires, the world's poorest people will take more than a decade to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Covid-related stimulus and relief packages were unequally distributed between rich and poorer countries; and by the time vaccines were available rich countries bought the bulk. Covid-19 more than ever made partners, CSOs, governments and citizens aware of the need to increase Domestic Revenue Mobilization (DRM), in order to meet the social services and healthcare need of all. As Oxfam demonstrated in its report December 2020 [Shelter from the Storm](#), over a third of the world's population had no social protection to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

### Joint influencing to change policies (or prevent backtracking)

We reaped the awards of our longtime tax work, which had transformed in many countries North and South tax from a technical theme to a political one: citizens, CSOs and academia increasingly demanded tax justice. In the Netherlands, Oxfam Novib's recommendations on fixing a tax avoidance loophole, as published in our 2019 report [Belastinglek Nederland](#), were echoed in the advice of the commission Ter Haar on taxation of multinationals, in April 2020. As a result, the **Dutch government announced plans to introduce a new law** that addresses the above-mentioned loophole.

The pandemic increased the overall awareness of the need for DRM, which provided CSOs with new opportunities to influence governments to adopt fair tax policies. In Uganda, for instance, partners jointly

## Covid-related stimulus and relief packages were unequally distributed between rich and poorer countries; and by the time vaccines were available rich countries bought the bulk.

pushed for a Pay As You Earn structure to fund Covid-relief measures, which was adopted by Parliament. Furthermore, Oxfam and partner Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) called for disclosure of the government's Covid-19 plans. In a bid to speed-up this process, they launched the [Covid-19 Tracker](#), which tracked the development of the disease at national level and revealed a lack of (mandatory) transparency at local governments' level regarding funds and planned procurement. As a result, **authorities increased their budget transparency**.

In Niger, our partners created 'citizens' participation cells' in 30 local communes. These managed to restore trust between the communal authorities and citizens, resulting in **increased tax revenues being spent on basic services**. Partners also monitored public spending at local level, and boosted public debate while advocating for a retrocession of 15% of mining royalties for the development of communes and regions. A success for Transparency Maroc and Oxfam in Morocco, was the **adoption of the 2021 finance law**, which aims to reduce tax avoidance.

In September 2020, in view of the acute relevance of DRM, Oxfam hosted three online **learning sessions about subnational** resource mobilization in sub-Saharan Africa, attended by 50 representatives from 13 countries. Partners and Oxfam dug deep into the issue, in order to understand the barriers, identify key policy asks and practical steps civil society can take to strengthen the resource mobilization work.

**Capitalizing on the Vietnamese chairmanship of the ASEAN** process in 2020, a regional CSO coalition worked together to create political will to engage with civil society actors on tax incentives. The coalition comprised partners from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines, along with ActionAID Asia, Tax & Fiscal Justice Asia and Oxfam. By the end of 2020, they had launched two highly recognized tax research reports and organized roundtable discussions with representatives of embassies, the Vietnamese government, IMF, ADB, and World Bank, among others.

At the global level, Oxfam supported local asks for a fair Covid-19 response by **advocating for debt cancellation and tax justice**. In [Dignity not Destitution](#), Oxfam laid out an 'economic rescue plan for all' that meets the scale of the crisis, requiring rich countries to mobilize at least US \$2.5 trillion. Meanwhile, SOMO continued its work on building research capacity on tax issues, in order to enhance research collaboration and sustain advocacy linked to international influencing on the topic. In June 2020, more than 500 CSO participants from Tax Justice Africa joined a SOMO workshop on tax research, while our partner Prakarsa convened an online training in tax avoidance in Indonesia.

We called on **financial institutions to use their investments to build back better**: fair, equal and sustainable. [Fair Finance International](#) (FFI) launched 26 research reports, which serve as a base for awareness-raising among CSOs, citizens and consumers. CSOs were also supported to assess the sustainability of banks and hold them to account. Among the many results achieved was VPBank's (Vietnam) update of its Green Loan Framework, greatly aligning it with the FFIGI methodology. The bank intends to integrate recommendations it received during a training on Reporting Sustainability in October and November 2020.



# CASE



People's march to demand transparency on the government spending to fight the Covid Crisis, Nigeria.

© Oxfam Nigeria

## YOUNG NIGERIANS FOLLOW THE MONEY

Where does the money go? That is basically the question posed by [Connected Development \(CODE\)](#) in Nigeria, echoing the voices of many young people on social media. What happens to the funds and resources that organizations, including the EU, contributed to help Nigeria fight the spread of the coronavirus? Raising the question can hardly come as a surprise in a country that has a track record of “ill use, misallocation and misappropriation of [its] resources”, as Oxfam Nigeria’s inequality report put it in 2017.

CODE is one of our Strategic Partnership partners in Nigeria and the initiator of ‘[Follow the Money](#)’, a group of about 6,000 people around the world, who are trying to hold their governments accountable by tracking government spending on basic education, health and water sanitation. They use tech tools, social media and direct communication to reach out to relevant government organizations such as the National Center for Disease Control in Nigeria. The Follow the Money team asks for detailed information about donations and how these are being spent, and about test kits and testing.

The group started their tracking of Covid-19 funds across seven African countries, responding to young people’s call for transparency and accountability. At ‘Follow the Money’ press conferences, the teams share updates and information about their findings. They even extended their work to countering fake news, in collaboration with other partners, as this complicates their verification of figures while tracking the funds. Follow the Money deliberately involves the online community of active Nigerian citizens, asking them to support their tracking efforts and raise their voices on social media.

According to CODE, the pandemic has brought to light the inadequacies and misappropriation of Nigeria’s health and education system. Follow the Money calls on Nigerians to maintain the momentum of discussing transparency and accountability of government spending. CODE is committed to continue tracking funds and advocating for transparency, also after the Covid-19 crisis.

## CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

### RESULTS VERSUS PLANNED TARGETS IN YEAR 5 AND CUMULATIVE



#### **LAWS, POLICIES, NORMS/ ATTITUDES INFLUENCED (DD2)**

Result year 5:	52 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	120
Target end 2020:	118



#### **TIMES CSOS SUCCEED IN CREATING CSO SPACE (DD3)**

Result year 5:	84 cases
Accumulative results 1-5:	117
Target end 2020:	99



#### **# ADVOCACY INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT BY CSOS (DD4)**

Result year 5:	43 initiatives
Accumulative results 1-5:	106
Target end 2020:	92



#### **CSOS INCREASED LOBBY & ADVOCACY CAPACITIES (DD5)**

Result year 5:	145 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	523
Target end 2020:	269



#### **CSOS INCLUDED IN SP PROGRAMS (DD6)**

Result:	247 CSOs
Accumulative results 1-5:	981
Target end 2020:	619



#### **CITIZENS RAISED THEIR VOICES**

Result year 5:	45,813 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	101,574
Target end 2020:	187,518



#### **CITIZENS CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDES**

Result year 5:	0 citizens
Accumulative results 1-5:	116,140
Target end 2020:	720

This chart represents the indicators and results of the Strategic Partnership program in its fifth and last year, covering the period from April 2020 to December 2020. It also presents the cumulative results over the last five years of the project. The last year of the project had less months (9 months) coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic this impact most on the indicators related to outreach of changed attitudes. The relative high number of citizen's raising their voice in this context is almost entirely a result of a petition signed in Myanmar related to large-scale mining investments on land occupied by communities based on customary tenure. Similar to previous years, C&F indicators show less progress than

the R2F and F4D indicators, affirming the complexity of influencing policy changes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, characterized by high levels of insecurity. The publication on the IATI platform is an accumulative status of the results updated daily. The results represented here concern the translation of the SOMO and Oxfam Novib indicator framework to the Dialogue & Dissent framework. The indicators DD4, DD5 and DD6 often relate to the same organizations and sometimes include members of network or member organizations, so they cannot be aggregated over the years. The number of unique civil society organizations identified as strengthened since the beginning of the program is 202 in Year 5 while 329 were included in the program.



Young South Sudanese refugees building a house in Bidibidi camp, North Uganda.

©Julius Caesar Kasujja/ Oxfam Novib

## CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

### Context

Lockdowns and other Covid-related restrictions were impossible for the around 70 million people who were forced to leave their homes. For the 2 billion people living in fragile and conflict-affected countries, the pandemic was a crisis on top of multiple crises. Communities in war-torn countries such as Yemen were already struggling to overcome malnutrition and the spread of diseases. Still, the world spends a mere 1% of global military expenditure on peacebuilding and addressing the root causes of conflict, as Oxfam underlined in a May 2020 [report](#) calling for a global ceasefire to enable an effective response to Covid-19.

Although partners' influencing of powerful private sector parties remained challenging, the pandemic also provided unexpected opportunities. In particular, the financial relief provided by governments and financial institutes for foreign investment projects, provided additional pressure points to ensure accountability, conflict sensitivity and upholding of human rights.

While the increasing number of populist governments watered down UN resolutions on women's rights, women across the world – who in every crisis pay the highest price – faced [increasing violence](#) in and outside their homes. This reinforced the need for the Strategic Partnership to continue advocating for strong and effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the last year of the program.





Zarina Charan, a female farmer, social activist, clothes seller, and mother of 4 children is irrigating her land in the Sindh region, Pakistan.

©Khaula Jamil/  
Oxfam Novib

## Joint influencing for policy changes (or prevent backtracking)

In some instances, a policy win means preventing the reversal of already achieved gains. An inspiring example is the way civil society joined forces to block a Russian attempt to water down previously agreed UNSC standards on WPS, including the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. The NGO Working Group on WPS, of which Oxfam is an active member, successfully mobilized **558 CSOs** to call on other states to block the resolution. Meanwhile Oxfam's policy advisor in New York activated colleagues from UNSC Member States. Targeted (social) media actions did the rest: **Security Council members voted against the Russian resolution.**

Following years of influencing by civil society and international institutions, the African Union Commission (AU) had declared the **2020 AU theme 'Silencing the Guns'**. The commission had planned multiple activities to include youth and women in peace-building processes, and to secure that their contributions would be critical to shaping the continent's peace and security agenda. Unfortunately, most of the activities were changed in online events due to the pandemic, thereby reducing the participation of grassroots women and youth. Yet their stories were disseminated, among others through the [She Leads photo project](#) and associated [webinar](#) on World Peace Day.

The work of the [South Sudan Law Society \(SSLS\)](#) and Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) demonstrate both the power of local alliances and the effect of focusing on change at the local level when national level efforts bear little fruit. In their successful quest to build trust between civil society and security actors, the Strategic Partnership partners supported civil society networks in Torit, Yei, Wau and Bor. Together, they consulted citizens, organized multi-stakeholder dialogues and supported security actors to improve the security situation. In Yei, for instance, citizens suffered from sexual violence and looting by government soldiers. SSLS shared their concerns with the military, including the chief of staff, and recommended immediate investigations, while offering its technical support. As a result, a **court-martial was established**, which convicted 70 soldiers for committing crimes against civilians.

Our partner (SIHA) and its network of women's peace collectives achieved several important successes. In June 2020, the South Sudanese government published a **joint ministerial statement calling for the elimination of gender-based violence** and an end to impunity for its perpetrators. As a result, military court-martials were implemented to try military officials involved in violence against women and girls. In Somalia, the peace collectives urged the powerful Minister of Interior Affairs to take a stand against the increasing numbers of rape and gendered killing, after a young mother of three was murdered. The next day, the Minister held a press conference, condemned the murder and warned traditional leaders not to intervene and let the courts do their work. One effect was that women and girls felt encouraged to mourn and protest, and demand justice for the killed woman.

In South Sudan, civil society reaped the fruits of the continuous efforts of African Security Sector Network (ASSN) under the Strategic Partnership, to train and connect CSOs around inclusive security sector reform. In August 2020, 30 representatives of CSOs gathered in a roundtable organized by ASSN, to discuss about the best approaches towards security sector reform in the new South Sudanese context. This resulted in the **first ever civil society position paper on influencing security sector reform** in South Sudan, which was used in consultations with key security institutions.

Pakistani women in Sindh province celebrated a great win, when an amendment of the provincial water law was finally approved. The amendment was nearly adopted in 2016, but elections interrupted the regional parliament to sign it into law. Thanks to the ongoing strategic influencing by partners and the raised voices of water communities it was finally approved at the end of 2020. The law stipulates a **10% quota for landless women to be active members of water governance bodies**, meaning that 50,000 women who are the majority of users and managers of water resources will be represented in the irrigation management system of Sindh. A very important result, not only from a gender equality perspective, but also because water scarcity increasingly puts pressure on community relations. Moreover, It is the first bill in Pakistan which recognized the importance of women participation in decision making.

In September, a **regional mining law was passed** in Sagaing, Myanmar, following an intensive influencing process by Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability, a national network comprised of over 450 member organisations. After the government had asked MATA for support, our partner had drafted recommendations based on research conducted with members of Parliament. In October 2019, Parliament enacted the mining law, which reflected strongly MATA's recommendations. Although the government left out some of MATA's proposals, it is still a significant policy win.

**Pakistani women in Sindh province celebrated a great win, when an amendment of the provincial water law was finally approved.**



# CASE



Nigerian workers in  
a warehouse.

© Oxfam Novib

## HOW A MULTINATIONAL OIL TRADER WAS HELD TO ACCOUNT BY THE WORLDWIDE INFLUENCING NETWORK

The times are over that oil companies can easily get away with pollution, human rights violations and abuse of power. See the persistent actions of communities and their (international) allies to hold multinationals like Shell to account, which recently resulted in incredible wins for the people who suffered from the company's misbehavior for decades.

A similar case in point is oil trader Vitol's failure to comply with international standards for responsible business conduct. In October 2020, SOMO and Strategic Partnership partner CISLAC shed a light on the lack of transparency of Vitol's operations and the associated human rights and environmental impacts in the Niger Delta, in their report [Big business, low profile](#).

Nigeria is a textbook example of how a country with huge natural resources fails to end extreme poverty. If the government would redirect the major oil revenues, it could positively impact the development and lives of all Nigerians. So, there is every reason to try and influence this policy. We set out to push Vitol to do no harm, behave conflict sensitive and to be more accountable to citizens and the communities where they work.

SOMO's and [Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre \(CISLAC\)](#) research served to raise awareness on this issue, both in Nigeria and internationally. Partners worked with communities on the ground to raise awareness and mobilize voices, while providing input for the report. They shared it with Nigerian journalists, on social media and in networks of organizations working on commodity traders, extractives and human rights.

Meanwhile, Oxfam Novib and SOMO called for new legislation in the Netherlands, to hold companies like Vitol accountable for their impact abroad. We worked together strategically: SOMO provided the questions for a Dutch MP who was in contact with Oxfam Novib, which led to parliamentary questions on Vitol's operations and conduct in Nigeria. Dutch finance minister Hoekstra felt obliged to respond in February 2021, a clear impact of the report.

Together, SOMO and Oxfam composed letters to two Dutch banks financing Vitol (Rabobank and ING), and met with a third (ABNAMRO), asking them how they engaged with Vitol on its lack of due diligence.



## 4. FIVE YEARS OF WIN

As we pointed out in the introduction, we did not really start from scratch. Both Oxfam Novib and SOMO had decades of experience in supporting civil society organizations to increase food security, fight inequality and enhance peace and security. We had vast networks consisting of strong partners at local, national, regional and global levels. Over time, we had learned how important gender equality and youth inclusion are for any sustainable result. The partnership Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN) enabled us in our journey to build even stronger connections and be smarter to leverage advocacy agenda locally, regionally and internationally. We learned to remain relevant Oxfam and SOMO's roles changed from supporter to a valuable link in the network for leverage.

Looking back, we are proud on what we have achieved. If we ask ourselves whether the world has profoundly changed due to our ambitions and actions, the answer is no. Yet, if we look at our journey, and the smaller and bigger changes in policies and practices that we have contributed to, we are convinced that they hold the potential to positively change people's lives. We also know that to achieve this ultimate goal, we have to make sure our voices are being heard even louder. Building on the sound foundation of the strengthened worldwide influencing network, we will continue our lobbying and advocating journey, in dialogue and dissent. Supported by the Strategic Partnership we grew stronger and more interconnected; and above all, we learned. In this part of the report we touch upon those results, highlight our lessons learned and share how we plan to use them in future programs.

We financed over 184 partner organizations, including 1122 CSOs (DD6) of which 719 improved their influencing capacity (DD5). Of these organizations 72% operate at the national or sub-national level, 21% at the communal level and 6% work at the international or regional level. Influencing together in 745 alliances (DD4) and in solidarity we achieved (DD2) 822 policy or practice changes of governments and government institutions, and 365 policy or practice changes of private sector actors. In this and previous reports we could only present a fraction. We achieved these through gaining political will and creating space for civil society (DD3) will (667 reported cases) and support of 4.5 million people that raised their voice.

The external [evaluation](#) confirmed that, thanks to the Strategic Partnership, CSOs gained influencing capacities and, by working in alliances, they also gained influence: "They have successfully learned, adapted where needed, and successfully employed various strategies and tactics that can be summarized as 'Paper Tiger, Roaring Dragon'." Yet, we realize that it is a step in a continuous process, making a strong civil society that is able to monitor and act in case of backtracking, all the more important. A thriving, connected civil society that acts as a constant countervailing power to influence policy and push for systemic change.

**We financed over 184 partner organizations, including 1122 CSOs (DD6) of which 719 improved their influencing capacity (DD5). Of these organizations 72% operate at the national or sub-national level, 21% at the communal level and 6% work at the international or regional level.**



On National Peasant's Day, more than 7,500 farmers, youth and workers marched in Jakarta, and convinced the president to stop the land bill hearing.

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE TOCS: 5 YEARS

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 independent evaluators. The [evaluation](#) set out to answer the following 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 favor of social and economic justice? How did these changes take place?"

Below we briefly elaborate on the conclusions for each of the thematic ToCs, yet we are proud to say that the evaluation was very positive. The change pathways and assumptions of the ToCs have to a large extent been found valid. Creating and strengthening alliances – which was at the core of our program – proved to be of central importance to the partnership's successes. 'Towards a worldwide influencing network' managed to lay a strong foundation for the crucial role of civil society as a countervailing power that is capable of reaching and sustaining policy changes. Research and evidence-based advocacy, and engaging citizens in policy advocacy, have been very instrumental to this achievement.

The evaluation explicitly confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of our approach to work in alliances. Thanks to a mix of purposeful capacity development interventions and particularly by acting together and learning by doing, with a strong emphasis on alliances and making connections, the partnership has "created a roaring dragon", according to the evaluators.

**We organized workshops and coaching, co-created and co-implemented strategies, facilitated exchanges and (peer) learning, and convened collaborative platforms and influencing spaces. All interventions were tailor-made, based on the needs we assessed before and during the projects.**

## **Strengthening civil society**

Since in our ToCs a strong civil society plays a key role in driving systemic change, the external evaluators specifically looked at the effect of our capacity development of civil society. Their conclusion: we achieved “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.” Moreover, the increased – technical, knowledge and ‘soft skills’ – capacities of Oxfam country offices and partners were transferred to other CSOs and community groups, but also to government officials and media. “MPs now talk on the floor of parliament with well-researched facts”, said a Ugandan member of Parliament, referring to his increased knowledge on land rights after engaging with civil society.

In the course of five years of program implementation, we have mutually strengthened our capacities through a range of interventions. We organized workshops and coaching, co-created and co-implemented strategies, facilitated exchanges and (peer) learning, and convened collaborative platforms and influencing spaces. All interventions were tailor-made, based on the needs we assessed before and during the projects. Partners praise the mutual ‘learning by doing’ (“We knew a lot about land use, but not about land rights”) and the knowledge-building on technical issues such as budgeting analysis: “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.”

Capacity development under the Strategic Partnership has increased the ability to operate, act and connect of 1122 organizations involved in the Strategic Partnership project – and beyond. Partners also put to use their gained knowledge and skills outside the Strategic Partnership: a clear indication of the sustainability of the increased capacities. Organizations became stronger through improved finances, HR, fundraising and MEL practices; they were better capable of developing and implementing effective influencing strategies; and their ability to form partnerships and link to constituencies had improved.

Soft skills such as communication and confidence-building equally contributed to partners’ enhanced capacities to have a stronger voice, and to build and expand stronger alliances. A total of 93% of Strategic Partnership partners reported that they have applied the increased capacities to achieve policy changes. Almost all partners interviewed for the end-term evaluation agreed on the conclusion: without the Strategic Partnership strengthening their influencing capacities, they would not have been able to influence the targeted policies.

Increased capacities are here to stay, as this Nigerian partner underlined: “Now it’s the community people’s project, not an Oxfam and CODE project. Now that we’re ending the CSF project, the activities will not end.”





A rice farmer in Myanmar.

©Saikat Mojumder/  
Oxfam Novib

## RIGHT TO FOOD

“We had to make noise. The alliance organized meetings with parliamentarians who clearly had not any idea of how dangerous this amendment could be for smallholder farmers. Due to Covid-19 we organized a well-attended webinar when the research report on the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law came out. We made space for this important evidence to be heard. Given the circumstances in Myanmar I think we can be proud of what have achieved.”

Cho Thet, Economic Justice Lead, Myanmar

## Context and ToC specifics

In 2016, we started with the ambitious aim to ‘change the broken food system to ensure all people realize their right to food’. Although this is more of a dot on the horizon than a feasible five-year program objective, we do need a system change in the way we produce and consume food. A system that is more just and sustainable for all, including for the smallholder farmers – often women – who produce the bulk of the world’s food.

To realize such a system, which produces healthy and affordable food for all, we need to heavily invest in smallholder farmers, enforce the implementation of CSR commitments in the agricultural value chains, and ensure that (women) farmers and agricultural workers have a say in what a more just and sustainable food system should look like. We aimed to strengthen the countervailing power and voices of civil society, hold governments accountable for the protection of civil society’s rights and pressure companies to comply with international human rights and environmental standards.

So we set out to strengthen civil society and achieve policy changes around three R2F subthemes: Land; Fair & transparent value chains; and Investment flows in agriculture & climate change.

Our land rights work used several strategies. For instance, we became an active member of the Global Land Indicators Initiative to ensure land rights were embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. But we also supported an international alliance: Land Rights Now that actively lobbied multilateral institutions, governments and donors. It’s exactly this combination of technical approach and influencing work that has increased political will and eventually led to policy changes.

In our value chain work we unleashed the power of the worldwide influencing network to convince food multinationals to profoundly improve the conditions in their supply chains. In this network, local communities who defend their lands were supported by (sub)national NGOs that work with Oxfam country offices. Through Oxfam’s network and SOMO, we put pressure on the international companies who were responsible for the land grabbing in their value chains. And together we lobbied and advocated successfully for more supportive government policies such as the EU.

With regards to agri-investments and climate change, we contributed to getting climate finance for adaptation on the Dutch and global political agenda, by frequently getting good media coverage of this urgent issue. We made effective use of the power of alliances to advocate for food security issues, among others as an active member of the Dutch [AgriProFocus](#). In countries such as Vietnam and Nigeria, we supported civil society to e.g. ensure the integration of climate change in agricultural policy developments.

## Shifting approaches

Following the outcomes of the midterm review, we adapted some of our approaches and tactics. For instance, we started an ambitious gender visibility & gender action learning trajectory (see subchapter on Gender below) for gender justice starts with changing attitudes, norms and values. Also, we decided to co-create more, and to integrate more flexibility. We increasingly shifted to mutual capacity strengthening and mutual learning. Judging from partners’ appreciation, our switch to more co-creation was right: ‘co-design of strategies and plans’ scored highest on the list of most effective capacity development strategies (see end-term [evaluation](#)).

Reflecting on the ToC, and knowing that policy wins do not automatically imply positive changes in the lives of people, we conclude that ensuring the implementation of achieved policy gains should be an even more explicit part of every new Oxfam program. We need more impact assessments after achieving policy or practice changes, more frequent monitoring and more alliances with monitoring agencies, among others, to achieve real impact on the lives of real people. For instance, in Cambodia farmers got their lands back after 15 years of targeting Coca-Cola, the sugar company and governments, which we considered an important policy win. Yet the farmers were not redressed for their losses during these 15 years. Conclusion: the win contributes to better policies and practices of big companies, but it takes more to improve the lives of people on the ground in the long run. We cannot accept that the change stops here: the battle is not yet over.

In that respect our strengthening of civil society and connecting them in alliances, is one of our most important legacies. As our report on R2F’s worldwide influencing network approach shows, many partners

see the building of alliances as an asset they will maintain, and continue to use. We are proud to have contributed to this countervailing power of civil society, which is more capable of influencing global conditions and local realities than it was five years ago.

## Conclusion of the end-term evaluation:

The evaluation of the Strategic Partnership reviewed 384 of the 630 changes in policy and political will in general. Creating a 'roaring dragon' through CSO strengthening and building alliances by R2F is considered effective, relevant, sustainable and a core outcome of the program, 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.

## Influencing strategies

Our R2F projects show an increasingly well thought-out patchwork of themes, tactics and ways to link people and organizations across the globe. Alliance building was a key success factor in fostering land rights at the national level, just like strengthening CSOs and connecting land rights defenders across the world.

An inspiring example is Land Rights Now (LRN), is a global alliance of more than 800 organizations and communities, coordinated by Oxfam Novib. LRN mobilizes and engages citizens and organizations worldwide through online calls to action and weeklong global campaigns, and has helped push land rights on the political agenda of governments and the UN. In 2018, the alliance successfully mobilized its constituencies internationally to support the policy asks of civil society in Liberia, contributing to the signing of a Land Rights Act in Liberia which recognizes the customary land rights of three million people. LRN also played an important role in the official recognition of indigenous people's land rights in Panama in 2020.

We learned how important it is to be flexible, in order to seize sudden opportunities when they occur, like building an alliance to win an important policy battle. As a response we launched an Alliance Building Fund in 2018, which proved crucial in funding alliances in Mozambique around the elections, but also the above cases in Panama and Liberia.

## Building a powerful influencing network

Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange featured as important strategy in building a worldwide influencing network. The much appreciated Land Learning series, or journeys, strengthened the influencing capacities of partners and communities across the world, by leveraging their on the ground experiences, tactics and tools. In 2018, Oxfam Novib and partners organized a women's land learning journey in Myanmar, in which CSOs from 15 countries exchanged learnings and discussed effective advocacy strategies. At the request of partners, we also organized land learning series in Kenya and Uganda, among others.

Building a worldwide influencing network proved to be a powerful approach to counter the growing global power of multinational companies. In June 2018, Oxfam launched Behind the Barcodes: an evidence-based influencing campaign questioning value-chain practices at the source all the way to internationally operating supermarkets. Oxfam and the Sustainable Seafood Alliance looked in detail at working conditions at some of the biggest shrimp processors and exporters in Thailand and Indonesia, which supply some of the biggest supermarkets in the U.S. and Europe.

Their stories fueled a strong campaign involving audiences around the world who put pressure on supermarkets, resulting in important policy commitments to improve working conditions in their supply chains, including from leading Dutch supermarkets. Meanwhile, actors in Indonesia and Thailand used the generated space to influence regional Asian seafood traders. On the EU policy side of this work, SOMO's mobilizing of 60,000 Europeans - in coalition with European CSOs - contributed to an important success: in March 2019, the EC published its EU Directive on unfair trading practices (UTP), to protect food suppliers.



Just like our Behind the Barcodes campaign, the Milk campaign in six West African countries and worldwide showed the value of both horizontal and vertical linking. Our partners leveraged political will from key duty bearers in West African countries to support local milk producers, while also raising awareness among consumers of fresh milk being healthier than powder milk. At the same time, civil society organizations in Europe advocated for protection of the same producers from the import of European milk overproduction to West African countries.

## Adapting to changing realities

Strategic application of technology is yet another approach that delivered tangible results in Mozambique and plays an important role in the new five-year Public Private Partnership in Cambodia, [RiceTechCambodia](#), in which Oxfam is involved. In Mozambique, campaign platform Medialab and four youth organizations, managed to create broad attention for the needs of smallholder farmers. Among others, they broadcast short videos with farmer testimonials and developed an app for people to monitor commitments made by candidates for the 2019 presidential elections.

Shifting strategies and continuously adapting to changing realities, proved of great value in Indonesia. Our partner Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA) and its allies contributed had advocated for an inclusive agrarian reform for over 50 years. Supported by the Strategic Partnership, KPA seized a crucial influencing moment in 2018 (see [annual report 2018/19](#)), resulting in a draft land bill. In 2019, KPA changed its strategy to mobilizing the public against proposed changes to this draft land bill. As a result of the large-scale protests which halted the changes, KPA was invited to join the government's review and draft process of the land bill, which started in November 2020.

Similarly in Myanmar, Oxfam, SOMO and partners decided to let go of the strategies to directly influence the private sector, as most companies were not open to advocacy and linked to the military and political elites, which made direct advocacy extremely challenging and risky. Instead, we strengthened local governments' policies, and enhanced alliance-building, so that they could increase companies' compliance with set human rights standards.

## Continuing stories

'Not in it together' is a 2021 campaign that we prepared in 2020, and that builds on value chains work done within the Strategic Partnership since 2018. Oxfam and SOMO will, together with new partners in the power of voices partnership program FAIR for All, follow up on the successes achieved in the Behind the Barcodes campaign.

A similar example of the program's sustainability is our influencing work targeting FMO. Following the murder of indigenous land rights defender Berta Cáceres in 2016, human rights and environmental organizations heavily criticized Dutch development bank FMO. FMO had been involved in financing the construction of the Agua Zarca dam in Honduras, that Cáceres had tried to halt – and for which she paid the highest prices. Eventually, FMO did seem willing to behave more responsibly and adopted a new sustainability policy. Yet to date, the FMO policy lacks implementation, as we concluded in a critical report, together with 28 organizations (February 2021). In a recent win, the bank finally stopped another obscure financing process in Honduras, after over a year of increased pressure by civil society in Honduras and the Netherlands. But clearly, this battle is not over yet.

The Land Learning Series have connected land rights activists across continents – Africa, Asia and Europe (the Netherlands) – and strengthened them, with groups taking collective action beyond the Strategic Partnership-funded interventions. The follow-up work of these (women's) land rights groups will be part of our new program FAIR for All, and has been incorporated in some LAND-at-scale proposals supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the land learning series have been mainstreamed within Oxfam.

The many individuals, grassroots, CSOs and strategic partnership partners that work together in local-global campaigns such as Behind the Barcodes and the West Africa Milk campaign, will continue their fight for policy changes (see above). Partners have learned that influencing policies takes time and requires flexibility and endurance. They know that political wins need continuous monitoring, to ensure that laws and regulations actually benefit smallholders and agricultural workers.



Shamima Nasreen (left) and some of her co-workers. Shamima Nasreen is founder of SBGSKF an organisation that lobbies for better and fairer working conditions in garment factories. They were posing for the Tax Justice campaign in Bangladesh.

©Saikat Mojumder.  
Oxfam Novib

## FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

**“I used to pay tax and other fees as asked by local government officers, without wondering what and why. Now, I only pay money when I am clearly explained why the money is collected and how it will be spent.”**

Mrs. Ho Thi Suong, Baze community-based group, Vietnam

### Context and ToC specifics

Inclusive growth and reducing inequality are key aspirations for the Sustainable Development Goals that world leaders agreed upon in 2015, when we developed our strategic partnership program. At the time, seven out of ten people lived in a country where the gap between rich and poor was worse than thirty years before. Meanwhile, corporate tax dodging cost middle and low-income countries at least \$100 billion every year: money these countries desperately need to finance their public services.

In that context, we set out to strengthen civil society and achieve policy changes around three F4D subthemes: Fiscal and financial justice, Financing for development, and Transparent and accountable finance.

All three subthemes are part of the inequality agenda that Oxfam has set and maintained for many years. Looking back, we can conclude that the Strategic Partnership was very relevant in getting this agenda more rooted in the countries we worked in and thereby strengthening it. Moreover, it was instrumental in connecting citizen's voices to the international decision-making fora, among others through the Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA) and its national and regional chapters, in which more than 200 CSOs from 26 countries coalesce. By connecting and mobilizing global movements, including FIA and Tax Justice Network (TJN), we expanded the powerful worldwide influencing network to fight inequality.

Building alliances such as the FIA and TJN proved to be an effective pathway to generate political will and subsequently achieve policy changes. In addition, the F4D ToC deliberately had a strong component of civil society strengthening, in particular regarding awareness raising about tax issues, which is a rather technical subject. Our assumption was that people could only be mobilized, develop expertise and advocate, after being made aware of the issues at stake. If we look at the results, the support expressed by citizens and the number of CSOs working on tax justice, we can conclude that our assumption holds true, both at the international and the local level.

Trying to mobilize masses for very tough and complicated issues such as tax and financial systems, is quite a challenge. Still, it's exactly these issues that lie at the basis of many problems we have tried to solve for decades, ranging from quality healthcare and education for all to pensions for the elderly. Increasing awareness of the linkages between these issues and fiscal justice and a responsible financial sector, are among the achievements we are most proud of; just like we are proud of having enabled millions of people to raise their voices.

All in all, we believe that the three F4D pathways – awareness raising, increased citizen's voice and alliance-building – have reinforced each other and enabled us to achieve tangible results in terms of policy changes and increased political will. Results that not only put tax avoidance and its devastating consequences firmly on national, regional and international agendas (see recent G7, G20 and OESO plans and debates), but also had life-changing effects for people in e.g. Pakistan and OPT, who gained access to more affordable medicines.

The Strategic Partnership provided us with the space to train, exchange knowledge and experiences, and develop tools that will be used long after the program has ended. Think of the Fair Finance Guide (FFG), which holds financial institutions to account and helps consumers to take conscious decisions, the Commitment to Reduction Inequality Index holding governments to account, and the Fair Tax Monitor (FTM) which provides organizations with the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in constructive dialogues on fiscal policies with decision-makers. As one of the results, Oxfam and partners were increasingly able to influence public debates through the launch of 13 FTM country reports and over 20 country, regional and global inequality reports.

## Conclusion of the end-term evaluation:

The strategic Partnership evaluation reviewed contributions to 730 changes across several outcome areas. The strengthening and growth of NGO-alliances and networks, facilitated by the Strategic Partnership, has been effective. Coordinated advocacy and 'speaking with one voice' added to the influencing power of NGOs. The program 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 Strategic Partnership to favorable changes in public policies on budgetary and fiscal matters.

Yet a specific lesson refers to the volatility of increased political will – and even of policy changes if they fail to be implemented. Just like in the R2F ToC, we learned that we need to focus more on the implementation of policy changes, and better monitor the actual results on the ground. An increase of government budgets for public services such as health and education is a clear policy win. Yet if the budget increase only lasts one year or does not benefit the poor (as happened in several cases), the policy win is at least partly hot air. If accompanied by advocacy for pro-poor spending of the increased budgets, the chances increase that the policy changes actually improve people's lives. Also, we learned to focus more on domestic resource mobilization (see page 15).

## Influencing strategies

In the F4D projects we used a range of strategies to increase the influencing power of the Strategic Partnership partners, CSOs, grassroots and other stakeholders who are committed to fight inequality, in particular women and girls. Below, we provide some examples of how we effectively used and combined influencing strategies, to achieve policy changes that positively impact people's lives.



## Strengthening civil society

Oxfam in Nigeria and partners were able to promote participatory budget systems, fair taxation and fair natural resource governance, by strengthening CSOs' capacities, increasing citizens' voice, and building strong alliances. Local budget and tax monitor groups, and subnational tax justice platforms were capable of successfully influencing a [national tax policy](#), and realized the reintroduction of the [Petroleum Industry Bill](#). Strategic Partnership partners also supported the government's management of public finance with a [roadmap](#).

Positioning local partners as experts to increase their legitimacy and influencing power, was an important part of F4D's influencing strategies. A national-level result was the increased ability of Oxfam and partners to influence public debates through the launch of FTM country reports. At the more local level, the efforts of Cambodian partners to increase the gender-responsive budgeting of several communes, provide a good example. By targeted training of women groups from these communes, they convinced commune councilors to allow the groups to engage in commune budget planning and disclosure of budget information.

In Pakistan, our partners used the knowledge obtained through the FTM tool to make clear that poor consumers paid the price for the government's lack of corporate tax income, through the "general sales tax", an indirect tax on essential goods. The Strategic Partnership convened the Tax Justice Coalition in 2016, which built on the public pressure produced by Oxfam's previous Pakistan Inequality Reports to [mobilize citizens](#) to take action on fair taxation. Eventually, in 2019, the government of the Islamabad region [reduced the tax](#) from 17.5% to 7.5%.

## Mobilizing citizen's voice

The power of sharing lessons learned across countries in the worldwide influencing network, was demonstrated by the way the Tax Justice Coalition (TJC) in Pakistan and partners in Uganda used the concept and experiences of their OPTI colleagues with the [Money for Medicine](#) (M4M) campaign. The Ugandan campaign for accessible blood transfusion services, used OPT lessons learned to increase citizen's voice, resulting in the government requesting our partners to collaborate in tackling the issue. In Pakistan, the campaign of Tax Justice Coalition and Fight Inequality Youth Alliance (FIYA) groups activated hundreds of thousands of citizens. As a result, the government announced a national policy to ensure affordable medicines.

Putting active citizenship, and particularly women's participation, at the center of their approach, was one of the success factors of the Strategic Partnership work in Vietnam. Among the key lessons learned that we shared in a [case study](#), were the need to know what issues citizens identify as important, and the value of exploring cooperation with unusual allies, such as the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce. Equally relevant was the tax expert status of Oxfam in Vietnam, which continuously proved its value as an influencing actor. Combined with working on both the tax and the budget spending side of the fiscal system, this led to strong fiscal justice gains.

## Building alliances

Oxfam's annual [inequality report](#), launched at the WEF in Davos, is an example of how the worldwide influencing network expands our impact, by linking local to global actors and actions. Oxfam's guidance and SOMO's research skills supported partners in translating the topic to their own country context and developing appealing campaign and influencing work. Vice versa, evidence and examples from the national and regional level helped build the global narratives.

Likewise, in the fight against tax dodging, we simultaneously pressed the EU and the Dutch government to adopt more stringent tax standards, and built pressure in countries such as Uganda (see our [annual report 2019/20](#)) and Vietnam on tax 'holidays' for foreign investors. The Vietnam Alliance for Tax Justice (VATJ) successfully advocated for the reduction of harmful tax incentives, supported by Oxfam's lobby at EU level to adapt the black/grey list of tax havens. The fact that Vietnam was listed as 'grey', made the government more receptive to domestic pressure, opening doors for VATJ. After VATJ's effective media launch, the government asked the tax authorities to report on tax losses due to tax incentives.



Oxfam Novib Ambassador Dolf Jansen and Oxfam Novib are calling for politicians to put a stop to corporate tax evasion, from a Dutch tax-paradise setting in front of the parliament in The Hague.

©Arie Kievit/Oxfam Novib

## Continuing stories

Strategic Partnership-related tools and associated alliances, such as FFG and FTM, will continue to support partners' advocacy for accountable financial institutions and fiscal justice. Some tools were even adopted by governments, thereby greatly increasing their reach and influence. For instance, in Vietnam we supported the development of M-Score, an innovative app for citizens to rate public services and thus encourage the government to invest its tax revenues in quality services. Piloted in 2015 in Quang Tri Province, the remarkable improvements in public service quality and citizens' satisfaction led the authorities to fund and expand the tool to the provincial health services. After another province adopted M-Score, the national Ministry of Health supported our partners to develop a similar tool to be used nationwide.

As Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc across the world, exacerbating deep-rooted inequalities, our work for a people's vaccine will also go on. Vaccines are developed with tax payers' money, but mainly serve to enrich pharmaceutical multinationals that channel their profits to tax havens, leaving poor communities without access to their lifesaving treatments. Oxfam joined a coalition of more than 50 organizations, the People's Vaccine Alliance, which pursues a 'people's vaccine' for middle and low-income countries.

For years, we advocated for the inclusion of a global minimum effective tax rate to stop the global tax race to the bottom, among others during the OECD-led negotiations on new global tax rules in 2019. We regarded it as a win that for the first time developing countries were among the 130 countries negotiating. But two years later, when the G7 presented its 'global corporate tax deal' in June 2021 as "overhauling a broken global tax system", the African Tax Justice Network and Oxfam were very critical: "They are setting the bar so low that companies can just step over it." So this story will also continue, as part of the new strategic partnership Fair for All.





A co-creation workshop  
to sharpen skills and self-  
confidence, Pakistan.

©Khaula Jamil

## CONFLICT & FRAGILITY

“When we started, women couldn’t move out of the village because these decisions were made by male members, they had to be escorted by male family members. Five years later, we have been able to break this cycle and women can now attend national level exposure visits, and freely interact with parliamentarians and government departments. Now we have joint meetings and women are expected to meaningfully participate.”

Project Officer, Pakistan



## Context and ToC specifics

In 2016, more than 1.5 billion people lived in countries affected by conflict and fragility. More than 59 million people were displaced, the then highest number since World War II. Crises were becoming more protracted and the root causes of the widespread violence ranged from weak governance to a lack of political will to protect citizens, and women and girls in particular. Civil society was often divided and disconnected, while the private sector was more or less free to grab natural resources and violate human rights.

In that context, we set out to strengthen civil society and achieve policy changes around three C&F subthemes: Women, Peace & Security (WPS), Security sector reform, and Private sector & conflict sensitivity.

Overall, we can conclude that influencing policy and practice in conflict and fragile contexts proved much more challenging than we had expected. Comparing figures of 2016 and 2020, one might even say that the situation got worse: in 2020, more than 2 billion people lived in conflict-affected countries, and some 70 million people were displaced. Yet, we believe that the Strategic Partnership has contributed immensely to improving the lives of people living in conflict-affected countries.

Beyond the hard, global numbers, civil society has become stronger, less divided and better connected, both in countries and within the worldwide influencing network that we have built together over the past five years. This has led to increased political will and in several cases also to policy changes, as well as to a civil society that is capable of dealing with rapidly evolving contexts and of further increasing its influencing power.

In fact, we are really proud of the gains our partners have achieved, despite the enormous challenges our partners faced – and still face – in the C&F project countries. And we cannot underestimate the value of the results for people in e.g. South Sudan, who are now able to influence their security situation, and to the Pakistani women who can finally participate in decision-making on water issues that directly affect them.

Obviously, it takes a lot of time for policy changes to happen in the volatile environments in which the Strategic Partnership has operated. Looking at the Sindh water governance example: it took the full Strategic Partnership period before the envisioned law was approved. Yet along the way, partners achieved important results, such as the increased confidence of women in Sindh to speak up in relation to water governance at community level and beyond (see our [annual report 2019/20](#)). An unintended result was realized by CODE and Oxfam in Nigeria: through their investment in engagement with companies' community liaison officers, they laid bare the gender inequalities related to capture of the benefits of natural resources.

Below, we shortly reflect on the strategies, gains and obstacles of each of the C&F subthemes, whereby we refer to the end-term evaluation for the conclusions about our private sector work that was sampled.

## Women, peace and security

Respond, innovate, and adapt. Basically, that's what our partners have learned how to do in countries such as Yemen. Here, Oxfam and partners [AWAM Foundation for Development and Culture](#) and [Foundation and Youth Leadership Development Foundation](#) built the WPS capacities of senior staff at 11 ministries, after which the officials became very supportive and decided to mainstream WPS in their policies. Unfortunately, after a change of power the capacitated staff left the ministries, and the Strategic Partnership partners were back at point zero. Another example is that Yemeni authorities in the north did not grant us permission to operate there, because the project mentioned gender equality and women's rights. This lasted for over a year. But our partners demonstrated their increased knowledge and strategic insights: they adapted to the new situation and moved some activities to the south of Yemen.

At the global level it's not all doom and pushback, like in the example of Russia on WPS resolution S/2020/1054. The number of governments discussing a feminist agenda and passionately advocating for WPS has increased, just like the number of organizations involved in WPS. Yet, most good intentions and progressive declarations did not result in meaningful implementation. That is where the Strategic Partnership comes in: we walked the talk. Our partners have been implementing WPS on the ground, in their communities and at national level, slowly pushing the needle forward in contexts where it was needed most: [Afghanistan](#), [OPT](#), and [Yemen](#).

## Inclusive security sector

An important part of our work under this subtheme was done in South Sudan. Here, we were proud to partner with ASSN, which is an absolute specialist in security sector reform and an influential regional organization. Combined with the international influencing experts of Oxfam, the Strategic Partnership could really create a force of civil society. ASSN was linked to the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) and created space for civil society within the African Union and regional organizations such as ECOWAS and IGAD. Oxfam linked the same forum to its UN entry points, enabling civil society to exert pressure at the international level as well. Connecting these different levels of influencing was a key strategy in our efforts to advance civil society's role in security sector reform.

Workshops and trainings that ASSN provided to national-level alliances, trickled down to CSOs at the local level, increasing their influencing capacities and at the same time enhancing networking - which eventually resulted in policy changes at both national and subnational levels. At the local level, these CSOs have played a crucial role in building trust between communities and security forces. Moreover, operating in a "coalition of coalitions" like the SSCSF strengthened the influencing power of civil society and reduced the risks for the individual partners. The Strategic Partnership laid the foundations for an important regional alliance connecting SSCSF in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2018, during a workshop to 51 representatives from all over the continent (see our [annual report 2017-18](#)).

## Private sector: conclusion of the end-term evaluation:

The evaluation reviewed 57 of 117 cases of increased political will and 35 of 120 changes in public and private policies in the C&F program. Advocacy regarding the private sector was in most cases targeted to the government, to hold the private sector to account, although that was sometimes also a conscious choice based on safety considerations. There are examples of increased political will in the form of commitments, but the translation to concrete changes in policies or legislation has not materialized (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 (DR Congo, Myanmar and Nigeria). The program has been quite successful in raising local communities' voices. Almost half of all the outcomes in the overall C&F program related to increased citizens' voice, fall under the sub-theme Private Sector. The program has laid the groundwork, initial results are promising, but it is too early to develop conclusions on impact.

In the course of the program we gradually learned that there was a bias on influencing western private sector parties. As the end-term evaluation rightly noted, we should reflect on the approach towards non-western actors, such as Chinese companies, which are very influential in conflict areas. To support this reflection, SOMO has published [learnings](#) from experiences around controversial Chinese mining investments, including possible leverage points for CSOs and affected communities. Among others, the report concludes that communities' grievances regarding human rights violations and environmental degradation are often ignored by Chinese companies and their investors. CSOs are most successful when they use scientific evidence and legal claims based on legal frameworks from the 'host country' where the company operates.

## Influencing strategies

Influencing strategies used in C&F projects ranged from building trust with decision-makers and engaging key actors, collecting evidence for advocacy and policy proposals, to raising awareness, mobilizing citizens, and, last but not least, creating alliances that are part of an expanding worldwide influencing network. Partners demonstrated an increased ability to shift their strategic focus and priorities, adapting to local

## Strategies of partners such as SSLS and CEPO in South Sudan also proved valid.

realities and contexts. A good example are the South Sudanese partners (see page 20), who focused on the local level when national level results appeared hard to achieve.

### Engaging key actors

In Pakistan, Strategic Partnership partners combined community mobilization strategies with lobby tactics, supported by research and rooted in the experience of women's daily lives. Armed with this diverse input, they influenced the Sindh government and Parliament to legally require water authorities to elect at least 10% women to their boards. Their long haul had effect (see page 21). In addition to the policy win, women felt more confident to raise their voice on community water governance. As a result, water governance officials and provincial parliamentarians listened to the issues more seriously than before. Alliance building again was key to achieve the success in Sindh: our partners formed local-level alliances of CSOs, farmer groups, community groups and media to engage with government actors. Together, they advocated for participatory water management, which included women and landless farmers.

In Yemen, the successful engagement of officials of 11 ministries (see above) was at least partly the result of strategically localizing the WPS agenda. Many participating officials considered WPS to be a foreign agenda at the start of the workshops. Adapting the WPS agenda into more culturally accepted language played a significant role in changing participants' attitudes. For example, one Deputy Minister apologized to his women staff after the trainings for not having taken them seriously before, and made himself available for future collaboration.

### Building trust and legitimacy

Strategies of partners such as SSLS and CEPO in South Sudan also proved valid. They prepared for the long haul and effectively managed to build trust between citizens and security actors, by organizing consultative meetings, stakeholder dialogue, and offering their support and experience to all parties in order to solve pressing and persistent security issues.

Dialogue to influence local policies and practices proved to deliver tangible results, just like having a seat at the international table. However, we also realized the risks of these approaches, such as excluding grassroots organizations from the international influencing level and thus undermining partners' legitimacy. Also, there is always the risk of being perceived to be siding with conflicting parties when engaging in advocacy, which equally affects the legitimacy of the CSOs involved. We learned that there is a need to balance constructive and critical engagement with government actors, as priorities shift and remaining impartial is extremely difficult.

Another learning is that influencing governments and local authorities in conflict and fragile contexts was successful, when the approach was non-confrontational, balanced, non-partisan and professional; this enabled trust to build. For example, in Pakistan, partners prioritized trust-building with authorities before implementation, to ensure the sustained will to cooperate; this greatly contributed to the passing of the Sindh water governance law.

African CSOs achieved structural inclusion in the peace processes despite closed civic space, by positioning themselves as experts, and leveraging on partners such as ASSN to open doors to key actors and authorities. By focusing on technical inputs, such as language on provisions in the peace agreements, they avoided being perceived as overly political or threatening.



## Connecting networks

ASSN managed to connect CSOs to relevant networks, by organizing multiple workshops and providing targeted trainings on inclusive security sector reform. In 2019, ASSN and Oxfam hosted a learning event in which CSOs from seven countries identified strategies to engage with authorities and join decision-making processes. The event was supported by the Strategic Partnership and the the Netherlands Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law (Knowledge Management Fund). In 2020, we published 'civil society's successful strategies to maintain and reclaim civic space, and to advocate for inclusive, people-centered security and peace; a valuable advocacy learning document for other CSOs.

SIHA's success is based on its strategic support to and connecting of national level groups and networks in the Horn of Africa. SIHA is an extensive network itself, comprising 136 member organizations, and well-positioned to make a powerful stand for women's rights. The Strategic Partnership supported SIHA to effectively use its monitoring of sexual and gender-based violence (SGVB) as evidence for advocacy purposes; which SIHA did, although within the short timeframe (SIHA only joined the Strategic Partnership in 2019) not yet with concrete policy level results.

In Myanmar civil society organizations used a multipronged approach, integrating engagement of companies and financial institutions, and policy influencing work that was sustained through our worldwide influencing network. We found that MATA's members have become more effective in influencing the private sector and government; network platforms with national bodies – such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative – have mitigated the risks of speaking out alone.

## **Continuing stories**

The bottom-up global solidarity #IMatter campaign was kickstarted by Oxfam and partners, following lessons on implementing UNSCR 1325 and Women Peace and Security programs, to raise awareness of different forms of injustices facing women in conflict zones, and push duty bearers to fulfil WPS commitments. The campaign will last until at least 2022, connecting partners with a broad network of organizations and alliances, including the NGO Working Group on WPS to influence UN processes in New York.

The story of SIHA will definitely continue under the Dutch funded Power of Women program. The network has ongoing activities in all countries and is determined to continue collaborating with the peace collectives. SIHA assists in the capacity development of emerging women's groups towards independence, but also considers them potential partners. During SIHA's Strategic Partnership closing meetings in all implementing locations, grassroots organizations and intercommunal peace collectives contributed to developing a sustainability strategy, reflected on activities and agreed on maintaining women movement networks. They explicitly noted the importance of networking for greater impact on their agenda to reduce SGVB and increase access to justice.

In South Sudan, the CSOs that partners like ASSN and SSLS had successfully brought together, discussed plans for the development of civilian disarmament and built consensus on their coordination, during the Strategic Partnership's final event in November 2020. In a clear intent to continue their cooperation, they requested ASSN and SSLS to organize a co-creation workshop to review and draft a common strategy on civilian disarmament. ASSN looks forward to continue working with the South Sudanese CSOs.



Farmers from the area of Bangai, who fought the big palm oil companies to reclaim their land in Bangai, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.

©Ilvy Njiokiktjien  
/ Oxfam Novib

## CIVIC SPACE

For many partners and country offices, civic space has declined since 2016 in all areas: land rights, tax laws and corruption, and conflict resolution. The Strategic Partnership has provided our partners with opportunities to adapt by:

- developing new tactics;
- learning from others;
- forging innovative partnerships and networks;
- mitigating risks and better protecting themselves, offline and online.

To protect partners' voice both offline and online, we implemented several civic space strategies. In partnership with specialized protection agencies, we equipped partners with antidefamation tactics and digital security tools. We invested in a deep dive into the way narratives influence polarization and civic space, and piloted the creation of new alternative narratives about civil society by broad alliances; we linked partners to experts in advertising, communication and psychology.

In addition, participatory action research and exchange of tactics with peers in other countries, such as a [learning lab](#) on land rights, helped activists to find out what works in a context of shrinking civic space. We supported partners to be resilient facing a shrunken space. Now even more than in 2015, civil society's countervailing voice and power is needed.

In 2014, Oxfam developed a [civic space monitoring](#) tool to help partners understand what is happening in civic space at a local and national level. The tool is increasingly being used by partners and promoted by others for its effectiveness in breaking inertia, starting dialogue and motivating strategy development. Furthermore, we mobilized people worldwide to fight the criminalization of indigenous peoples and local communities who defend their lands, forests and waters.

## Learnings about civic space

Despite Covid-19, we did document and shared our lessons learned on civic space in this final Strategic Partnership year. We focused on three topics:

1. How to remain influential on land rights in shrinking civic space context. For safety reasons, we only shared the documentation of this work with a secured circle. Yet we did publish [blogposts](#) and organize webinars for a wider land community, and discussed our learnings at the (postponed) [EADI-ISS](#) conference, among others.
2. How to remain influential in a context of (post) conflict and shrinking space. We held a [two-day workshop](#) with civil society from eight African countries, organized webinars and an exchange with Yemeni civil society. After anonymizing the country of origin in the documentation, we shared it more broadly through our civil society networks and with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. How to start changing a negative, often toxic narrative on civil society. Here, we shared our learnings through webinars (December 2020, February 2021) to which we invited several leading organizations from our program, as well as at the ISS conference. In addition, we organized a learning session for the Dutch human rights network BM0, and published [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of 'Narrative Power & Collective Action'.

**We invested in a deep dive into the way narratives influence polarization and civic space, and piloted the creation of new alternative narratives about civil society by broad alliances; we linked partners to experts in advertising, communication and psychology.**



# CASE



Demonstration against a proposed financial law in the streets of Niamey, Niger.

©Ali Idrissa

## NIGER AND THE POWER OF WIN

In shrinking civic spaces, the worldwide influencing network (WIN) has proven to be especially relevant and powerful. A good example is the increasing speed and efficiency with which an international coalition and civil society in Niger responded to the imprisonment of civil society leaders. In March 2018, 26 activists were arrested, following peaceful demonstrations against a proposed finance law that had triggered protests since 2017. Together with organizations such as Publish What You Pay (PWYP) and Tournons la Page, Strategic partnership partners built an alliance of international NGOs in Niger, which linked local civil society actors, the regional Oxfam office, France, Europe and the USA to pressure powerholders in a 'pincer movement'. Three months later, the main leaders of the protesters were released from jail: the last leader finally got out of jail in November 2019.

Immediately, partners started to influence the national legislation on the right to assemble and protest peacefully. However, a few months later and in the light of Covid-19, again over 100 people were arrested during demonstrations, including six civil society leaders. The renewed international alliance readily responded with coordinated demands for their release. Oxfam in Niger, our partner ROTAB and the national civil society platform took the lead in high-level talks with the prime minister, Oxfam influenced EU countries and the US, and Amnesty and PWYP focused on international media attention. As a result, three leaders were provisionally released after 37 days, which is considerably quicker than in 2018. The other three also spent less time (6 months) in jail than their colleagues did in 2018-19.

Fighting for 'space' continued and continues: An important win was the **verdict** of the ECOWAS Court of Justice on June 22, 2021, that found the State of Niger liable for the violation of the fundamental human rights of one of the civil society leaders who had been imprisoned in 2018. Niger has to pay him 50 million CFA as compensation. The ECOWAS judge called the arrest and detention arbitrary, illegal and a violation of the complainant's rights to freedom of assembly.



Steven is a former child soldier from South Sudan who is now taking classes to qualify to enter into mainstream school after his exam.

©William Vest-Lillesøe / Oxfam IBIS

## CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

How can we prevent projects from – unintentionally – fueling conflicts or posing a risk to partners’ safety and security? What can we do to ensure we do no harm and at the same time increase the project’s chances of success, even in fragile environments? Key is an integrated conflict-sensitive approach to a project’s design, implementation and monitoring.

From the onset of our program, we have applied such an approach to Strategic Partnership projects, based on ongoing conflict analyses. In short, this means that in every step of the program cycle, we aim to understand the context and the interaction with the project, and act upon it.

In 2017, we conducted an internal conflict sensitivity training, and one year later we mainstreamed conflict sensitivity in all proposed program activities. After our assessment in 2019 indicated that our support on conflict sensitivity issues was rather ad-hoc instead of fully integrated, we developed training modules to fill this gap.

According to the same assessment, the major role of local partners in influencing activities ensured that interventions were conflict sensitive, as they rapidly adapted activities in response to changing conflict contexts. We learned that operating in a context-specific way also means that differences in scale and intensity occur.

## Learnings and recommendations

In 2020, we took stock of our learnings and assessed what had worked well and what could be improved in future projects. We shared practical lessons such as ‘reflect on the implications for your conflict-sensitive approach if the project specifically aims for gender inclusion’ and ‘link your (often) national-level analyses to the impact and realities at local level’.





A village elder overlooking the remains of his neighbourhood after a flood, Herat, Afghanistan.

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Evelien Schotsman

Overall, we concluded that the conflict sensitivity which we applied did add value to the projects' quality and adaptability. However, our conflict-sensitive approach was often implicit rather than explicit, and not well-documented or fully integrated into all project implementation stages. For example, the capacities of South Sudanese partners were enhanced, with regards to conflict sensitivity, security, and safety consciousness in a fragile post-conflict. Yet at the same time, the joint context and conflict analysis of partners was not clearly recorded.

Still, the inclusive approach to conflict sensitivity as such worked well. Connecting CSOs in the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) had strengthened their influencing power and reduced individual and organizational risks. Strategies to minimize negative impact and maximize positive impact, included ensuring impartiality, an inclusive and participatory approach, constructive engagement with authorities, and increasing local ownership and legitimacy.

## Conflict sensitivity in practice

How did we try to be and remain conflict sensitive, while advocating for more responsible behavior by extractive industries in Nigeria? We started with an in-depth research (2017-18), to better understand the intricacies of the Nigerian extractive sector, from the host communities to the upstream sector. It cemented an understanding of how communities, oil companies and the government interact, including the frictions within, and provided input for SOMO's and CISLAC's report on Vitol.

In 2019-20, we focused on a conflict-sensitive approach towards awareness-raising on the social and economic costs of the extractive industry's opacity. One important conclusion of the different analyses we made, was that male-dominated community development committees had a demand-service driven relationship with the oil companies: they negotiated the returns of the company to the community (e.g. a school), and mainly served their own interests. This local 'elite capture' led to tensions within communities, aggravated by an absent state and local government officials that took money from oil companies in exchange of community lands. Another observation was that tensions increased as a result of poor understanding among communities and companies. Therefore, our partner CODE and Oxfam invested in engagement with companies' community liaison officers, which eventually resulted in increased mutual understanding.





Beatrice, a South Sudanese refugee combs and plaits her daughter's hair as part of her efforts to keep the bond and erase bad memories of war, Uganda.

©Julius Caesar Kasujja/ Oxfam Novib

## GENDER AND GENERATIONAL INCLUSION

### Gender

In our program document, we committed to putting gender at the heart of our influencing work. Yet the program's mid-term review concluded that we should invest more in gender mainstreaming. In response, we made gender a priority in our learning processes, shifting our own norms and attitudes, and set out to integrate gender in all influencing strategies. For example, F4D incorporated a specific gender analysis into the Fair Tax Monitor, enabling civil society to define gender biases and advocate for fair, gender transformative tax systems. Also, the ToC focused its [inequality campaign](#) on gender and trained partners on gender-responsive budgeting.

C&F had integrated gender right from the start, in its Women, Peace and Security work – think of SIHA and the integration of women in the Afghan police force (see annual report 2018-19) – and e.g. shifted its influencing focus in OPT to gender-based violence. R2F started an ambitious gender visibility & gender action learning trajectory with partners across countries, sparking conversations on how to improve gender integration, resulting in country reports and the Gender Visible report. We already started incorporating this report's three [main lessons](#) in the design of future campaigns such as 'Not in it together', in which we will push supermarkets to focus on gender (in)equality in its value chains.

We mapped cases, organized training workshops, held in-depth discussions, conducted research and presented our findings in a report. This includes best practices and three clear lessons learned that we have shared widely and will take onboard in the Power of Voices program FAIR for All.



Young people sign the Money for Medicine petition in Ramallah, OPTI.

©Oxfam OPTI

## Youth

In our original proposal to the MoFA, we had included a fourth thematic area: Youth influence for an equitable future. Due to budget restrictions, we had to let go of this theme. Yet that did not change the fact that young people are key actors in any influencing work in which citizen's voice is leading. So they did play an important role in all three thematic areas.

Nevertheless, we must conclude that in several cases we could – and should – have done more to really include youth. In 2020, we reflected on our youth involvement through 4 case studies. The jointly developed and implemented campaign on fair taxation with the Fight Inequality Youth Alliance in Pakistan, and the Money for Medicine (M4M) campaign in OPT, are examples of successful youth involvement. Yet in Vietnam (F4D) and Nigeria (R2F), young people were mainly involved in a rather instrumental way, during the implementation of the projects. An important success factor in M4M was that we looked for synergies and participated with youth on an equal basis from inception, resulting in an effective campaign that was enthusiastically driven by young Palestinians. Our learning here is that we must co-create projects with young people and grant them genuine ownership, if we aim for meaningful engagement and sustainability of results.

**Our learning here is that we must co-create projects with young people and grant them genuine ownership for meaningful engagement with youth now and sustainability in the future.**





Everyday inequality  
in the streets of  
Dhaka, Bangladesh.

©Saikat Mojumder

## 5. REFLECTIONS ON PARTNERSHIPS

In 2016 Oxfam Novib and SOMO set out ‘towards a worldwide influencing network’ which includes CSOs across the world, in a Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). This one sentence includes all partnerships that were part of this program: Oxfam Novib and SOMO, their collaboration with the Ministry, and the relationship with all national, regional and international partners and alliances.

Oxfam Novib’s and SOMO’s goal was to strengthen civil society’s influencing capacity at all levels, including our own lobby and advocacy power. According to the end-term evaluation, our approach of ‘learning by doing’ and ‘being in it together’ was very effective from a capacity development perspective. Looking back, we must conclude that this was enabled by the way we partnered in this Strategic Partnership.

### ToC partners

At the start of our partnership program, Oxfam Novib and SOMO were still ‘marked’ by many years of working within the co-financing scheme of the Dutch government, with its long-term subsidies which enabled core funding of southern partners. Putting it over-simplified, Oxfam Novib was primarily seen as a sub-granting organization with strong lobby and advocacy positions in the Netherlands, Europe and globally, while SOMO’s core business was strong research to hold big multinationals to account. That was the setting when we entered into this partnership, meaning for example that Oxfam Novib supported local partners’ missions with crucial core funding and used this work as input for its influencing and public campaigns. Similarly, SOMO would seek evidence for its reports, while on a smaller scale supporting affected workers and communities to defend their human rights. As a result, we designed and planned our capacity development activities within



this Strategic Partnership in terms of serving the needs and demands of local partners. In the course of our program, this has changed drastically towards a partnership with more distinct and mutually beneficial roles.

The shift in relationships is visible in Oxfam's campaigns and brand, which increasingly served as a strategic vehicle for CSOs and activists to strengthen their influencing work and legitimacy. For example, the annual inequality campaign around the World Economic Forum (WEF) became a platform to amplify the voices of our partners, both at the international and national levels. Where Oxfam used to publish one inequality report worldwide, the Strategic Partnership program led to the simultaneous publication of multiple nationally focused inequality reports, often through the national or regional chapters of the Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA) which we supported. And where it was Oxfam's executive director who used to attend the WEF, in 2020 grassroots mobilizer and coordinator of the African FIA Njoki Njehu was invited; she brought the voices of those most affected by inequality into the global debate.

In constant dialogue with our partners, we also learned to use Oxfam's powerful brand more smartly and strategically. Sometimes we mutually decided not to brand certain advocacy initiatives, in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the project's message, for example in the health campaigns in OPT (M4M) and Pakistan (Money4Health) and in Land Rights Now. In other instances we made sure that partners were not associated with the brand and advocacy at all, for safety reasons; an example is the publication on Vitol in Nigeria by SOMO. We also used our brand to forge a 'pincer' strategy by advocating seemingly independent on the same policy issue, like we did on inequality in Morocco in 2019.

In addition, our partners increasingly set Oxfam's campaign agenda. For example, the Behind the Barcodes campaign focused on seafood in 2018, to support our partners' advocacy in Southeast Asia. And in 2019, the human and especially gender dimensions of inequality were put at the heart of the inequality campaign, instead of the fiscal technicalities, as a clear input from our partners. Also, Oxfam used its Africa Union accreditation to support the work of ASSN and partners in South Sudan for inclusive security sector reforms.

In short, we learned to focus on how we could add value in partnerships and strengthen partners' legitimacy. Influencing and campaigning structures evolved from top-down to being informed by and serving southern influencing agendas. As a next step, we should translate this development to a shift in power relations within program and project management. In 2019, we developed a more mutual risk management system (see our [annual report 2019/20](#)) in order to strengthen Oxfam's sub-granting system from an equal partnership perspective; this is yet to be translated into governance structures that enable shared, participatory and inclusive decision making.

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs

At the start of the program we agreed with the MoFA on a set of partnership modalities, which ranged from sharing information to joint influencing. Throughout the program we tried to shift towards joint influencing as much as possible. Yet, despite good examples, this was not always easy due divergent expectations, as the IOB evaluation of the functioning of strategic partnerships in 2019 also concluded. The instrument of strategic partnerships was fairly new, so it should not be surprising that its application was more fruitful in certain contexts than in others. We mutually learned that working in partnership largely depends on an overlap (or not) in development objectives – for example when an embassy shifts from aid to trade – as well as on personal interests and relations. Moving forward into the Power of Voices partnership, we aim to be much more explicit about our expectations from the onset of the program. But we also build on the inspiring examples of our program 'Towards a worldwide influencing network', which mark a shift from the traditional donor-recipient relationship to one in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxfam, SOMO and local partners jointly undertake influencing activities.

For example, thanks to MoFA civil society [could participate](#) in Double Tax Treaty negotiations between the governments of Uganda and the Netherlands. By combining SOMO's technical knowledge, Oxfam's role in the Netherlands, and SEATINI's expertise in Uganda, we managed to [advocate and lobby](#) for a fair deal. In a similar mutual reinforcement, Oxfam's land rights expertise enabled us to support well-connected and community-based partners in Chad, while our partnership informed the Dutch Embassy of our influencing efforts (see page 8). After a successful lobby and improvement of the land law, the embassy continues the Dutch support to Chadian civil society through the LAND-at-scale program implemented by [Netherlands Enterprise Agency \(RVO\)](#). Dutch Embassies also proved of great value in different contexts of (very) limited civic space, by



A photo from the exhibition  
“the leatherman of  
Pakistan, a coproduction  
by Oxfam Novib and Somo.

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diplomatically advocating for increased space, reinforcing the activities of national and international civil society alliances to achieve the same.

## Oxfam and SOMO

Similar to the journey we described related to our ToC partners, we further and more explicitly defined the mutual added value of Oxfam Novib and SOMO in the course of the program. In the Dutch context, Oxfam and SOMO were, and still are, longstanding and complementary partners; we aligned our thematic focus on all three ToCs. SOMO’s thorough research on the impact of multinational corporations influences governments, while Oxfam holds the potential to amplify SOMO’s groundbreaking publications.

However, we started our journey as two autonomous partners, based on the Dutch co-financing scheme’s ways of cooperating: no joint planning, but a staff that easily connects with each other. During the past five years, we learned to be more efficient by making our strengths, added value and complementarities more visible. This inspired more interaction, collaboration and thereby trust and respect among staff; furthermore, we identified some common activities that added value to both organizations. Moving forward, we will have to translate the principle of equality in partnerships into the program and project governance.

**In the Dutch context, Oxfam  
and SOMO were, and still are,  
longstanding and complementary  
partners.**





Wall painting in Covid times, Nairobi, Kenya.

©Oxfam Kenya

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED

In order to remain relevant and influential, we have put learning and evidence-based advocacy at the heart of our work, allocating 7% of our budget to MEAL, with a clear emphasis on learning. Right from the start, we were committed to enable learning at various levels, and collect and share knowledge, in order to increase the quality and the sustainability of both results and partnerships. To ensure valuable external input to our learning processes, we instituted an External Reference Group. Moreover, when we set up the [end-term evaluation](#), we split this into an internal contribution assessment of all outcomes, and an external evaluation and validation process.

Learning enabled us to adapt our strategies, which was crucial while influencing in complex political environments with shrinking civic space, and global forces that impact local realities. We continuously monitored, shared knowledge and facilitated exchange through [measuring impact for change](#) and our [knowledge hub](#), using the resulting insights to periodically reflect on and evaluate our work. The [reflections](#) based on a PhD research into adaptive management in the aid sector, which we hosted, also supported us to apply learning for adaptive management.

### Decentralized learning

We learned that to support this adaptive and agile management, three things are essential: decentralized learning, knowledge exchange, and a centrally guiding learning agenda on the ToCs, underlying assumptions and outcomes. Towards 2018, we opened a substantial part of the centrally held MEAL budget, to support context-, country- and partner-specific learning and knowledge activities. Furthermore, we emphasized



**In 2020, we reviewed all monitoring methodologies and had Oxfam's Knowledge and Impact unit harness specific recommendations from this review. These were subsequently applied to the new programs that we developed under the Power of Voices framework.**

the learning cycle by encouraging both data gathering as part of [monitoring and reflecting](#) on that data, to inform planning and adapting influencing strategies.

The result of this learning approach became visible when we brought together five years of learnings in 2020: we identified over 91 separate learning products, ranging from evaluation reports and [podcasts](#) to [webinars](#) and interactive [online learning](#) sessions around our publication of [Beating the Drum](#). Read here the blogs of these sessions on '[shifting power](#)', '[mutual capacity strengthening](#)', and '[community mobilization](#)'.

## **Learning how to learn**

Thanks to the Strategic Partnership we could improve the quality of our monitoring data, which we reflect on and use to adapt our influencing strategies. To monitor the seven outcomes in the ToCs, we invested in refining and sometimes developing our methodologies: outcome harvesting; stories of change; capacity assessment tool; start and end survey on citizen's voice and attitudes (audience research). The most profound innovation was the application of a contribution analysis by the end-term evaluators, to the internally drafted contribution stories which were based on harvested outcomes. With this theory-based evaluation approach we addressed concerns of inherent biases to outcome harvesting as an evaluation methodology.

In 2020, we reviewed all monitoring methodologies and had Oxfam Novib Impact Measurement and Knowledge team harness specific recommendations from this review. These were subsequently applied to the new programs that we developed under the Power of Voices framework. We took the general lesson derived from these reflections into account, by reducing the number of methodologies and the amount of data that will be generated. Furthermore, we will invest more in creating a platform for sharing insights, brokering knowledge, connecting expertise and supporting specific learning and research questions.

## Four key lessons learned

The above-mentioned 91 learning products only captured lessons that were documented. Yet most of the learnings were directly applied in the specific intervention context; think of the shift to youth engagement in the M4M campaign in OPT, following research on citizens' voice in 2016. In chapter 4 we elaborated on more specific lessons learned related to civic space, conflict sensitivity, gender, and the different ToCs. Below, we highlight some key lessons at the overall program level.

- Despite strategies specifically targeting women and youth, our research 'What drives citizens' voice?' (June 2021) found that they were less likely to be active than men and older citizens. The same goes for (other) marginalized groups of people; they were the most difficult to mobilize, even in projects that had developed specific strategies targeting these citizens. Based on findings of surveys on citizens' voice and attitudes, among over 4,600 respondents across seven program countries, we analyzed who raises their voice and who refrains from raising their voice. Feelings of efficacy turned out to be the most crucial determinant in citizens' decisions to raise their voices. This confirms the need to support and amplify the voices of young people, women and marginalized groups; projects that ignore this run the risk of reinforcing existing inequalities. It also reminds us that mobilizing people is first and foremost about increasing citizens' confidence that they can be drivers of change.
- In 2017 and 2019 we analyzed the respondents' baseline data on citizen's voice and attitude, to learn about 'trust' and 'legitimacy'. The analysis we did in the above-mentioned 2021 research combined the questionnaires with data from the endline surveys, and reconfirmed earlier conclusions: there is a substantial variation in the perceived trustworthiness of civil society actors. Generally, civil society actors closer to citizens (traditional and religious leaders, CSOs and local governments) were perceived as more trustworthy. In contrast, INGOs and media, in particular, were distrusted by the majority of respondents. The evidence showed that the level of trust in INGOs or partner organizations was related to citizens' willingness to take action. The lessons going forward is that we should not make the (implicit) assumption that Oxfam and SOMO are perceived as trustworthy actors by default and will support, for example, the global campaign frameworks. Instead, we are strengthened in our approach to jointly develop and implement influencing strategies, and reach out to citizens in partnership with trusted civil society actors, such as local CSOs and traditional and religious leaders. We will continue to invest in building trust and equal partnerships as described in chapter 5.
- The end-term evaluation concluded that our approach is diligent and evidence-based, but also reactive and reducing damages instead of advocating for the positive alternative. While we feel the picture is more nuanced and also forced within three decades of global neo-liberalism with ever growing inequality, there is validity to the remark. In our new Power of Voices program FAIR for All, we have included an 'alternative business models' pathway, and an alternative new humane economy will be central in this program. Also, the evaluation highlighted the continuous need to further strengthen and innovate civil society's capacities to influence the private sector. This is specifically relevant in light of the increasing power held by multinationals and the growing importance of non-western actors, along with the security risks that come with challenging powerful interests.
- Our three ToCs might have led to unintended silos, according to the end-term evaluation. As a result, we might have missed opportunities where they could have strengthened one another. This was most evident in countries where each ToC implemented their 'own' projects, such as in Nigeria. Despite evident overlap, e.g. between food production (R2F) and agricultural investments (F4D), the administrative separation hampered capitalizing on the possible added value. Learning from this evaluation, our Fair for All program is comprised of one ToC. This combines evidence of alternative FAIRer business models with pressure on private sector actors to reform, and influencing governments to set regulatory and enabling frameworks, while addressing issues of fiscal justice and a just financial sector.



Celebration day for  
Femme Rurale in Chad.

©Oxfam Chad

## 7. CONCLUSION: THIS IS OUR LEGACY

Learning was an extremely important component of our program, both to improve our interventions and results, and to guarantee the sustainability of what we have achieved: active citizens who raise their voice, as an indispensable foundation of democratic societies.

Of course, changed policies will have to be implemented and monitored for results to become truly sustainable. Yet, even though in some cases changes will possibly not (yet) 'survive' the end of the program, the odds are much more in favor of civil society than they were before the launch of this Strategic Partnership. As the final evaluation concluded: capacitating and engaging local level actors and promoting their 'ownership', has made CSOs better equipped to monitor progress and to re-engage if progress is threatened.

Longer-term core support is key for the successful development of an influencing network capable of changing policies and practices that affect the lives of millions of people. Equally important for sustainable results are trust, local ownership, needs-based support, and continuous learning. We were very happy to find all this in the Strategic Partnership with the MoFA; assets that greatly contributed to both the results and the lessons learned which we share through this report.

We will definitely take these lessons onboard in our new programs and projects – starting with the Power of Voices partnership FAIR for All. Again, this program allows us to partner with activists and civil society organizations across the world, thanks to the long-term trust and partnership of the MoFA. Together, we will continue our lobby and advocacy, in order to achieve real improvements in people's lives.



## Building on the stronger and more connected network of activists and CSOs, and together with consortium partners Third World Network and the Huairou Commission, Oxfam and SOMO will continue to support organizations in 13 countries.

In retrospect, this grant and program has been of tremendous value to making the worldwide influencing network stronger. For Oxfam it meant a very significant investment in lobby and advocacy funding for country offices and partners, for whom usually such funding is very limited. Subsequently, they could build on their programming experience and expertise, and link this with increased legitimacy to effectively lobby and advocate for policy changes. In fact, the Strategic Partnership grant was by far the largest contribution to Oxfam's strategic goals to link local and national action with global change, making a major shift towards supporting national change. Likewise, for SOMO, the program offered the opportunity to greatly increase the reach and influence of their expertise and to share their knowledge and specialized research capacities.

Building on the stronger and more connected network of activists and CSOs, and together with consortium partners Third World Network and the Huairou Commission, Oxfam and SOMO will continue to support organizations in 13 countries. Our 'FAIR for ALL' program aims to achieve fundamental, systemic change through a paradigm shift in the roles of the state and the market. We will strengthen civil society's capacities to challenge vested interests, tackle power imbalances, and help build new economic models and principles that put people and the planet before profit. Thanks to five years of working together with fantastic partners towards a Worldwide Influencing Network, and a wide range of valuable learnings, our starting point for this new program is better than ever before. We are immensely grateful for this great opportunity to support people to profoundly improve their lives.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASSN	African Security Sector Network
C&F	Conflict and Fragility
CODE	Connected Development
COONAPIP	Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de Panamá (Indigenous Peoples organization of Panama)
CoP	Conference of Parties
CSBAG	Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group
CSO	Civil society organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRM	Domestic Resource Mobilization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPO	European Patent Office
F4D	Finance for Development
FFG	Fair Finance Guide
FFI	Fair Finance International
FIA	Fight Inequality Alliance
FIYA	Fight Inequality Youth Alliance
FTM	Fair Tax Monitor
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organization
KPA	Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (Consortium for Agrarian Reform)
LRN	Land Rights Now
M4M	Money for Medicine
MATA	Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPT(I)	Occupied Palestinian Territory (and Israel)
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
R2F	Right to Food
RSP0	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SOMO	Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations)
SSCSF	South Sudan Civil Society Forum
SSLS	South Sudan Law Society
SP	Strategic Partnership
TJN	Tax Justice Network
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UTP	Unfair trading practices
VATJ	Vietnam Alliance for Tax Justice
VGGTs	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests
WEF	World Economic Forum
WIN	Worldwide Influencing Network
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

## COLOPHON

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