

OI response to Promises to keep
(Report on the evaluation of the implementation of *Towards Global Equity*, Oxfam International's Strategic Plan, 2001 – 2006)

December 2006

1. Introduction

Oxfam International welcomes the insights and recommendations from this evaluation. They have been instrumental in formulating priorities within our next strategic plan.

Oxfam has chosen to publish the Evaluation externally, in the interests of transparency and accountability. We think it is important to model openness and a learning approach and we try to show here how the lessons are being incorporated into future plans. This document aims to summarize Oxfam International's response to the evaluation as well as explain what we will do differently as a result.

The document first looks at the eight key headlines that were described in the Executive Summary of the Evaluation as well as some other general issues, then looks more in depth at the four sectoral evaluations that were conducted on our Trade and Livelihoods, Education, Humanitarian and Gender Equality work.

2. The Eight headlines and other Oxfam Wide Issues

1. *The Make Trade Fair Campaign shows what Oxfam can achieve at its best. Oxfam's footprints are evident in global and national policy and practice changes in labour rights and agriculture. There is also some evidence of positive changes in the lives of working women and poor farmers. But MTF has also exposed Oxfam's vulnerabilities: shifts in focus and discontinuity of effort; unwillingness to listen to others and difficulty in integrating regional and field concerns.*

Oxfam welcomes the recognition of the achievements of the Make Trade Fair Campaign. It also agrees that MTF is proof, in many respects, that campaigning works. As the evaluation notes Oxfam has changed the terms of the debate, it has generated massive interest in trade issues, it has been a catalyst, a facilitator and a valued participant in an array of alliances – though it can always improve how it works with others. However, we would also agree that policy change on the scale Oxfam is seeking takes a long time. We have learned that achieving and sustaining policy change requires sustained investment at different levels, and that we cannot fix arbitrary timelines to when we stop or scale down our campaigning work. This also means being clearer about the effects of switching between high and low profile phases of different campaigns. As the evaluation notes our work on Labor Rights indicates how Oxfam has gained a significantly positive profile because of the way we interacted with others and which sets a new Oxfam standard for collaboration. We need to build from this success and would argue that over the course of the last plan we have significantly improved the way we work with others as well as the way we work with staff in regions.

It is likely that the next phase of our work on trade will require a greater focus on regional and national level work. This means involving more regional and country level people in planning and implementation.

- 2. Decreased priority during this Strategic Plan means that Oxfam's work in the education sector, though showing positive effects in its own terms, has not realised its earlier potential. Oxfam needs to face up squarely to the implications of its rights-based approach and its involvement in service delivery in the education sector.*

This evaluation confirms that Oxfam International's work on education can and is changing people's lives. We agree that we need to capitalize on the good practices, lessons learned and experience we have developed with our partners. We also agree that it is important to adopt a clearer Rights Based Approach to our work in this, and other areas. To that end, as an integral part of the Essential Services Goal in Oxfam's new strategic plan, a major priority will be to strengthen our agenda of developing the capacity of civil society for policy analysis, budget monitoring and advocating for quality education services whilst also at the same time pushing for strong and accountable government structures at national and decentralized levels of the education and health systems. In this sense Oxfam will not be 'gap-filling' although it may directly support the provision of health and education services but only within a longer term agenda of engaging duty bearers in taking up their responsibilities over time – see below for more on our Education work.

- 3. Organisational changes in Oxfam's humanitarian response sector have demonstrated their value – most visibly in the Tsunami response. But much work remains to be done at affiliate level to ensure a consistently high level of quality. Affiliate preoccupations sometimes jeopardise the excellent intentions of the Humanitarian Dossier.*

The evaluation has usefully confirmed the findings and conclusions of other evaluations and assessments commissioned by the Humanitarian Consortium. We welcome in particular the positive conclusions related to the changes in organizational structure and in particular the creation of the Humanitarian Consortium. We would also share the view that we need to continue to ensure that affiliate work is of a consistently high quality. To that end, in the next plan explicit emphasis will be put on maintaining and strengthening affiliate capacity in general and in particular developing the capacities of affiliates and partners to ensure that women participate fully in the planning, leadership and implementation of humanitarian response and advocacy – see below for more on our humanitarian work. In the next year, the Humanitarian Consortium will focus on affiliate alignment to OI agreements (mainly the Humanitarian Dossier), in order to move from intentions and systems to real delivery of what has been already agreed.

- 4. Mainstreaming efforts to promote gender equality has failed. Gender expertise has become marginalised and a considerable investment in staff education, training and management is needed to reverse the decline in Oxfam's commitment to promoting gender equality as an intrinsic part of the rights-based approach. Examples of good practice, as in Labour Rights and the CAMEXCA Women's Rights work, are admirable – but exceptional.*

The historical overview provided in this evaluation of critical thinking on gender issues in development is very useful. It provides lessons learned from thirty years of efforts to incorporate a more rigorously gendered analysis and perspective in development programming and institutions. Whilst the review asserts that mainstreaming, in general, has failed, it is felt that the specific analysis of Oxfam's experience relies largely upon surrogate measures of Oxfam engagement (for example, the percentage of resources allocated to Aim 5 work) rather than any in depth attempt to assess the comparative effectiveness of different ways of working

(i.e., impact upon women's rights and lives). As such the respective advantages and disadvantages of mainstreaming vs. stand-alone women's rights work is not really empirically assessed.

Having said that, Oxfam International accepts the broad conclusion that a considerable investment in staff education, training and management is needed. However we do believe that some affiliates have actually invested significantly in gender training of staff and that the critique of the 'mainstreaming' approach applied across all of our work may reflect more the inadequacies of our evaluation tools (and the challenges of results attribution) and our joint work than necessarily in any inherent shortcomings of the mainstreaming approach. As a result the new plan has a major focus on Gender Justice as one of the four Change Goals, as well as a renewed emphasis on ensuring that we are appropriately dealing with gender equality in all aspects of our program.

5. The beneficial effects of Oxfam's "models of change" are visible in all four sectors. They need to be articulated more clearly and given practical and consistent application in day-to-day programme development, planning and management. In particular, as suggested in headline (2). Oxfam's approach to the rights-based approach needs to be more consistent across the board.

Oxfam International accepts the recommendation we need to more clearly articulate the models of change we employ, as well as making our Rights Based Approach more consistent. To this end the new Oxfam International Plan will:

- Have as its central proposition a commitment to empowering people living in poverty to hold others, including ourselves, to account, as well as a commitment to promoting action by concerned citizens throughout the world to promote pro-poor change. This will go a long way to making a Rights Based Approach more integral to all we do by trying to ensuring that men and women living in poverty are aware of their rights and entitlements; that they have the capacity to articulate those rights and defend them, and have access to mechanisms of grievance or redress if their rights are violated, and are empowered to access such mechanisms,
 - Clarify the linkages between our work at local, national and international level, and how the menu of actions we take i.e. capacity building, long term development, humanitarian response, and research campaigning and lobbying, can be best deployed to make a difference. We believe we need to start from the perspective of what change we seek and how we achieve it depending on context and the issue, rather than an approach based primarily on functions i.e. campaigning, development funding, capacity building etc. This approach has formed the basis of our new plan from 2007-11 which has defined a number of change goals which will then determine the different mix of activities required at different levels to achieve them.
- 6. In all four sectors we find examples of field-level programming empowering and equipping poor people to benefit from policy changes which Oxfam is campaigning to change: but these examples are not the norm. The "one-programme" reforms in OI-level architecture have not yet been replicated throughout the confederation.*

Oxfam agrees that we need to do more to link our work at different levels – see response to the previous headline. In the next plan we will in particular focus on national level change agendas and make these a critical level at which planning, programming and strategic collaboration occurs. We believe that it is at this level, where the international political economy meets the domestic arena, where we need to increase our efforts along with that of our key partners. If for example people living in poverty are to benefit from the increased levels of aid that are scheduled, or from improved agricultural prices then it will be largely at national and sub-national levels that this will be determined. This will mean developing change agendas in ways that involve those working at local, national and international levels in various combinations and more effective collaboration between Oxfams working in the same country.

7. Trust, complementarity and cooperation among affiliates are being achieved in pockets of the confederation's work. Affiliates have differing perceptions of the cost-benefits of collaborating in the confederation. Managing the power imbalances and tensions that could block Oxfam's progress demands courageous leadership from the Board and Executive Directors.

Oxfam International recognizes that, as in any voluntary grouping of autonomous agencies, trust and cooperation are critically important. We also recognize that perceptions of the costs and benefits vary, and that this is exacerbated by the fact that we do not have adequate means to more objectively portray and assess this – see point 8 below. It is also recognized that the large differences in size and capacity between affiliates can create imbalances and tensions. We would also recognize that whilst affiliate collaboration has increased tremendously in the context of some work i.e. Make Trade Fair, strategic collaboration amongst the affiliates at a country level and in some regions still remains a challenge. As a result in the next plan Oxfam International will be making a major effort to improve mutual accountability between affiliates, make significant progress in developing more strategic collaboration at a country level, as well as develop better management information in order to better assess the functioning of the confederation.

8. The Evaluation did not study the evaluation systems or capacities of all affiliates. Oxfam International confederation lacks a coherent system for quantitative and qualitative programme and financial information to support monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability and as a solid advocacy platform.

To date Oxfam International has largely relied on affiliate management information and monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as a limited joint annual financial and program data mapping exercise to pool 'hard data' and various one-off evaluations such as this one. It has been felt in the past that given the different demands that affiliates have from their back donors and regulatory authorities, the different financial years that affiliates have, as well as the challenges of aggregating qualitative data, that the likely complexity, cost and opportunity cost of investing in single uniform system would have been prohibitive.

At the same time, as the evaluation notes in several places, that our **joint** processes of monitoring, evaluation and learning are weak and the evaluation makes a number of other recommendations about how to improve this notably:

- agreeing on those areas of M&E work which can best be carried out collectively, and those which to need to be done at affiliate level;
- piloting collaboration on M&E in one high priority area of work during the next strategic plan period and establishing the necessary architecture, toolkit and resources to carry it out as a service to the confederation as a whole.

- bringing information systems up to the standards required to support the agreed M&E objectives. These processes need to link the monitoring and evaluation of campaigns work with the monitoring of field-level activities.
- making M&E become an integral, normal and continuing part of management, not as an occasional, optional add-on.
- undertaking rigorous but focused external evaluations as appropriate;
- establishing more systematic recording or reporting of direct and indirect costs. And agree and apply common program and financial categories and definitions so that Oxfam will be able to judge the cost-effectiveness of its work.

Whilst Oxfam agrees that these are valid issues raised by the evaluators, there are differing views as to the degree to which Oxfam International needs a single uniform and sophisticated learning and accountability and management information system. We always have to assess the degree to which further monitoring, evaluation and reporting – which has a cost – will really improve our performance or produce more unread paper. However Oxfam does believe that it needs to make a major investment in this area over the next five years and will commit to the following objectives in its next plan:

By 2011 Oxfam International will be able to provide solid evidence about the degree to which our joint work is contributing towards women and men suffering poverty and injustice realizing their rights.

We will achieve this through:

- enhancing the quality of our work by more systematic sharing of knowledge between affiliates and partners and more effective monitoring and evaluation.
- empowering the men and women we seek to support to hold us, and others, to account for performance.
- defining common core information needs (including gender disaggregated data) and developing manageable systems to bring this information together to able to transparently report on our performance

We believe these processes will in turn allow us to manage our multiple accountabilities more effectively. This includes building greater mutual accountability within the confederation through targeted peer reviews, and better management of information.

More specifically it is proposed to develop focused work in 5 -10 countries – rather than focusing thematically - to develop robust gender sensitive research, planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes based on national level change agendas linked to international change goal processes – see point 6 above. These processes will need to include developing mechanisms to enhance the ability of the men and women we seek to support to hold us, and others, to account for performance. The learning from this experience will then be used to develop a more uniform OI approach.

In addition we will:

- ensure that all parts of the OI structure are adequately resourced to develop relevant learning and accountability processes. This includes making learning and accountability processes central to all our work throughout the program cycle, and ensuring that adequate space and time are devoted to them.
- further developing the KIC project to allow effective exchange between partners and OI on good, bad and new practice within specific thematic areas.
- work to define core information needs and developing manageable systems to easily aggregate this, as well as exploring the development of peer review processes to assess affiliate quality management processes and to assess the cost effectiveness of joint OI work.
- develop joint work with those OI staff working on Gender Justice, Organizational Development and Information Technology to develop a more effective enabling environment for learning and exchange.
- develop an OI evaluation policy which includes how we will ensure that the recommendations of evaluations are addressed, decisions made accordingly, and the findings made public.

There were two other main issues raised in the evaluation which merit some comment.

Identity

The evaluation notes that Oxfam remains predominantly Euro-centric and Anglophone and recommends that the question of Oxfam's identity deserves more attention. Whilst Oxfam agrees that its identity is an important issue it would point out that 6 of its 14 members are based outside Europe and 6 are not Anglophone. However it is with exception of Oxfam Hong Kong a largely 'Northern' entity.

Oxfam does not believe that a rapid expansion of its membership to include more Southern and non Anglophone affiliates would lead to a more effective confederation or a genuinely 'International' body. However OI expects that Oxfam affiliates in India, Japan and Mexico will join the confederation by 2010.

During the period of the current plan we have expanded our participation in coalitions such as GCAP and processes like the World Social Forum. This has been influential in positioning us as a truly international organization, participating in a global movement for change. We will continue to explore new forms of alliances and creative kinds of accountability/ diverse representations, alongside limited growth in new members from among G8 and large southern countries (India, Mexico, Japan).

Focus and priority-setting

The evaluation argues that a major substantive issue concerns focus and priority-setting. They suggest that MTF and Labor work demonstrate what Oxfam can achieve when it is focused. Whilst Oxfam agrees that focus is important, particularly at a global level, it also recognizes that differences in context - especially differences in social, economic and political settings – mean that if we are to be responsive to local realities then we cannot adopt a ‘one-size fits all approach’ which we have so long criticized others for. The trick is balancing the need to focus our investment and knowledge particularly in establishing local to global levels links we seek to make e.g. on trade or labor, whilst at the same time recognizing that the means to support a poor woman to realize her rights will need different strategies in different places.

To this end Oxfam in its next plan has determined a global change agenda based on 4 change goals and a number of more focused and specific objectives to which all Oxfam’s joint work will contribute albeit in different ways in different countries and regions.

3. THE SECTORAL REVIEWS

3.1. Trade, Markets and Assets: the Make Trade Fair Campaign

OI welcomes the achievements noted in the evaluation of the MTF Campaign, notably: Oxfam’s strong analysis, lobbying and campaigning work particularly in late 2003 when it helped Southern countries act more assertively at the WTO on the Doha Declaration on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and public health, in Cancun and the Summit of the Americas; the focus on US and EU policies, and the key commodities coffee and cotton; the raising of public awareness in trade issues and the collection of more than 17 million signatures for the “Big Noise”; the Labor Rights Campaign and its combination of robust gendered analysis and argument; the linking labor, human rights and women’s rights and alliances with a focus on specific, actionable demands.

Oxfam agrees that it needs to better link local level livelihoods work with international efforts on trade and associated global issues in order to bring about sustained change. It also recognizes that processes of change at different levels have different time-scales, and that to expect major changes in people’s lives shortly after a campaign has begun is not only unrealistic but can be demoralizing. We also agree that the pathways between global change and change in people’s lives are not simple linear processes but are mediated through a range of complex political, economic and social processes at regional national, sub national and local levels. We agree that the Trading Away Our Rights element of our Labor work is a very good example of local-to-global and functionally integrated programming that demonstrates how a strong gender analysis can strengthen Oxfam’s work and make a significant contribution to gender equality. We also agree that for the rest of MTF gender is touched on in policy documents but is not strategically integrated in campaign planning.

As a result in the next OI plan Oxfam will:

- Start from a focus on people with vulnerable livelihoods and some of the main issues they face, e.g. access to and control of assets; need for more effective agricultural policy; and insecurity due to climate change, drought, conflict, etc. and then determine how best to achieve this rather than starting from a ‘functional’ perspective;

- Be much clearer about the different elements of what makes for positive change at different levels. This should include a greater emphasis on the national level processes, how best to link and create synergy between these levels, and how to empower people to take advantage of gains made in international policy arena. We will then be able to be clearer about priorities and better define the milestones we expect to reach in different time scales are;
- Make visible our work at different levels and in particular give greater recognition to work at local and national levels and start to build more critical reflection, monitoring and evaluation and effective learning across countries and regions with staff and partners through the Oxfam Novib sponsored KIC¹ project;
- Put a much greater emphasis on incorporating gender equality concerns for example through taking into account the burden of unpaid caring work between men and women; focusing on women's access to social protection and control over resources, promoting women's leadership;
- Put an even great emphasis on improving collaboration and two way dialogue both within Oxfam and with our allies and partners. We will further invest in regional and particularly country teams to consolidate their capacity for more fully incorporating them into the development of our overall strategy.

3.2 Girls' access to education

Oxfam recognizes that good quality education enables girls and boys, women and men to acquire skills and knowledge with which to lift themselves out of poverty and to allow them to live the kind of lives they value. Achieving Oxfam's aims of sustainable livelihoods, peace and security, social and political participation and identity is contingent on individuals acquiring a basic and enabling education. Oxfam's education program² contributes to these broader aims through its unique ability to bring together and address key elements of Oxfam's work – the right to be heard, governance and accountability, gender equality, the MDGs and HIV/AIDS mainstreaming.

The evaluation recognizes that our work on education can, and is, changing peoples lives and we need to capitalize on the good practices, lessons learned and experience we have developed with our partners. It is recognized that the global campaign contributed to a positive shift in the international terms of debate between 1999 and 2005, which has led to some quantifiable, positive policy outcomes on increasing primary education for girls, especially in Africa.

The evaluation makes four main recommendations, in addition to the point made about Rights Based Approaches in point 2 of the eight main headlines (see above):

- **Create greater synergies with other 'Aims' (in particular areas of gender and accountable governance)**

Oxfam welcomes the recognition of the importance of a quality education which challenges inequalities and marginalization. Each affiliate has its own models and approaches which provide a rich context for exchange and learning and we will continue to build on what we do well and the strengths of our partners and allies. We strongly endorse the need to make closer links between other Oxfam Aims and in particular to ensure that gender equality and participation are integrated into all that

¹ KIC (Knowledge Infrastructure with and for Counterparts) – a web initiative, which will be key in collaboration and learning exchange across Oxfams and their partners)

² Education Programme means programme in its broadest sense encompassing campaigning, advocacy and local programming with and through partners.

we do. Additionally we feel the need to link up our work on Education with our work on HIV/AIDS. Finally we will also be seeking to link work on economic justice and redistribution to effective financing of social services and we recognize the need to strengthen these links and promote innovative ways of working across Aims.

As a result our work in the next strategic plan will have as objectives:

1. Improved and expanded public sector capacity in poor country governments to deliver equitable and gender-balanced essential services including education.
 2. Strengthened Civil Society Organizations (including women's organizations) able to use a full range of advocacy approaches to achieve the right to essential services.
 3. Building on existing commitments, rich countries and international institutions provide further increases in funding and better policies to improve delivery of improved and equitable essential services.
 4. There is measurable change in attitudes and beliefs, formally acknowledging essential services as a right, particularly of women and disadvantaged groups as equal right holders.
- **Greater Integration of program, advocacy and campaign with fewer countries but a critical mass**

Oxfam welcomes the recommendation for greater collaboration and communications between the OI affiliates working in education. We also agree that this is more likely if we have more focused and integrated work at a country level. As part of the next plan a limited number of countries will be chosen as a key focus for our joint work.

These country strategies will be based on solid power analysis as a base for a holistic, localized strategy for policy and practice change. This should include a clear gender, rather than 'Women in Development', strategy, focused on changing the power relations between the genders. The process of defining change goals will also define the level of obligatory strategic collaboration between participating affiliates, as the evaluation suggests.

We recognize the importance of improving the integration between program work, advocacy and campaigning in all aspects of our education work – as suggested by the objectives summarized above. This integrated approach will be built on a strong power and policy analysis at all levels.

- **Keep investing in alliances (GCE, GCAP) including OI**

As part of the next plan Oxfam will continue to invest in national programs and support to the GCE. As part of the emphasis on active citizenship a main campaigning strategy and objective will be to promote civil society by working in alliances (GCE, GCAP, etc.).

- **Improved Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning mechanisms for accountability, learning and as a platform for advocacy and campaign**

Oxfam agrees that the need to capture our learning and impact is very important to develop our education program's direction and quality, as well as inform our advocacy. It is acknowledged that there is a lack of capacity in terms of monitoring practice, documentation and learning. To improve learning we need to prioritize time and resources for learning and sharing and to develop greater capacity at country level for documentation for a range of purposes including advocacy and campaigning. We need to explore and fully utilize the existing and developing

infrastructure of KIC for this, along with further development of the Oxfam International Extranet (Dashboard) for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

In addition as part of the next plan we will be developing more robust monitoring and evaluation processes as part of an increased investment in Learning and Accountability – see below.

3.3 Humanitarian response

Oxfam International welcomes the finding that there is clear evidence of progress in the coherence and quality of Oxfam's responses from Hurricane Mitch in 1998 through Gujarat (2001), Ethiopia (1998-2002) and Darfur-Chad (2004-5). We are also pleased to note that there is a clear agreement that the Humanitarian Consortium Management Group (HCMG) has been effective and that it is a big step forward and that the response to the Tsunami proved the value of what a consortium approach can deliver; that affiliates have taken possession of and make use of the Humanitarian Dossier; and that the Tsunami Fund Management Team is judged to have taken its managerial role seriously and been innovative and pragmatic in finding solutions to unprecedented problems.

The evaluation makes a number of recommendations, which we have grouped into the following categories.

- **Improving the quality and effectiveness of our response**

Oxfam recognizes that we can always improve the quality and effectiveness of our humanitarian work. As the evaluation notes this needs to involve: improving our understanding of the political and social (and in particular gender relations) contexts we work in; improving the quality and timeliness of response by developing our management capacities, increasing the availability of trained staff and helping them to build the preparedness of teams and partners and put agreed standards and systems into practice in a consistent way; establishing more effective links with state governments and agencies in certain countries; building emergency response capacity in vulnerable areas; and developing more effective monitoring and evaluation processes including more genuine accountability to those we seek to benefit.

- **Improving our internal processes**

Whilst the evaluators note some notable progress they recommend a number of areas for improvement including: making the HCMG being more permeable and improving information flows; further clarifying the necessary investments required in affiliates and in the secretariat; improving the links between humanitarian response and advocacy work; developing clearer research-based policy and guidelines on working with partners,.

As a consequence the forthcoming OI plan will place a major emphasis on improving our performance and in particular we will:

- Ensure that women are at the centre of OI humanitarian responses, having greater leadership and voice in claiming and promoting their rights in humanitarian assistance and protection. We will work directly with women's organizations in responses (wherever present & competent) making this visible in our communications.
- Build local capacity and strengthen accountable partner organizations (including new partners and allies) to enable enhanced delivery and leadership of responses of an exemplary quality and proportionate quantity.

- Promote programs driven by Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches. They will be designed and delivered, and geographically focused, on the linkages with chronically Vulnerable Livelihoods (see above) and longer-term strategies in the light of accelerating climate change and environmental degradation.
- Improve understanding and practice of Accountability to “beneficiaries”, especially to women – putting their needs and participation at the centre of our approach and linking this to more effective monitoring and evaluation.
- *We will continue to:* Adhere to quality and practice standards; Integrate delivery, influence and advocacy in our work; exemplify outstanding distinctive competence in Public Health responses.
- Further develop the OI Humanitarian Consortium to ensure effective OI humanitarian responses by Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) at country level, and build capacity within OI using Enhanced Contingency Planning as the key tool. This will align and give cohesion to HCTs, engage with partners at the local level, reinforce our analysis and response strategy and prepare ourselves for a more informed, faster and coordinated response in times of crises.
- Improve the information flow of the HCMG, which is already taking place with three concrete measures: the HCMG Dashboard folder information has been made open (public) to all Oxfam staff; a Newsletter has been put in place to link the HCMG agenda with the EMN (which includes all OI members); and through the new humanitarian position appointed last June, the Quality and Process Officer, new linkages have been established with key groups, such as LEAP, EMN and the HCMG.
- Further integrate work at program and advocacy levels through the new Strategic Plan and the Humanitarian Change Goal.. HACT and HCMG have already engaged in developing an integrated operational plan to develop this.
- Reinforce the OI Secretariat, which started in June 2006 with 1.6 FTE humanitarian staff, and there is a plan to be submitted to the EDs, to reinforce this up to a total of 5 FTE positions by 2008.
- Implement the investment plans approved last year, which is being carried out by HC affiliates with a significant growth in the allocation of humanitarian resources in Oxfam America, Intermón Oxfam and Oxfam Novib

3.4 Gender equality

This work was commissioned not so much as an evaluation as in the other areas but as research and critical reflection on the experience and practice of individual affiliates and a couple of countries where we have worked together on gender. Our intention was to be able to learn from this in order to ensure that the next OI plan was able to build upon good practice.

Oxfam notes the positive findings on gender work notably on Women and Rights Program in Central America and in the Labor Rights work in general. We also acknowledge that the evaluation confirms the earlier conclusions of the Mid Term Review that Oxfam has some good gender policies and systems but the contribution to gender equality in program development and implementation is mediocre – with a few exceptions. The study provides important insights into some effective gender work being done in affiliates but which is not joint OI work.

The evaluation recommends that Oxfam develop a confederation-wide gender equality program with the following possible areas of focus:

- Taking women’s labor rights further;
- Women’s leadership in humanitarian response;
- A focus on gender in primary education;

- Women and PRSPs;
- Women and violence.

Oxfam agrees with this recommendation and in its next plan will have a major joint program focused on Gender Justice with a focus on Women's leadership and Gender Based Violence. In addition we will see a major focus: on women's leadership in humanitarian work – see above; on women's leadership and access and control over resources in our economic justice work and on the provision by governments of gender-balanced essential services.

The evaluation also recommends that a major investment is made to build and jointly develop staff and partner capacities in integrating gender work in all sectors of program development, implementation and management. Oxfam agrees with this recommendation and as part of its Gender Justice strategy is making a commitment that by 2011 OI will have a greater institutional depth and reach on issues of gender justice and will be a more effective agent for gender-focused change. This will be achieved through a combination of learning (i.e., developing an OI body of knowledge on gender justice) and internal capacity-building.

Finally the evaluation recommends more effective confederation-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning on gender equality; the development of gender equality criteria to assess programs, partners etc (along the lines of Oxfam Novib "traffic lights" system), the establishment of explicit spending targets for gender equality, and more robust reporting on progress and setbacks at Board and ED .

Oxfam agrees that in line with a major effort to improve its learning and accountability it needs to effectively integrate gender equality and criteria into all its programs and ensure that appropriate accountability mechanisms are in place, and that as part of its reporting it needs to make explicit reference to progress made. There is however some disagreement amongst affiliates and staff about the degree to which setting spending targets for different Aims or Change Goals will be effective in promoting gender equity and whether focusing more on developing criteria for all Aims and putting in place effective accountability mechanisms may be more cost-effective.

ENDS