

A: Context, background and findings

1. The context and background of the evaluation, i.e. the purpose and scope of the evaluation.

The Creating Spaces to Take Action on Violence Against Women and Girls (“Creating Spaces”) project is a five-year (2016-2021) initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Oxfam. Its aim is to reduce violence against women and girls, including child and early forced marriage, by shifting local norms and changing laws, responding to violence by providing women and girl survivors with services and economic opportunities, and building the capacity of organizations and movements. Creating Spaces is implemented in six countries – Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Philippines – with 25 local organizations, including women’s rights organizations.

This review evaluated the success of Creating Spaces project activities through key evaluation questions on the relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the project objectives. Finally, the review is intended to address key findings and recommendations from the mid-term evaluation and any associated changes.

The overall objective of the final review is to capture lessons learned and build on Creating Spaces’ experiences. Doing so should help Oxfam Canada understand how decisions made during the project can be used to implement successful projects on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) in the future.

Specifically, the final review:

- Provided an independent assessment of the project, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Assessed project developments based on MTLR findings and recommendations.
- Identified discrepancies, if any, between Creating Spaces’ initial assumptions and actual occurrences.
- Established progress on the project’s ultimate, intermediate, and immediate outcomes.
- Indicated adjustments and changes relevant to potential future projects.
- Captured lessons learned and provide recommendations to enhance EVAWG programming.

The mixed methods evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative component involved a community survey of women and girls, an influencer survey, and community perception index (CPI). The qualitative component involved focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs) and a comprehensive document review of project documents and resources.

2. Summary main findings and recommendations

The summary of findings and recommendations of the final evaluation is organized by the core evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability as per the OECD-DAC criteria. For more details, refer to the full evaluation report.

Relevance
<p>Findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project’s design and focus on the three project’s pillars was highly relevant to the local contexts and realities in each of the implementation countries for addressing VAWG and CEFM.

2. There are clear linkages with best practice on preventing VAWG, including the importance of addressing multiple drivers of violence, such as gender and social norms, poverty, limited enforcement of laws, inequitable relationships, and attitudes which condone or justify violence.⁶
3. CS used evidence-based interventions, including working with both women and men, integrating support for survivors, combining economic and social empowerment for women, community activism to shift harmful gender attitudes, roles and social norms and couples' interventions to transform gender relations.⁷
4. Oxfam targeted women (25+), youth (15 – 24 years) and to a lesser extent, children (0-14 years).

Recommendations:

1. Clearly define target populations of other relevant intersectionalities, including adolescents, ethnic minorities, and other populations particularly vulnerable to violence to meet their diverse needs. Ensure that women are not defined as a homogenous group and strategies, messaging and activities are tailored to unique segments of the population.
2. Undertake evidence-informed intentional design process for future programming with adolescents and youth. Consider different segments of the population (10 – 14, 15 – 19, 20-24) and design tailored program interventions to meet their distinct needs, with complementary monitoring and evaluation systems to monitor progress and achievements for the different segments.
3. Clearly define influencers and other stakeholders to ensure shared understanding and consistency across program locations, specifically to distinguish between influencers and target beneficiaries.
4. Look beyond policy and legislation development and implementation to promote more systemic gender equality and protection of more marginalized women and girls from CEFM and VAWG.

Coherence

Findings:

1. There was coherence and compatibility of the interventions across the countries and organizations. External coherence was generally more evident than internal coherence.
2. Baseline studies, household surveys and FGDs with members of local communities and project staff in each country determined the focus across different pillars and the choice of activities in relation to the constraints and priorities identified for each country. Inception-phase country and cross-country workshops and consultations informed country-level strategies, project management structures, and approaches to implementation.
3. CS activities across the three pillars are well aligned with external policy commitments, and the program has maintained communication with other programs to ensure consistency and cohesion of efforts across all countries.
4. CS worked with more than 20 implementing partners, including 9 women's rights organizations. These organizations' understanding of relevant issues, including gender-budgeting, anti-trafficking laws, children's rights bills, and laws and policies related to VAWG, has helped CS country projects align their activities to country priorities and also coordinate with other organizations working on a similar agenda.

Recommendations:

1. Support greater flexibility in adapting interventions, including institutionalizing and promoting documentation of changes to the country design, including rationale. While responsive to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the flexibility was not as great earlier in the program to shift and adjust the timing of core elements of the program.
2. Improve the use of monitoring information to adjust plans and strategies to respond to the availability of new information and emerging issues through an adaptive management approach.
3. Increase opportunities for structured knowledge sharing mechanism between countries to share success, and as a platform to explore solutions to thematic issues and inform programming

Effectiveness

Findings:

1. The project has **reached approximately 363,329 direct beneficiaries** to date, of which 59.2% are women and girls⁸.
2. While sometimes difficult to ascertain the extent of change due to data challenges, the evaluation found some positive results and progress towards improving general awareness of issues related to VAWG and CEFM, and capacity building of local civil society organizations.
3. Interventions were designed as a complementary, mutually reinforcing package to prevent and respond to violence and support survivors at the individual, community, and structural levels. There was some variation in the implementation of project interventions across countries, so that the opportunity for the maximum potential impact of the project interventions was, in some cases, inconsistent across project countries.
4. CS countries reported a total of **64 public declarations and actions by influencers in Year 5 and 281 over the life of the project to end VAWG and CEFM** and in support of women's rights and leadership, surpassing project targets.
5. 110 initiatives were reported over the life of the project, ranging from the formation of monitoring/coordination committees to regulations passed at village, regional and provincial levels.
6. The project's **Community Perception Index (CPI) score increased from 0.85 at baseline to 1.32 at the end line**, illustrating an improvement in the perspective of beneficiaries on VAWG and CEFM, and women's rights.
7. **60.3% of women respondents** who participated in economic empowerment activities felt that their skills and knowledge and confidence to participate in economic activities increased.
8. **121 strategic alliances** with national and local governments, NGOs, CSOs, and mass media were formed or strengthened to address VAWG and CEFM, surpassing the project target of 26.
9. One notable design feature of CS was the promotion of a **feminist MEAL agenda and approach** – that challenged country teams to think differently about data collection tools, approaches, analysis, dissemination of findings, and use of findings for advocacy and to inform programming.

Recommendations:

1. Contextualize training and awareness-raising to respond to country/ population-specific drivers of VAWG and CEFM
2. Continued and deeper investment in women's and girls' leadership, and more strategic engagement of men and boys, building on CS successes and achievements
3. Informed and strategic investment in economic empowerment programming, with support of additional technical expertise through staffing or partnerships on women's economic empowerment
4. Comprehensive service provision and delivery to address gaps in availability and accessibility of services. Measures to address immediate and emergency needs of survivors for support, or to extend or strengthen the reach and availability of services will strengthen future programming.
5. Strategic use and capacity building around technology and digital connections to improve digital literacy and skills and address access gaps will be important for future programming and for extending the reach of programs
6. Invest in the development and implementation of comprehensive M&E tools and systems as part of project design, including measurement definitions, computation plans and documentation
7. Consider which aspects of Feminist MEAL are realistic to implement within a traditional project cycle, use of RBM tools, and donor compliance requirements.

Impact

Findings:

1. Generally, it appears the percentage of women reporting violence in project target areas is lower than that reported at baseline (30%)⁹ or in the DHS country-level values, suggesting CS may have played a role in decreasing this.
2. Across all countries, there were various examples of contributions to reducing CEFM, both in the end line reports and in KIIs, the majority through advocacy efforts conducted by individuals and influencers.
3. **59% of surveyed community beneficiaries** stated that the main benefit they gained from CS was an increase in knowledge and awareness on VAWG and CEFM.

Recommendations:

1. In addition to addressing overall root causes and drivers of VAWG and CEFM, targeted interventions should be implemented to tackle context specific elements, such as early pregnancy and the influence of key groups such as mothers-in-law. Additional efforts to identify and target nuances in the drivers of VAWG and CEFM would improve the project impact.

Sustainability

Findings:

2. Progress towards sustaining the gains made under CS has been varied across different countries and pillars.
3. KIIs with key stakeholders suggest that irrespective of the continuity of the women's groups, **knowledge obtained by women and youth through project activities will remain** and have a long-term positive influence at the household level.
4. The project's engagement of religious leaders is seen to be the most effective in promoting positive gender norms, and the anticipated longer-term, sustained impact is expected to continue to influence community and household level behaviors and gender norms beyond the life of the project.
5. Nearly 60% of women who have experienced violence who participated in project activities to improve economic opportunities expressed greater self-confidence and are expected to benefit from new knowledge and skills gained.
6. Country-level KIIs with key stakeholders and project partners, project reports and country evaluation findings indicate that activities related to capacity assessment tools and workshops with CSOs and WROs, use of information to generate evidence-based policy making, learning events including web-discussions on thematic areas on women's rights issues are expected to influence long term change.

Recommendations:

1. Continued campaigns and advocacy with influencers and local government to maintain and build on CS gains and achievements.
2. Sustainability planning and organizational capacity building of partners to foster more sustainable opportunities for women's access to services and economic empowerment opportunities.

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

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

The report has well-articulated the project implementation achievements, issues, challenges, and lessons learned in the context and realities of countries in which the project was implemented, providing realistic recommendations to be considered for future programs. However, Oxfam Canada believes the report does not fully consider how operational challenges impacted the effectiveness of programming.

Creating Spaces is a complex program addressing sensitive issues in multi-country settings with unique socio-cultural contexts was another big challenge for designing and executing the evaluation. A great effort was spent on the technical aspects of the quantitative survey design, sampling techniques including data collection, and working with the country-level consultants. Though survey tools were standardized across all the countries, different parameters were used to calculate the sample size and sampling approach per the available beneficiaries' database. This has limited the inter-country comparability of some indicators' findings.

Multiple delays due to the COVID situation made it challenging for Canadian consultants to accomplish the final report in the estimated time. Moreover, the inconsistencies in the quality of reports received from some country-level consultants limited qualitative information integrated into the final evaluation report.

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

Oxfam Canada will take the following actions:

- Disseminate the final evaluation's findings and recommendations through a learning event on November 18, 2021, with Creating Space country teams, partners, and external stakeholders
- In project design for new GBV initiatives, carefully consider different segments of the population, and design activities and strategies accordingly to meet the needs of the individual segments.
- In project design phase for new GBV initiatives, clearly define influencers and other stakeholders to ensure shared understanding and consistency across program locations, specifically to distinguish between influencers and target beneficiaries.
- Where possible in project design, link GBV activities to existing platforms in countries where service and access is strong, e.g. SRHR programs in schools, in order to leverage as much reach as possible.
- Position Oxfam as a thought-leader and expert in ending GBV by disseminating project learnings through events, communities of practice, international fora, and South-South exchanges, and conferences, working across Policy, Programs, Communications, and Fund Development for a whole-of-organization approach.
- Design, monitor, and evaluate GBV projects with recent feminist MEAL tools, in particular Oxfam Canada's Feminist MEAL Guidance Note: <https://www.oxfam.ca/publication/guidance-note-on-feminist-meal/>.
- Explore the possibility of integrating monitoring and evaluation components of projects into an online M&E system, adopted across Oxfam Canada and country offices.

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

Though the evaluation report has captured the Creating Space program implementation's comprehensiveness, Oxfam Canada would like to clarify some of the interpretation of the findings presented in the final report.

Exclusion of Beneficiaries (p.9): Indeed, the sampling framework excluded the beneficiaries below 18 years old, which was the larger composition of those engaged in the project in the Philippines and other countries. However, there was no problem in determining sample sizes, and every country used replacement samples for those hard-to-reach selected samples. Moreover, the quality of data sets has no significant relation with the exclusion of beneficiaries in the survey.

Varying data quality across countries (p.9): In the Philippines, enumerators falsified some interviews during the data collection process, and immediate corrective action measures were taken after the data verification and validation. As a result, falsified data were excluded from the final datasets, and replacement interviews were done to meet the required sample size.

Effectiveness of the Monitoring and Evaluation System (p.43): Oxfam Canada agrees with many of the statements regarding the lack of clear monitoring and evaluation systems; however, it does not fully agree with the statement coaching and mentoring were missing. From February 2019 to June 2020 Oxfam Canada's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning focal person conducted routine coaching and mentoring and personal capacity strengthening sessions with Oxfam Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, and Bangladesh staff and partner staff. Oxfam Canada acknowledges that this could be due to staff turnover, and understaffing in some cases, at the onset of the project.

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

Oxfam Canada Creating Space team reflected on the final evaluation process and noted the following lessons.

1. Have Oxfam Canada staff provide better face-to-face support to the countries team and quality monitoring during the evaluation process.
2. Include the quantitative survey design and qualitative analysis (to avoid inconsistency on the data quality received from different country-level consultants) under the lead consultant's TORs.
3. Be mindful to avoid multiple components while designing the evaluation, which complicates the evaluation process (i.e., internal Vs. external evaluation).