VALUE FOR MONEY
ASSESSMENT

OXFAM SRI LANKA

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM (ACRP3)
CAPACITY BUILDING TO CBO PARTNERS IN EASTERN SRI LANKA

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ABBREVIATIONS

AACES	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme
ATSIPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Program
ACRP3	Australian Community Rehabilitation Program Phase 3
BER	Basic efficiency resource
CBO	Community based organisation
GBV	ender-based violence
ILO	International Labour Organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MTR	Mid-term review
NGO	Non-government organisation
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
SROI	Social return on investment
ToC	Theory of Change
VDP	Village development plans
VfM	Value for Money

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OXFAM AUSTRALIA'S DEFINITION OF VALUE FOR MONEY

Oxfam Australia defines Value for Money (VfM) as "the best use of resources to contribute to positive significant change in the most vulnerable people's lives". Significant change includes:

* **consideration of scale (the number of people benefitting);**
* **depth (the intensity and sustainability of change); and**
* **inclusion (the change benefits people who are vulnerable and marginalised).**

VfM has four core dimensions referred to as the four Es:

ECONOMY	Costs and inputs — what went in?
	Reasonable cost to acquire good quality inputs that will enable realisation of the desired changes
EFFICIENCY	Inputs to outputs — what happened?
	A measure of productivity; how much you get out in relation to what is put in (increasing output for a given input, or minimising input for a given output, with a regard for maintaining quality)
EFFECTIVENESS	Outputs to outcomes — what resulted?
	Is the program generating positive and sustainable outcomes?
EQUITY	Equal inclusion of vulnerable groups
	Is the program appropriately engaging and producing equal benefits for different groups?

Within the concept of VfM the four Es are interdependent, such that VfM cannot be determined in the absence of one or more of the four Es. Oxfam's approach is weighted towards effectiveness (delivery of desired outcomes and sustained impacts) and equity (benefits are distributed fairly).

DEVELOPMENT OF A VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Oxfam Australia sought to progress its understanding of VfM and how it can be practically applied within its programs. In 2015 it engaged Michelle Besley, an independent consultant to work with three program teams to facilitate reflection on the VfM of their programs, and conduct three independent VfM assessments:

- **Oxfam in South Africa Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES)**
  capacity development support to partners component.

- **Oxfam Sri Lanka Australian Community Rehabilitation Program (ACRP3)**
  institutional strengthening support to Community Based Organisation partners in Eastern Sri Lanka component.

- **Oxfam Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Program (ATSIPP) Straight Talk**
  whole of program.

The VfM tool was developed iteratively as the assessments were undertaken by testing its application in different ways and in different contexts. Assessment was based on evidence obtained through traditional evaluation methods such as desktop reviews, stakeholder interviews and questionnaires. The process explored the use of different methods and ways to incorporate different stakeholder perspectives on the VfM of these programs. Some assessments used highly participatory methods, such as partner workshops whereby partners themselves rated Oxfam's performance, and some assessments were conducted more remotely and informed by desktop review and staff focus group discussions.

The three VfM assessment processes were tailored according to the different contexts and needs of program teams. For the Oxfam South Africa AACES and Oxfam Sri Lanka ARCP3 VfM assessments, formal assessments with ratings were undertaken. This was because these programs were nearing completion and there were internal and donor imperatives to formally assess VfM. The ATSIPP Straight Talk assessment was completed without ratings. This was because the process had a focus on learning and was carried out as the team wanted to get a sense of how the program was tracking on VfM and explore how VfM could be better incorporated into the program's upcoming re-design.

Assessment is made against two sub-criteria within each of the four Es (eight sub-criteria in total). These criteria were developed through a consideration of how VfM can best be assessed in relation to Oxfam's particular development approach and programming context. Each of these sub-criteria are then aggregated to produce an overall VfM proposition. The assessment framework recognises that an assessment can only be made on the basis of evidence; it does not make an unsubstantiated judgement due to lack of evidence or penalise programs by rating VfM as poor due to a lack of data. Rather, the assessment notes the extent to which the judgement is well supported by evidence, or if a tentative judgement is made noting gaps in data. When insufficient information is available to enable an informed judgement to be made; this is stated. As with many evaluation methodologies, the judgement is ultimately the subjective interpretation of the evaluator.

The approach recognises that Oxfam delivers programs in complex settings, and that context specific factors determine VfM options and considerations. For example, contextual factors may have implications for the different components such as costs of operating in specific countries and presence and capacity of other in-country actors that a program engages with. These factors may make it costlier or difficult to implement activities or achieve outcomes, or conversely make it more affordable and easier to implement programs and achieve outcomes. A program should therefore only be judged in relation to what it can feasibly and realistically achieve in light of these factors. The approach does not attempt to compare across contexts or programs; assessment is based on how well the program has been designed and delivered to bring about changes within its scope of control in light of the level of investment, the operating context and what alternative approaches may have been possible. Additional information on the theoretical underpinnings of the tool is provided on page 44.

VfM can be approached from a compliance and / or quality perspective. The process adopted sought to apply a VfM lens to see if this could enhance program quality and improvement. As such, the tool seeks to draw out learnings and recommendations related to the VfM of a program and how it can be improved. It also aims to strengthen the assessment of costs and investment which is often lacking in program review and help teams to better consider cost and investment options and make evidence-based VfM decisions. The process recognises that assessment of VfM can only be made if appropriate data across the four Es is available. The approach therefore uses VfM assessment as an opportunity to help teams strengthen their monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks to collect particular information to inform on VfM in the future, and better manage for VfM.

PROGRAM
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Australian Community Rehabilitation Program Phase 3 (ACRP3) is a five-year, AUD $45 million program implemented in Sri Lanka, funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). ACRP3 supports a range of projects delivered by six implementing partners including Oxfam. The goal of ACRP3 is "to increase the number of conflict-affected communities across Sri Lanka benefitting from and living a sustainable, secure and productive life."

The Oxfam ACRP3 program is titled "Empowerment of Vulnerable Communities for Livelihood Improvement, Sustainable Resettlement, Gender Justice and Inter-Ethnic Understanding". The goal of the program is to foster inter-communal harmony and gender equality and significantly reduce the political, economic and social factors that have underpinned, and could in future reignite, conflict in Sri Lanka. Under this goal, there are five outcome areas:

1. Active citizens and rights-based local structures
2. Sustainable livelihoods and food security
3. Gender equality
4. Peace-building and conflict mitigation
5. Resettlement

Oxfam's program is implemented in 12 districts in Sri Lanka across four regions: east, north, south and central. It is implemented in partnership with local community based organisations (CBOs), non-government organisations (NGOs), national networks and universities. The program period is from June 2010 to December 2015. The total program funding provided by DFAT is AUD $7 million.

The institutional strengthening of CBO partners in eastern Sri Lanka is one component of ACRP3. Oxfam's institutional strengthening work aims to "increase the number and strength of rights-focused CBOs that empower poor and marginalised women and men as active citizens and support them to claim their rights from Government and other duty bearers at the local, regional and national levels." This feeds in to the wider ACRP3 Result 1.4: Good governance for conflict transformation.

The CBOs Oxfam works with are part of community and representative of community. Within these structures, community members are supported to lead their own actions to bring benefits to their villages that are important to them. Oxfam worked to establish these same CBOs supported through ACRP3 in eastern Sri Lanka and has worked with them for the past 15 years. Directly prior to this program Oxfam worked with the same 12 CBO partners, supporting them to implement infrastructure and water projects as part of the Tsunami response. CBO partners were therefore already established and had varying levels of capacity to deliver projects.

The approach aimed to build on lessons learned from annual partner reviews and evaluations which found that Oxfam's capacity building elements and community engagement work during the tsunami response was valuable and should be taken forward. Through this approach Oxfam shifted from a focus on working with CBOs to deliver services to supporting CBOs to mobilise communities to claim their rights in a more sustainable way.

VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Due to the large scale and complexity of the program, clear parameters were put in place to make the VfM assessment manageable. This VfM assessment examines the capacity development support provided by Oxfam's CBO partners in eastern Sri Lanka. It does not aim to provide a VfM assessment across the whole ACRP3 program.

The Sri Lanka VfM assessment was conducted towards the end of the program, six months before the final evaluation was set to occur. This program was selected based on the interest and willingness of the Sri Lanka program team to be involved. The team was keen to use the process to document their work in supporting CBOs. Oxfam had made a significant investment in the intuitional strengthening of CBOs over time, but did not feel it could clearly state what that level of investment had been, and what the results of it were. It was expected that the outcomes of the VfM assessment process would give an indication of how to invest in institutional strengthening in future programs, noting that support to CBOs would lessen significantly in future programs due to funding constraints.

In accordance with Oxfam's definition of VfM, a desktop review of information available to enable an assessment of the four Es was conducted prior to the assessment. Good information was available on the activities used to strengthen CBO capacity, and the outputs and outcomes facilitated by CBOs through their active citizenship work. However, there was a lack of data available on the capacity of CBO partners, and how this had changed over time in relation to Oxfam's support, and specific outcomes sought in relation to CBO capacity were not specified. There was no detailed Theory of Change for the capacity building component. This created challenges in assessing VfM as it was not completely clear what the capacity building work was aimed to achieve in terms of specific levels of capacity — and what these were prior to and after the program, and what success was expected to look like and how this would be measured at the end of the program.

In order to collect information about how efficiently and effectively Oxfam had strengthened CBO partners' capacity over the course of the program and fill this information gap, a one-day workshop was held with all Eastern CBO partners in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka facilitated by the assessor and the Oxfam Sri Lanka Program Quality Advisor. Approximately 30 participants were present at the workshop representing each CBO. During the workshop partners discussed and reflected on the concept of VfM. A range of participatory activities were facilitated to support partners to document their change journeys and Oxfam's role in supporting these, and provide feedback relating to the appropriateness and effectiveness of Oxfam's capacity building support including providing ratings.

A draft Theory of Change was developed before the field visit based on a review of program documentation which was to be tested with staff and finalised in the assessment. The CBO partner workshop raised some interesting issues and questions about the program's Theory of Change and the purpose and planned outcomes of Oxfam's institutional strengthening support which had implications for assessing VfM. These were then presented to Oxfam staff at a VfM workshop in Colombo in which staff discussed issues and findings and reflected on the VfM of the program to date and how it could be enhanced in the final stage and in subsequent programs. An assessment process overview flowchart is provided in Annex 2.

Some challenges were identified in relation to the data collection process. At the time of program design and implementation key principals of VfM had not been integrated into data collection and information management. For example, while financial data was available, it was difficult to separate how much was allocated for institutional capacity building of CBO organisations, and how much was allocated for community capacity building, and the amount spent on the different inputs. CBO partner level financial and program information was not adequately available and was difficult to trace from the national level. Furthermore, when the partner VfM workshop was held, the ACRP3 program was coming to an end, with most partners anxious about the uncertainty of the upcoming program closure in which they had not secured further funding.

Pottery production of HRDF.

PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The overall VfM of the program has been rated as good. The program has performed strongly in the areas of economy, effectiveness, and equity and fairly in terms of efficiency. The CBO partners engaged and invested in and resources and inputs used to build capacity for active citizenship have been appropriately located. Working through CBOs has allowed Oxfam to work with the poorest of the poor, have a large reach and ensure strong engagement of different ethnic groups across the program.

CBO partners have proven committed to the partnership and program, participating in a range of capacity building initiatives. This has supported them to become effective change agents and indicates that Oxfam has selected the right partners who are best placed to make change. As CBOs are governed and led by community, community members have taken ownership and responsibility for the projects they implement and their results. CBO staff positions are held be community members who are not skilled development professionals. This has meant that they require a higher level of capacity building support to enable them to effectively design, implement, and monitor their projects. While this approach is relatively slower and longer, it has been essential to building community capacity. Oxfam's CBO model is cost effective as CBOs have an extensive reach within communities and have lower operating costs when compared to NGOs and private sector entities.

Oxfam has primarily delivered its capacity building support internally through staff and community trainers. This is a relatively low cost operating model and has supported the development of local training capacity that will continue to be held within communities. The structure of the CBO model which works through committees and small groups is efficient in that it provides a mechanism to bring large numbers of people together to conduct training such as rights awareness, leadership and gender equality. Some inefficiencies have been created through Oxfam's annual planning processes and internal agency-wide review processes which diverted focus from program delivery and consistent engagement with CBO partners. The program has leveraged well internally by drawing on the knowledge and skills of staff, CBO partners and community members but has missed opportunities to draw on the ideas, skills, funds and resources of other individuals and organisations within Sri Lanka in its institutional strengthening work.

The capacity development inputs provided through the program have significantly increased the capacity of CBO partners who now have stronger organisational structures and program management practices, and a strong understanding of rights, gender, peace-building processes and social accountability. CBOs now have a demonstrated ability to campaign and engage with and effectively advocate to government. The program has substantively increased the number of poor and marginalised women and men who are empowered to claim their rights. There is clear evidence that the program has brought about positive systematic change in engagement between community and government, with several examples of communities successfully claiming their rights through collective action.

While outcomes in community capacity are expected to be sustainable and the program has been well designed to support sustainability by supporting community-led project design, implementation and monitoring and by building community capacity incrementally, challenges exist in relation to the institutional sustainability of CBO partners who currently do not have the resources required to continue their operations once the program period ends. There is opportunity in the final phase of the program to strengthen CBO networks at a district level and help CBO entities to become financially independent and sustainable. If CBOs do not become sustainable, there is a risk that some of Oxfam's investment in institutional strengthening will not realise its expected value or impact.

The program has had a strong and integral focus on ensuring equity, with gender equity being a stand out feature of the program. Specific investment has gone into building women's capacity due to their marginalisation and exclusion. Oxfam's approach to peace-building within active citizenship which supports people from different ethnic groups to come together to identify and tackle common issues has been highly effective in building trust and ethnic cohesion. Greater investment could have been directed towards supporting CBOs to ensure the equitable inclusion of people with disability in active citizenship processes, in addition to their achievements in lobbying for people with disability to receive government entitlements that have ensured they benefit from active citizenship work.

KEY LEARNINGS

- **By directing investment at the community level** rather than to an intermediary, the skills and knowledge of community are strengthened and remain in the community after the end of the program.
- **Having the same Oxfam staff located regionally to provide ongoing support** keeps costs low and supports the partnership, but can limit new and external skills, perspectives and expertise from being brought in.
- **Oxfam's "guiding role" in the first phase of the program,** in terms of supporting CBOs to reach the most vulnerable groups and strengthen the unity among different ethnic groups, was regarded as critical by CBOs in supporting them to make change.
- **Connecting CBOs with other CBOs and organisations through campaigns and networks** at village, divisional, district and national levels (for joint learning, campaigning and programming) has been critical to strengthening advocacy and maximising impact.
- **Targeting investment directly to rural and disadvantaged women** to build individual knowledge and motivation to act, coupled with strategies to create an enabling environment, has been an effective strategy.
- **Expectations of sustainability were not clear from the outset;** it was important to distinguish between sustainability of community capacity and sustainability of CBO entities, identify which the program was trying to bring about and why, and what needed to be put in place for this to occur.
- Oxfam has built CBOs as "mini-Oxfams" in terms of their organisational structures, mandates and objectives rather than supporting community structures to emerge organically. Sustainability needs to be factored in from the outset; the ways in which **Oxfam's partnership approach affects sustainability** needs to be considered in addition to the program strategies used to foster sustainability.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM PERIOD:

- **Continue to strengthen CBO networks at a district level** and support CBOs to link with other actors and function more independently.
- **Support CBOs to profile themselves and their work and network with relevant agencies** (ie government, international NGOs, UN and private sector entities).
- **Map the positions community members have taken up within government structures and how they are holding government to account** to ensure the program can demonstrate the extent and scale of sustainability of community capacity for active citizenship.
- **The final evaluation offers an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive picture** of the impact of the program and the extent to which different vulnerable groups have benefited and participated (ie numbers of people from different ethnic groups and numbers of people with disability participating in and benefiting from active citizenship).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING:

- **Explore alternative models, strategies and associated costings** to build capacity and provide a strong rationale for the options selected.
- **Develop a five-year capacity building framework** that is strongly linked to the Theory of Change, thus saving time taken up by lengthy planning processes and giving Oxfam and partners time to focus effort in other areas, and ensure support is well directed in relation to clear end goals.
- **Revisit and clarify the Theory of Change at a midway point** to see if resources are being appropriately directed to ensure realisation of end goals (ie sustained community capacity for active citizenship).
- **Collect data which tracks Oxfam's investment in and contribution towards facilitating equity** and shows how Oxfam and CBO partners are determining and prioritising support to progress aspects of equity.

FULL
VALUE FOR MONEY
ASSESSMENT

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program name:	Australian Community Rehabilitation Program (ACRP3)
Program type:	Capacity building in active citizenship
Region:	South Asia
Country:	Sri Lanka (Eastern Sri Lanka)
Program period:	5 years (2010-2015)
Stage in program cycle:	6 months before program end
Theory of change in place:	A Theory of Change was available for the overall program, but not for the capacity building support component
Total program cost:	AUD $7 million over 5 years
Program component cost:	AUD $295,003
Goal of program:	Increase the number and strength of rights focused CBOs that empower poor and marginalised women and men as active citizens and support them to claim their rights from government and other duty bearers at the local, regional and national levels.
Investment located (Individual, community, NGO):	Community - community based organisations (CBO)
Annexes	1. Theory of Change for CBO component 2. Assessment process flowchart 3. Program costs and inputs, outputs and outcomes

OVERALL VFM RATING
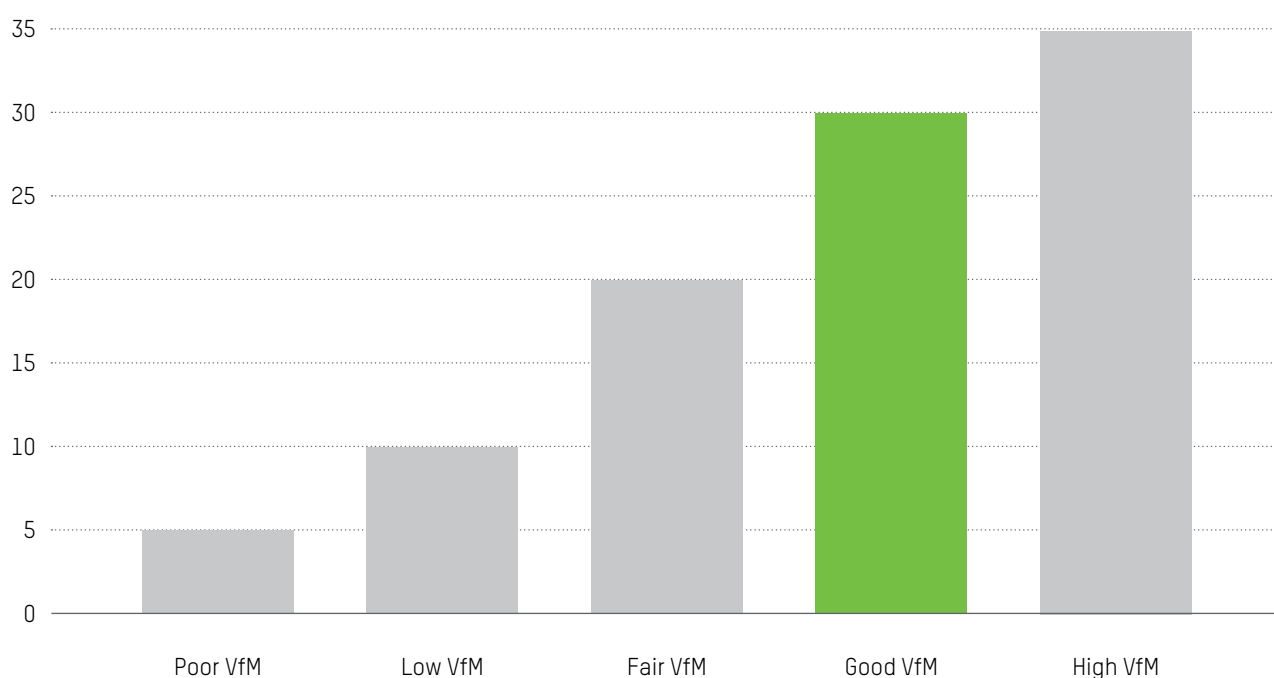
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The overall VfM of the program has been rated as good. The program has performed strongly in the areas of economy, effectiveness, and equity, and fairly in terms of efficiency as illustrated in the graph below.

The partners invested in and resources used to build capacity for active citizenship have been appropriately located. Working through CBOs has allowed Oxfam to work with the poorest of the poor, have a large reach and ensure strong engagement of different ethnic groups across the program. Because CBOs are part of the communities they are supporting they are not viewed negatively by the government, as an "external" influencing organisation may be, and have greater legitimacy. Oxfam's CBO model is highly cost effective as CBOs have an extensive reach within communities and have low operating costs when compared to NGOs and private sector entities. Oxfam has primarily delivered its capacity building support internally through staff and community trainers which has been a relatively low cost operating model and has supported the development of local capacity that will continue to be held within communities.

The structure of the CBO model which works through committees and small groups is highly efficient in that it provides a mechanism to bring large numbers of people together to conduct training such as rights awareness, leadership and gender equality. Some inefficiencies have been created through Oxfam's annual planning processes and internal agency-wide review processes which diverted focus from program delivery and consistent engagement with CBO partners. The program has leveraged well internally by drawing on the knowledge and skills of staff, CBO partners and community members but has not seized opportunities to draw from the knowledge, skills and perspectives of external stakeholders.

The capacity development inputs provided through the program have significantly increased the capacity of CBO partners who now have stronger organisational structures and program management practices, and a strong understanding of rights, gender, peace-building processes and social accountability. Importantly, CBOs now have a demonstrated ability to campaign and engage with and effectively advocate to government. There is opportunity in the final phase of the program to strengthen CBO networks at a district level and help CBO entities to become financially independent and sustainable. The program has substantively increased the number of poor and marginalised women and men who are empowered to claim their rights. There is clear evidence that the program has brought about positive systematic change in engagement between community and government, with several examples of communities successfully claiming their rights through collective action.

The program has had a strong and integral focus on ensuring equity, with gender equity being a stand out feature of the program. Specific investment has gone into building women's capacity due to their marginalisation and exclusion. Oxfam's approach to peace-building within active citizenship which supports people from different ethnic groups to come together to identify and tackle common issues has been highly effective in building trust and ethnic cohesion. Greater investment could have been directed towards supporting CBOs to ensure the equitable inclusion of people with disability in their active citizenship structures, in addition to their achievements in lobbying for people with disability to receive government entitlements.

SUMMARY OF VFM COMPONENT RANKINGS
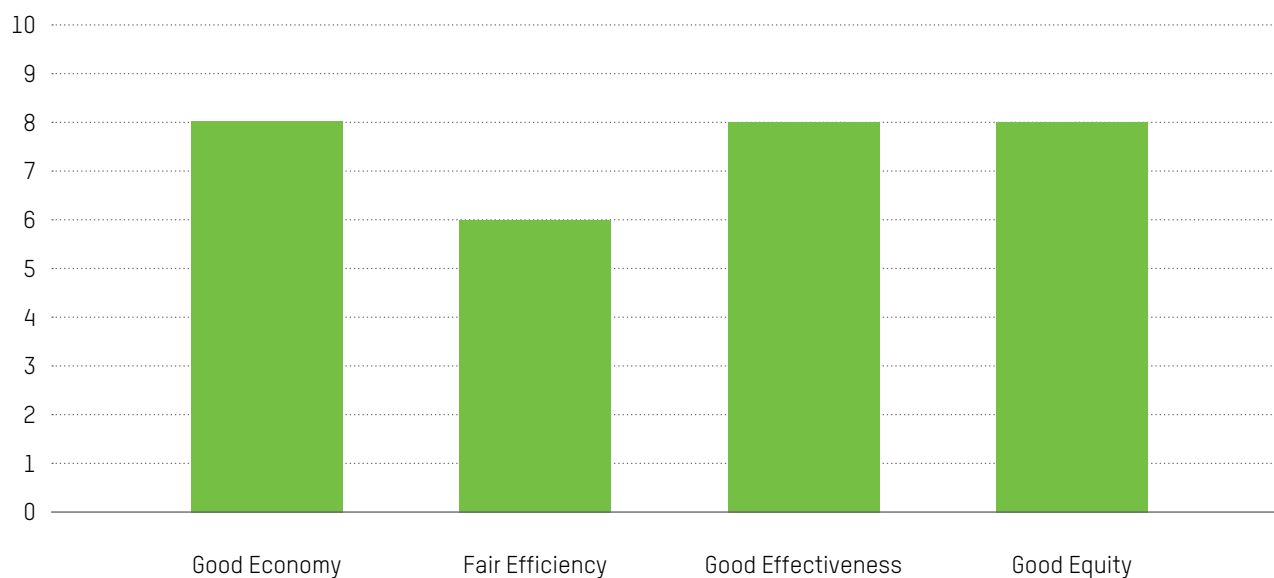
ECONOMY GOOD (5/6)	**5**	**POOR EVIDENCE**
Sub-component 1: theory of change	2/3	judgement made on best available data,
Sub-component 2: competitiveness	3/3	not well supported by evidence
EFFICIENCY FAIR (4/6)	**4**	**AVERAGE EVIDENCE**
Sub-component 1: productivity	2/3	tentative judgement made on the
Sub-component 2: leveraging	2/3	balance of evidence, noting some gaps
EFFECTIVENESS GOOD (9/12)	**9**	**EXCELLENT EVIDENCE**
Sub-component 1: reach and depth of change	6/6	informed judgement well supported
Sub-component 2: sustainability	3/6	by a range of quality evidence
EQUITY GOOD (9/12)	**9**	**POOR EVIDENCE**
Sub-component 1: equity of process	3/6	Judgement made on best available data,
Sub-component 2: equity of outcomes	6/6	not well supported by evidence

COMPONENT 1: ECONOMY
(COSTS AND INPUTS: WHAT WENT IN?)

Reasonable cost to acquire good quality inputs that will enable realisation of the desired changes

Relevant contextual factors and implications for investment options
- CBOs were located in one region — they could be brought together fairly easily at low cost.
- CBOs were located in rural areas — limited external institutional strengthening resources were available in region.
- Groups and committees were comprised of people from different ethnic groups after the conflict — forming cohesive structures took substantial time and effort.
- CBOs received grants for service delivery during the tsunami response — they had a "service provider delivery approach" and it took a significant amount of time during the first two years to shift towards a focus on rights and active citizenship.

ECONOMY SUB-CATEGORY 1: THEORY OF CHANGE

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

Has Oxfam invested in the "right" types of partners to achieve the change sought?

Oxfam worked with 12 CBO partners in eastern Sri Lanka to deliver its ACRP3 program. CBOs are part of communities in that they are governed by community committees and exist within a larger community structure which aims to ensure their activities are responsive to and representative of community needs and priorities. Because CBOs are part of the communities they are supporting they are not viewed negatively by the government as an external influencing organisation may be and have greater legitimacy. Working directly with community has allowed Oxfam to direct the majority of its investment to community, rather than to an intermediary (ie an NGO) which has been more cost-effective. It has also ensured the capacity generated through the investment will remain within community. The approach has ensured buy-in and ownership within communities which is demonstrated by the number of active community members.

The partners selected operate in a range of different communities and each CBO has a large reach; one CBO typically operates in approximately 6–16 villages and reaches between 800–1,500 families. This has allowed Oxfam to work with the poorest of the poor and ensure strong engagement of different ethnic groups across the program. Working with CBO partners has allowed Oxfam to program in relation to its own strength and value-add of facilitating understanding of rights and accountability, gender equity and inclusion, and creating opportunities for others to come together, discuss, reflect and learn. A high level of trust and understanding was in place between Oxfam and partners before the program began, resulting in an effective partnership. CBO partners have proven committed to the partnership and program, participating in a range of capacity building initiatives and program learning processes. This has allowed them to become effective change agents and indicates that Oxfam has selected the right partners who are best placed to make change, and supported them to do so.

Has Oxfam used the "right" resources to support the changes sought? (Has it invested appropriately and sufficiently?)

Oxfam's inputs to build community capacity for active citizenship have been well targeted. Inputs that have produced this capacity include training on rights, leadership and governance, and ongoing mentoring and support to CBOs and committees to analyse, plan, mobilise and advocate. This is evidenced by the large numbers of community members who are engaged in constructive collective action (resulting in improved access to services in several instances).

One of the most commonly cited challenges experienced by CBOs was engaging with government and obtaining approval of their Village Development plans and action plans. Oxfam's inputs to support CBOs to register at the district level, to create opportunities for them to link with and engage government, and to help them work collaboratively with government were regarded as critical by CBOs. All CBO action plans were approved by government, with CBOs noting that they now have the respect of government, which has been central to their ability to effect change.

At the time of assessment, most CBOs were not regarded as sustainable as they could not operate without other forms of financial support and do not have the capacity to write proposals in English to obtain funding, or other means to generate income. At the Oxfam staff VfM workshop, staff indicated that in hindsight it may not have been necessary for CBO structures to be sustainable for the community capacity for active citizenship built through the program to endure. This raises questions about the appropriateness of some resources directed to support CBO's organisational development and sustainability.

LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What learnings does the program hold for constructing the Theory of Change and ensuring investment is appropriately aligned?

- **Playing an unbranded role and working through CBOs is an advantage of Oxfam's active citizenship approach** — because CBOs are part of the communities they are supporting they are not viewed negatively by the government as "external" organisations are and have greater legitimacy.
- **By directing investment at the community level** rather than to an intermediary, the skills and knowledge of community are strengthened and remain in the community after the end of the program.
- **Oxfam has built CBOs as "mini-Oxfams"** (in terms of organisational structures, mandates and objectives) rather than supporting community structures to emerge organically. **Sustainability needs to be factored in from the outset;** the ways in which **Oxfam's partnership approach affects sustainability** needs to be considered in addition to the program strategies used to foster sustainability.
- It is important to understand and clearly **conceptualise the links between community organisational structures and community itself**, and invest in building the knowledge and skills of community members themselves in case those structures are dismantled, in order to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could resources be better directed to achieve the program's intended outcomes?

- It may have been better to have **allowed the direction and form of local partner entities and Oxfam's role in supporting and shaping these to have emerged more organically** in relation to the Sri Lankan context.
- **Clarifying the distinction between CBO capacity and community capacity and the links between them** in the Theory of Change would have clarified the program's intent.
- **Resources may have been better directed if the Theory of Change was clarified and tested in collaboration with communities and alternatives** (in relation to CBO organisational formation/development) explored at the beginning of the program by researching other local models in Sri Lanka.
- **Revisiting and clarifying the Theory of Change at a midway point** may have helped to see if resources were being appropriately directed, to ensure sustained community capacity for active citizenship.

ECONOMY SUB-CATEGORY 2: COMPETITIVENESS

Have costs been kept reasonably low while maintaining quality? (Outline in relation to other comparable options available to support the same changes OR the way in which the program has been implemented so reducing or increasing costs/inputs).

Oxfam's CBO model is cost effective as CBOs have an extensive reach within communities and have low operating costs when compared to NGOs and private sector entities. In the eastern region, 12 CBOs work in 25 Divisional Secretariats in around 147 villages with around 11,700 people. Oxfam has primarily delivered its capacity building support internally through staff and community trainers which has been a relatively low cost operating model.

Costs are being rated as comparably low based on the following factors:

1. Support was provided by Oxfam staff and community trainers;
2. Capacity building support was provided by local staff who are located in-region, making staff travel costs low; and
3. Most capacity building was provided locally, meaning partners did not often travel to Colombo to receive training.

As the outcome of building collective community capacity for active citizenship has been built, it appears that the resources and inputs allocated were sufficient.

What learnings are provided for managing/sourcing the funds required and ensuring the most economical use of funds?

- **Having the same Oxfam staff located regionally to provide ongoing support** keeps costs low and supports the partnership, but can limit new and external skills, perspectives and expertise from being brought in.
- **Using community mobilisers and training CBO staff** (who are from the communities they serve) keeps costs low but also serves to develops the skills and knowledge of community members and supports sustainability.

How can funding arrangements and management of costs be improved?

- **Exploring options for bringing in external expertise and ideas for aspects of program design and delivery** of CBO capacity building activities — while this may be costlier it could have extended impact.
- Being able **to demonstrate that the program has explored alternative strategies and associated costings** to build capacity and providing a strong rationale for the options selected would enhance the program's ability to demonstrate Value for Money.

ECONOMY RATING

OVERALL ECONOMY RATING: GOOD ECONOMY 5/6
(2 poor economy, 3 low economy, 4 fair economy, **5 good economy**, 6 high economy)

	THEORY OF CHANGE: 2/3		COMPETITIVENESS: 3/3
	How well has the program directed resources to bring about planned outcomes?		Have costs been kept reasonably low while maintaining quality?
U	It is not clear if resources have been closely linked to outcomes; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear if resources have been kept low and quality maintained; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Investment directed to achieve changes is largely inappropriate	1	Program costs are either unreasonably high or too low affecting quality
2	**Some forms of investment directed to achieve changes are appropriate, with scope for improvement**	2	Some forms of investment are reasonable, some costs could have been reduced/redirected
3	Investment directed to achieve changes is largely appropriate	3	**Investment is largely reasonable and quality maintained**

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	**Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence**
Average evidence:	Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps
Excellent evidence:	Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment:
  - Program budgets
  - Oxfam staff workshop in Colombo
  - Program design document and program reports
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment:
  - Oxfam staff provided strong analysis and reflection during a workshop which enabled a clearer analysis of the program's Theory of Change and how resources should be linked to it. Staff analysed gaps identified through the partner workshop and formulated ways in which they could potentially be addressed during the remainder of the program.
- Note gaps in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment:
  - Research into other models in which community capacity has emerged in Sri Lanka would help support a more accurate judgement in this area. Staff indicated that the CBO organisational structure was imposed by Oxfam and did not necessarily emerge "organically" and may not be appropriate. Without a counterfactual, it is not possible to know if this is the case or not. It could also be posited that Oxfam needed a "structure" to direct resources through, meaning costs were not wasted. Information on other models would support assessment in this area.
  - A more detailed breakdown of capacity building activities and their associated costs would make it easier to compare and determine different ways in which the same activities could be delivered and would encourage contestability.
  - Staff investment/costs were not provided — while staff noted that their support activities took large amounts of time, it is not clear how much time was involved and its cost, making it difficult to compare and evidence economy and consider if/how staff time could be better directed.

Bag producing group.

PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam

COMPONENT 2: EFFICIENCY
(INPUTS TO OUTPUTS: WHAT HAPPENED?)

A measure of productivity — how much you get out in relation to what is put in (increasing output for a given input, or minimising input for a given output, with a regard for maintaining quality)

Relevant contextual factors and implications for efficiency
- CBOs previously functioned as service providers; they were not linked to small groups and did not have well established community accountability functions embedded.
- CBOs did not previously engage closely with and advocate to government; this was a new way of working and required a new skill set.
- CBOs were formed to have similar structures and mandates — support could be streamlined.
- CBOs were not registered at a district level, were not formally recognised or integrated and linked in with government structures.
- Oxfam went through two organisational change processes during the program (Single Management Structure and Oxfam 2020) which required staff to contribute to these processes.

EFFICIENCY SUB-CATEGORY 1: PRODUCTIVITY

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How has the project created efficiencies?

Oxfam has created efficiencies by allowing CBO partners to communicate in their own language (project proposals, training and reports) and by providing targeted support in relation to CBO needs and capacity. Oxfam tailored its capacity building support to individual CBO needs, but also streamlined support to multiple CBOs where common needs were identified. This has enabled CBOs to learn and apply knowledge and skills at their own pace and in relation to their own needs. CBO staff are formed from community members who are not skilled development professionals. This has meant that they require a higher level of capacity building support to enable them to effectively design, implement, and monitor their projects. While this approach is relatively slower and longer, it has been essential to building community capacity.

As Oxfam eastern regionally-based support staff work with the same communities and partners over several years, staff have a good understanding of the local context and most have established strong relationships with CBO partners over time, providing responsive support and ongoing mentoring. The commitment of Oxfam staff to supporting and nurturing CBOs is clear and has been essential to a productive and efficient partnership. The structure of the CBO model which works through committees and small groups is highly efficient in that it provides a structure through which to bring large numbers of people together to conduct training such as rights, leadership and gender. Given the large number of people that are now aware of their rights and are actively participating in groups, it does appear that the scope and level of outputs are significant (12 CBO partners have formed over 600 small groups comprising of approximately 5,000 women and 700 men). The range of advocacy actions taking place indicate that community understanding of rights and motivation to act is strong.

How has the project created inefficiencies?

It was reported by staff that a lot of time was spent by both staff and partners planning on an annual basis and that that this process could have been simplified to save time, without compromising program quality. Partners recognised the value of Oxfam's monitoring process and annual reflection workshops in helping them to learn and improve; they also stated that these processes had been inconsistent and diminished during the last phase of the program along with regular communication. Oxfam staff agreed with this observation, commenting that they were required to contribute more time to agency change processes whereby focus was diverted from ACRP3 program delivery and their engagement with partners. This indicates that staff were not allocated sufficient time to perform their roles during this period.

LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about trying to produce certain outputs in relation to the context and program type and the implications of this for investment?

- **Supporting organisations to shift from a service provider to a rights-based approach** takes time and is slow paced, requiring ongoing and phased inputs.
- **The partnership between Oxfam and CBOs was built on previous years of engagement** whereby Oxfam and CBOs had a high level of trust and commitment to the partnership. This supported Oxfam and partners to develop established ways of working to bring about program outcomes.
- **Oxfam has regionally based staff which allows for regular face-to-face engagement with partners;** this has supported Oxfam and partners to develop a good understanding of CBO capacity building needs. Oxfam also **instituted a practice of partner self-assessment** to ensure partners articulate their needs from their own perspectives and Oxfam's support is aligned and welcomed.
- **Regular engagement between Oxfam and partners,** through ongoing monitoring and annual reflection workshops, has enabled partners to voice their issues and perspectives to Oxfam and ensure capacity building support is relevant to them.

RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could Oxfam produce more or better outputs with a commensurate level of investment?

- Efficiencies could have been created by **developing a five-year capacity building framework** strongly linked to the Theory of Change — thus saving time taken up by lengthy planning processes and giving Oxfam and partners time to focus effort in other areas and ensure support is well directed in relation to clear end goals.
- **Engaging staff selectively in internal agency change processes** and ensuring they are still able to perform their roles, and/or bringing in additional support to protect program delivery, would ensure program quality and productive relationships with partners are maintained.

EFFICIENCY SUB-CATEGORY 2: LEVERAGING

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How well has Oxfam strategically used and mobilised resources (i.e. the ideas, skills, funds and resources of other individuals/organisations, and its own skills, knowledge and networks)? Outline how it has leveraged and missed opportunities to leverage.

Some leveraging occurred during the program which enhanced outcomes beyond the scope of the upfront investment. Oxfam has leveraged well internally (drawing on the knowledge and skills of staff, partner and community) but has perhaps missed opportunities to benefit from external stakeholders.

In the VfM partner feedback workshop, partners reported the value of the learning and sharing facilitated by Oxfam through partner learning forums and exchange visits. These opportunities provided partners with the opportunity to contribute their own knowledge and skills to each other's development. Partners commented that through the approach taken, a pool of training resources had been created in different areas (ie Systematic Rice Intensification, gender, skills development and leadership) that is now held by communities. The community groups and volunteer structure is a core element of the CBO model; there are approximately 11,700 people working on a voluntary basis. The program is based upon this large amount of community support, which has been well leveraged through the program.

Oxfam's approach embedded active citizenship in partners' sectoral projects (ie livelihoods and gender), funded through ACRP3. This approach has given a focus to advocacy efforts and has supported partners to achieve gains in other areas such as women's leadership and inclusion. This in turn has resulted in CBOs becoming well respected by government. Arguably, if CBOs had just been supported to facilitate community awareness and action without this being attached to other programs, they would not have produced such a high level of outcomes.

Three main opportunities for leveraging were missed:

1. CBOs were not supported to link with others to secure other funds early on in the program;
2. External stakeholders were not engaged to provide technical support to CBO partners;
3. The program did not maintain working links with many of those trained by the program.

LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about trying to leverage in relation to the context and program type?

- **Linking active citizenship to CBO partners' sectoral projects** has made active citizenship work relevant and enhanced sectoral projects.
- **The design of the program and focus on collective learning and sharing between partners** has been essential to maximising program efficiency and effectiveness.
- **The level of trust built among CBO partners through the program has supported learning;** partners have engaged openly and constructively and some have gone on to form partnerships to campaign together on specific issues.

RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could Oxfam have better leveraged?

- **Oxfam could have supported CBO partners to link with others to secure additional funds early on in the program**; this would have enabled alternative funding to be leveraged to enhance ACRP3 projects, potentially extending the outcomes of Oxfam's investment and increasing the capacity and sustainability of CBOs.
- **Oxfam could have trialed a mechanism to engage external stakeholders** such as individuals, organisations and private sector entities to provide technical support to CBO partners. This would have enabled the program to draw on external perspectives which may have offered different ways of building community capacity.
- **Putting a system in place to keep the people whose capacity had been enhanced connected to the program** may have enabled Oxfam to retain valuable resources and leverage new skills and knowledge gained by stakeholders to benefit the program.
- **Oxfam Sri Lanka could perhaps have better leveraged internally within the confederation**, such as by drawing on Oxfam Australia's support in documenting its CBO model.

EFFICIENCY RATING

OVERALL EFFICIENCY RATING: FAIR EFFICIENCY 4/6
(2 poor efficiency, 3 low efficiency, **4 fair efficiency**, 5 good efficiency, 6 high efficiency)

	PRODUCTIVITY: 2/3 How well have efficiencies been created during program implementation?		LEVERAGING: 2/3 How well has the program strategically mobilised resources?
U	It is not clear how the way in which the program was implemented has supported efficiency; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear what leveraging occurred; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Program implementation was largely inefficient, affecting program quality	1	No/very limited leveraging occurred
2	**Some efficiencies have been created by the way in which the program has been implemented, with room for improvement**	**2**	**Some leveraging occurred and some opportunities for leveraging were missed**
3	The ways in which the program has been implemented have been largely efficient and supported program quality	3	Strong leveraging occurred, extending and enhancing outputs

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence
Average evidence:	**Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps**
Excellent evidence:	Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment:
  - One-day VfM CBO partner workshop
  - Focus Group Discussion with Oxfam regional staff in eastern Sri Lanka
  - Workshop with all Oxfam program staff in Colombo
  - Program design document
  - Program reports and reviews
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment:
  - Community capacity related outputs — the number and scale of outputs have been well documented, ie the number of groups formed and the percentage of people participating in collective action. This provides a clear picture of what CBOs have been able to achieve and what capacity related outputs are required to bring about change in this area and provides a baseline and benchmark comparator for future work.
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment:
  - CBO capacity outputs — organisational capacity has been built in different areas (based on partner feedback and Oxfam monitoring), yet the levels of this are not clear (as there is no baseline or documentation to indicate specific changes in capacity). Having this information would give a clearer picture of the level of inputs it has taken to achieve changes in levels of capacity and allow gaps and ways in which resources can be re-directed to be identified. MEL would have been stronger if it had clearly depicted how specific capacity building outputs were expected to produce specific outcomes necessary to facilitate effective collective action.
  - There is a lack of information outlining how many times inputs occurred (ie it is not clear how many exchange visits were conducted and how much these cost); if these amounts were documented it would have been easier to see if there was opportunity to redirect costs as the project developed, to ensure it supported the most critical outputs to be realised.
  - While indicators for organisational capacity building were established and reported against, these were general (ie number of organisations and groups strengthened level from A to B). The MEL framework does not detail the specific outputs in relation to organisational capacity that are needed to be achieved, or how and why specific outputs are necessary to facilitate community capacity for active citizenship. There is also no baseline to enable comparison of CBO capacity prior to and after the program. Staff and partners reported that prior to the project, communities were not aware of their rights.

Vegetable cultivation group.

PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam

COMPONENT 3: EFFECTIVENESS
(INPUTS TO OUTPUTS: WHAT HAPPENED?)

Is the program generating positive and sustainable outcomes?

Relevant contextual factors and implications for effectiveness

- Different CBOs were working with particular religious and ethnic groups.
- The Sri Lankan civil war had created deep divides and tensions between ethnic groups, meaning levels of collaboration and communication between people of different ethnic groups were low.
- CBOs were not connected regionally or nationally.

EFFECTIVENESS SUB-CATEGORY 1: REACH AND DEPTH OF CHANGE

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

Did the program bring about the outcomes it had sought to?

The capacity development inputs provided through the program have significantly increased the capacity of CBO partners in a range of ways. CBO partners have stronger organisational structures and a strong understanding of rights, gender, peace-building processes and social accountability. As a matter of course, partners establish grievance mechanisms and community engagement processes for all projects. Several partners reported that they publish their project costs, activities and the numbers and kinds of groups that have benefited within communities to ensure transparency. CBOs are better able to design, manage, monitor and report on projects. Group members (community members supported directly by the program) are making decisions independently, playing an active role in participating in projects, playing governance roles and holding CBO staff to account. Individual members (women and men) have an understanding of their rights to access government services (that they previously did not), and are motivated to participate and act.

CBOs now have a demonstrated ability to campaign and engage with and advocate to government. In a partner workshop, some CBO staff members commented that they still do not have sufficient capacity to work as a network at the district level. While Oxfam has provided support in this area, the primary focus has been to build the capacity of individual CBOs and support them to effectively engage their communities. It is not clear when Oxfam shifted to supporting and strengthening the links between CBOs at different levels and if this approach was planned from the beginning. It has, however, proven to be a critical step in supporting CBOs and communities to collectivise to strengthen their impact. The program has produced a range of tangible outcomes as a result of collective advocacy processes. People have successfully claimed their rights, receiving access to entitlements, existing services they were previously excluded from, new services — such as gender-based violence (GBV) desks — and land titles as outlined in Annex 4. The program has facilitated a high level of collaboration and trust between people from different ethnic groups, which is significant given the post-war context in which the program was implemented.

Did the program produce reasonable reach (numbers of people benefiting) and depth of change (systematic change) in relation to the level of investment?

The outcomes facilitated through the program are being rated as high due to the scale of people who have benefited and the significance of change facilitated. To date, in the east the program has reached approximately 11,702 people from 147 villages who are now working together to discuss their priority issues. 50% of people in small groups (2,500 women and 350 men) are actively participating in advocacy initiatives. If no such action was occurring prior to the program (as implied in documentation), this scale is impressive.

The depth and level of changes are also significant as mechanisms and systems have been put in place to support ongoing and constructive engagement between communities and government (evidenced by government integration of Village Development Plans, and CBO committee members' formal participation in administrative structures and on government committees). These outcomes indicate structural changes relating to community/government engagement. Government has demonstrated responsiveness, by making several services accessible to community members who were previously excluded as a result of CBO advocacy. The "small group" structure has also proved to be an effective mechanism which supports people to come together to discuss issues, plan and organise action. The local structures established have successfully institutionalised the collaboration of different ethnic groups that were previously in conflict and have promoted peace and social cohesion.

What lessons can be learned regarding the resourcing of critical pathways/strategies to support change in this program context?

- **Supporting CBOs to obtain registration and establish formal structures for engaging with government** has been critical.
- **Supporting CBOs and community to engage directly with government in a collaborative manner** has proven effective, as government has been responsive in a range of areas and has reached out to work with CBOs.
- **Connecting CBOs with other CBOs and organisations through campaigns and networks** at village, divisional, district and national levels (for joint learning, campaigning and programming) has been critical to strengthening advocacy and maximising impact.

Could Oxfam have invested differently to enhance the quality, scale or depth of outputs/outcomes? Are there alternative ways in which the program could be implemented that Oxfam should explore? (other models/ strategies used by Oxfam or other agencies)

- **Oxfam could have given more support and opportunity to CBO partners to make independent organisational decisions** and/or provided more support for actions CBOs themselves considered important and appropriate.
- **Oxfam should continue to strengthen CBO networks at a district level** and support them to link with other actors and function more independently.

EFFECTIVENESS SUB-CATEGORY 2: SUSTAINABILITY

Are the outcomes sustainable, or is there evidence to indicate likely sustainability?

The program approach has supported sustainability by ensuring the skills and capacity developed through the program is held and owned locally. Programs are implemented by CBOs and community members relatively independently, with Oxfam playing a guiding, supportive, convening and monitoring role to CBO partners.

There are two components to the sustainability of Oxfam's capacity building work:

1. The institutional capacity of CBO entities;
2. The capacity within community to mobilise and advocate to achieve their rights.

At the time of assessment only a small number of CBOs had received other funding and were able to operate independently without continued support from Oxfam. The majority of CBOs in the east stated they had not secured other funds and were dependent on Oxfam. Oxfam is currently working to link CBOs with other donors in the final phase of the program. While this situation may change in the coming months, at the time of assessment a high level of likely sustainability of CBO entities is not found.

There are strong indications that the community capacity that has been facilitated by the program (in terms of understanding of rights, and structures in place which enable people to collectivise, prioritise, plan and take action) is likely to be sustainable. The ability of CBOs and community members to persist and overcome obstacles to bring about significant advocacy wins strongly indicates that this capacity is likely to be sustainable. These examples demonstrate that community has successfully applied their knowledge and skills and are motivated to act and engage. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the social activist component is demonstrating signs of sustainability; many CBO members are now members of government structures, performing roles in which they are actively holding government to account. It is not currently clear to what extent community members are reliant upon CBOs to support them in their current and future active citizenship activities.

LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about ensuring sustainability of program outcomes in relation to the context and program type?

- **Expectations of sustainability were not clear from the outset;** it was important to distinguish between sustainability of community capacity and sustainability of CBO entities, identify which the program was trying to bring about and why, and what needed to be put in place for this to occur.
- **Supporting partners to link with each other and establish networks** has supported sustainability to some extent, as partners now have wider support networks they can draw on to help overcome challenges.

RECCOMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

What measures could have been taken to enhance sustainability and would this require additional investment?

- **The program would have benefited from clarifying sustainability within the Theory of Change earlier on in the program** — for example, is the aim to ensure community capacity is sustainable, and what is needed for this to occur? Or does the program aim to make CBO entities sustainable, and what needs to be put in place to ensure this occurs?
- **Mapping the positions community members have taken up within government structures and how they are holding government to account** would help the program to demonstrate the extent and scale of sustainability.
- **Support CBOs to profile themselves and their work and network with relevant agencies** (ie international NGOs, UN and private sector entities).

EFFECTIVENESS RATING

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS RATING: GOOD EFFECTIVENESS (9/12)
(2 poor effectiveness, 4 low effectiveness, 6-7 fair effectiveness, **9 good effectiveness**, 12 high effectiveness)

REACH AND DEPTH OF CHANGE: 6/6		SUSTAINABILITY: 3/6	
How well is the program achieving its intended outcomes?		To what extent are program outcomes likely to be sustained beyond the program?	
U	It is not clear if the program is achieving its intended outcomes; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear to what extent the program has addressed sustainability; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Outputs led to a small number of scale and breadth of outcomes	1	Sustainability has not been well considered and/or it is not clear how program outcomes are likely to be sustainable
3	Outputs led to a good level of scale and breadth of outcomes	3	**The program has been designed and implemented with sustainability in mind, though it is not clear if sustainably is likely**
6	**Outputs led to a high level of scale and breadth of outcomes**	6	Strong efforts have been made to ensure sustainability and evidence of likely sustainability is strong

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence
Average evidence:	Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps
Excellent evidence:	**Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence**

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment:
  - All program reports and reviews
  - Program design document
  - One-day VfM CBO partner workshop
  - Focus Group Discussion with Oxfam regional staff in eastern Sri Lanka
  - Workshop with all Oxfam program staff in Colombo
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment:
  - Quantitative outcome data — reports list the numbers of people who have benefited through increased access to services and realisation of their rights.
  - A range of tangible changes (ie advocacy wins) and intangible changes (ie empowerment) have been captured through reports.
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment:
  - There is a lack of documentation which outlines the prior situation; this has meant that assessment has been based on staff statements that no active citizenship was taking place in communities prior.
  - Qualitative information — there is a lack of qualitative information outlining how the change process has worked (how and why CBOs and communities were able to effect change); having this information would have better enabled the assessment to more clearly identify program elements that supported effectiveness.

JSSK Fish processing group.

PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam

COMPONENT 4: EQUITY
(EQUAL INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS)

Is the program appropriately engaging and producing equal benefits for different groups?

Relevant contextual factors and implications for equity

- The most vulnerable groups were not previously well integrated into government programs; awareness, processes and mechanisms were not in place to support this.
- Women's participation in leadership positions and public engagement was low, meaning CBOs were starting from a low base.
- The Sri Lankan civil war had created deep divides and tensions between ethnic groups, meaning levels of collaboration and communication between people of different ethnic groups were low.
- Oxfam and partners had not previously worked to incorporate disability into their programs; as such they were starting from a low base.

EQUITY SUB-CATEGORY 1: EQUITY OF PROCESS

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How well is the program appropriately targeting and ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups?
(ie women, men, children, people with disability, people from different ethnic groups)

The program has had a strong and integral focus on ensuring equity, with gender equity being a stand out feature of the program. Specific investment has gone into building women's capacity due to their marginalisation and exclusion. However, men have not been excluded and have been involved in the same program activities (approximately 90% of small group members are women and 10% are men). It is not clear if this gender proportionality was planned or if it has resulted from the approach used by CBOs. The approach has also worked to build greater collaboration between men and women. Successfully raising awareness of women's rights and advocating around women's rights to services, particularly in relation to GBV, has been a strong achievement of the program.

The program has also been designed to engage people from different ethnic and religious groups and enhance collaboration between them. Clear consideration has been given to ensuring equal participation and supporting peace-building through the design and implementation of the program approach, which is well supported by results.

It is not clear how people with disability have been engaged through the program and what efforts have been made to reach them and support their participation. Partners stated that awareness of disability had been raised through the program. CBO activities have resulted in some people with disability experiencing greater aspects to government entitlements (as discussed in the section below). The strong progression of disability inclusion as a rights-based issue, in which people with disability are engaged in community consultation and activism processes and given equal opportunity to lead action, is not evidenced through documentation. This indicates that Oxfam could have done more to build the capacity of CBOs to promote the equitable inclusion of people with disability in their active citizenship structures.

What can be learned about supporting equity in relation to the context and program type?

- **Oxfam's "guiding role" in the first phase of the program** in terms of supporting CBOs to reach the most vulnerable groups and strengthen the unity among different ethnic groups was regarded as critical by CBOs in supporting them to make change.
- **Oxfam's approach to peace-building within active citizenship,** which supports people from different ethnic groups to come together to identify and tackle common issues, has been highly effective to building trust and ethnic cohesion.
- **Targeting investment directly to rural and disadvantaged women** to build individual knowledge and motivation to act, coupled with creating an enabling environment for women (such as establishing GBV desks and structures that supports women's leadership) has been an effective strategy.

RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could equity be more strongly integrated into the ToC, and the design and implementation of the program? What resource implications would this have?

- **There is need for the program design and delivery to differentiate between equity of process** (ensuring people are supported to participate in active citizenship processes), and **equity of outcomes for vulnerable groups** (ie lobbying to ensure particular vulnerable groups have access to government services).
- **Monitor the strategies used to advance cross cutting issues** (such as gender equity, disability inclusion and child protection) and the progress Oxfam and its partners are making in these areas; this would support the program's accountability and ability to assess, learn and improve program effectiveness in terms of equitable targeting and inclusion strategies.
- **Data which tracks Oxfam's investment in and contribution towards facilitating equity** and shows how Oxfam and CBO partners are determining and prioritising support to progress aspects of equity (particularly in relation to disability) would support the program to better demonstrate Value for Money.
- **Ensure disability analysis is integrated into Oxfam's analysis of gender and poverty** and subsequent programming approaches; for example, when supporting women leaders as part of its active citizenship work, ensure women with disability are reached and given opportunity to participate, making reasonable adjustments as required.

EQUITY SUB-CATEGORY 1: EQUITY OF OUTCOMES

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How equitably have different groups benefited?

Several outcomes have been produced which have had a tangible benefit on the lives of different vulnerable groups including:

- Women (through systems established at district and divisional level to identify and reduce GBV issues, including task forces and help desks, through their enhanced participation and leadership in SME activities, and increased government assistance to vulnerable female headed families).
- People with disability and the elderly (with an increased number of people accessing financial assistance).

The program has also seen success in raising awareness and ensuring services reach the most vulnerable, with some government and International Labour Organisation (ILO) programs adopting Oxfam's "Poorest of the Poor" checklist for beneficiary selection processes. Partners acknowledged Oxfam's guidance towards helping them adopt a rights-based approach — particularly in relation to demonstrating and building respect for gender equality. This was seen as important, particularly as government departments were often said to be gender insensitive and not to take women's issues seriously.

Achievements in peace-building and bringing together different ethnic groups are strongly evidenced by the fact that people are now working together constructively on committees, in small groups and on advocacy campaigns. Oxfam staff and partners noted this outcome to be one of the most significant and valuable. One CBO partner stated that this work had resulted in reduced conflict in border villages. Due to a lack of disaggregated information, which indicates the number of people from different ethnic groups and people with disability participating in and benefitting from the program is not available, it is difficult to fully assess this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could groups benefit more equitably?

- **The final evaluation offers an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive picture** of the impact of the program and the extent to which different vulnerable groups have benefited and participated (ie numbers of people from different ethnic groups and numbers of people with disability participating in and benefiting from active citizenship).

EQUITY RATING

OVERALL EQUITY RATING: GOOD EQUITY (9/12)
(2 poor equity, 4 low equity, 6-7 fair equity, **9 good equity**, 12 high equity)

TARGETING OF VULNERABLE GROUPS: 3/6	FACILITATING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS: 6/6
How well is the program appropriately targeting and benefiting vulnerable groups?	To what extent have vulnerable groups benefited?
U	It is not clear if equity has been integrated; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear who has benefited; a judgement cannot be formed

	TARGETING			FACILITATING
U	It is not clear if equity has been integrated; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear who has benefited; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Equity was not sufficiently considered and integrated	1	The most vulnerable groups have not benefited
3	**Equity was integrated and resourced to some extent; there is scope to strengthen**	3	Some vulnerable groups have benefited and others have not
6	Equity was strongly integrated into the program's design and implementation	6	**Vulnerable groups have benefited significantly and equitably**

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	**Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence**
Average evidence:	Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps
Excellent evidence:	Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment:
    - One-day VfM CBO partner workshop
    - Focus Group Discussion with Oxfam regional staff in eastern Sri Lanka
    - Workshop with all Oxfam program staff in Colombo
    - Program design document
    - Program reports and reviews
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment:
    - Gender: some data is gender disaggregated (ie women and men's engagement in groups and committees) making it evident where investment is being directed in relation to gender.
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment:
    - Disability: data was not provided on the number of people with disability participating in the program, making it difficult to fully assess outcomes and level of investment in this area.
    - Ethnicity: data which shows approximate breakdowns of which ethnic communities are engaged by CBOs and the number of people from different ethnic groups engaging in small groups, committees and advocacy actions is not provided, meaning only a general assessment can be made and the scope and level of outcomes facilitated in relation to peace-building are not captured.

Women's group in Dalukana.

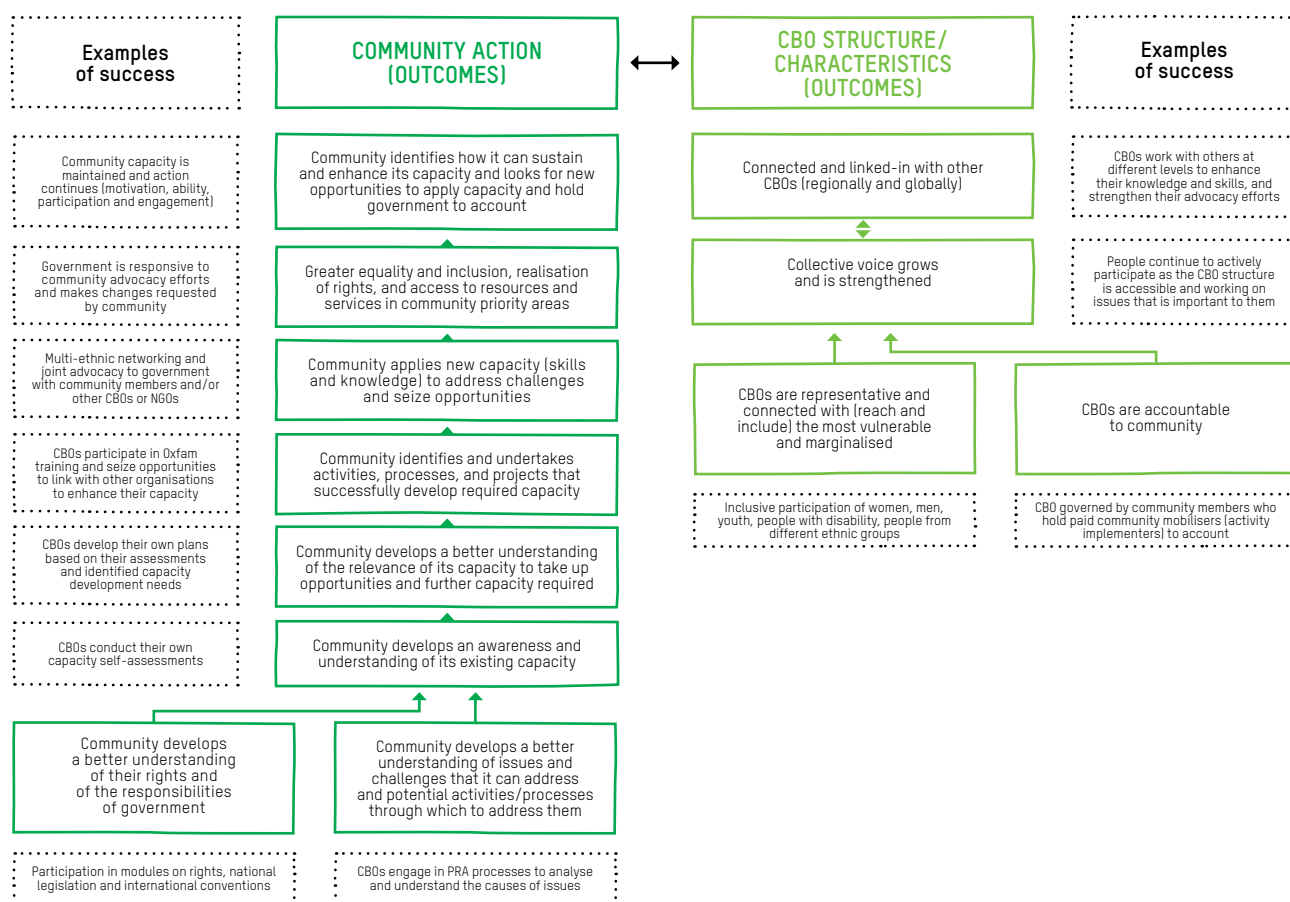PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam

VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT ANNEXES

THEORY OF CHANGE

Through ACRP3, Oxfam works with 12 CBOs in Eastern Sri Lanka to develop their capacity to support local community action. CBOs are organisations comprising of a small number of paid local staff. CBOs are representative of communities, as they are governed by small groups (of community members) that filter upward into sub and central committees (comprised of community members). Communities contribute fully in every process of forming groups to selecting which representatives will hold administrative positions in sub and central committees. Key decision making power rests with Central Committee members. This is different from the way in which other organisations work, who traditionally work through existing village level structures such as Rural Development Societies, fishery committees or farmer organisations which are less representative of communities. CBOs deliver Oxfam's ACRP3 projects in Food Security, Livelihoods and Gender Equality. Beneficiaries for projects are selected through Oxfam's "Poorest of the Poor" checklist, which gives priority to the most vulnerable people in the community and is done through a participatory process.

This program was designed to build civil society and help communities become aware of their rights and work collectively and strategically to hold government to account and claim their rights. The program strategy aimed to support committee members to discuss, analyse and select priority issues, then advocate collectively to achieve shared goals. As part of Oxfam's institutional strengthening component it worked directly with CBO staff (to build the organisational capacity of CBOs), and directly with committees to support their ability to participate in decision making, lead and hold CBO staff to account. Institutional strengthening investment was determined on an annual basis based on partner assessments. Some common support was provided to all CBOs such as community activist training or in instances where CBOs had shared needs. The committee training and other CBO training was tailor-made based on partner needs. The Theory of Change is represented in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: CBO THEORY OF CHANGE

A summary of the key processes used in this approach to exploring and assessing VfM is illustrated in the following flowchart:

DEFINE PARAMETERS
- Discussions with the country team to map out which components of the program to focus on, how the assessment will be used by the program and staff time to engage in the process
- Discussions with country team regarding what data is available, where the gaps are and additional data collection processes to be undertaken

CONSOLIDATE PROGRAM INFORMATION
- Consolidation of existing data on program costs (budget and staff time), inputs (key program activities/strategies), outputs and outcomes available in reports
- Interviews with key program staff to understand relevant program background (why decisions were made, consideration of alternatives and additional context)
- Drafting of a Theory of Change to test and refine through the process

COLLECT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
- Development of a process to collective missing information in relation to time and resources available and in consultation with program staff
- Collection of additional information and feedback from partners

ANALYS AND CLARIFY INFORMATION
- Analysis of data to draw out any key issues/confusion in relation to the objectives, intended outcomes and approach used and how this may have impacted on how resources were directed
- Develop questions to clarify the Theory of Change and ensure a clear framework is in place to assess Value for Money

TEST AND REFLECT WITH STAFF
- Presentation of key issues, and confusion/tensions in relation to the Theory of Change to staff, and facilitation of discussion among staff to clarify key issues
- Pose tailored questions in relation to the Value for Money - how could resources have been better directed in hindsight (looking back) and best used in the remaining period (looking forward) now that the Theory of Change has been clarified

COSTS AND INPUTS - WHAT WENT IN?

Total		295,003
FOCUS AREAS OF INVESTMENT	**$**	**%**
Capacity building	126,851	43%
Project development	14,750	5%
Networking	11,800	4%
Coordination/partner salary	126,851	43%
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	14,750	5%

KEY STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES - OXFAM SUPPORT TO CBOS AND COMMUNITIES

OXFAM INPUTS PROVIDED TO CBOS (ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL):

Support to set up grievance processes and social audit structures

Support to facilitate the development of integrated village development plans

Support to conduct self — Organisational Capacity Assessments (100 trainings)

Support to use monitoring tools to report evidence-based outcomes

Support to network, collaborate and campaign around common issues

Training in budgeting, finance, HR and administration

Support to develop organisational procedures and policies

Trainings on organisational activities to operate within an organisational framework

Support to connect with service providers and government to claim entitlements

Support to develop strategic plans prioritising organisational sustainability

Training in proposal writing

OXFAM INPUTS PROVIDED TO COMMUNITY (COMMITTEE MEMBERS):

Training on community activism for community leaders "community mobilisers"

Training to committee members on rights, leadership, decision making

Training to board members on governance and project monitoring

OUTPUTS - WHAT HAPPENED?

SCALE (NUMBERS REACHED)

12 CBOs working in **25 Divisional Secretariats** in around **147 villages** with around **11,702** people (1,401 men and 10,301 women) have strengthened capacity in the following areas:

- A constitution
- A clear strategy and vision
- Strong systems in place and staff capacity in project planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting
- Transparency and accountability
- Identifying gaps and ways to improve their own systems

CBOs have **not** developed the capacity to source and secure alternative funding sources

12 CBO partners have formed **over 600 small groups (5,000 women and 700 men)** and systematically built elements of capacity for active citizenship through facilitating meetings and discussions and conducting over **900** awareness raising sessions resulting in group members' increased:

- Understanding of their rights
- Ability to analyse issues, debate, problem solve, prioritise, make decisions and plan
- Ability to participate and monitor projects
- Understanding of the need to work together and collaborate

11 village development plans (VDPs) have been developed through village committees in a consultative manner, together with the communities and other relevant stakeholders and **9 Divisional Secretaries (DSs)** have accepted the integrated VDPs and incorporated them into broader development plans. DSs have agreed to chair the multi-stake holder meetings to implement the VDPs

DEPTH/LEVEL OF CHANGE

- Improvements in CBO capacity have led CBOs to manage and implement projects in Food Security, Livelihoods and Gender Equality more effectively and reach the most vulnerable
- CBOs have held themselves accountable to community, and have held Oxfam accountable to them
- CBOs have increased capacity to operate independently and determine their own organisational institutional strengthening needs, and their own priorities and strategic directions
- CBOs have an understanding of the requirements for survival as a separate entity
- Most CBOs are not sustainable and are dependent on Oxfam financially

- Local structures (groups with sub-committees and central committees) for community action have been established and are functioning well; they have continued to expand and strengthen
- CBOs are the only local structures representative of the poorest and most marginalised and are engaging government
- Group members are independently making decisions, playing an active role in participating in projects, holding CBOs to account, and playing governance roles
- Individual members (women and men) have an understanding of their rights to access government services (that they previously did not), and are motivated to participate and act

- CBOs and communities have successfully facilitated large scale, representative and equitable community decision making processes
- They have successfully engaged and influenced government to commit to ensure local development and social benefits programs reach the poorest segments of society
- Some action has occurred, indicating that plans have been, or are likely to be, implemented in practice

OUTCOMES - WHAT RESULTED?

SCALE (NUMBERS REACHED)

11,702 people from different ethnic groups, religions, casts and genders from **147 villages** are working together on common issues they face despite their differences in the society

CBOs are now working directly with government and linking with government structures in several ways:
- Integration of VDPs
- Government are engaging with and approving all CBO action plans and quarterly progress reports
- Some CBOs and committee members are linking with administrative structures, sitting on government committees and attending government meetings
- A CBO successfully influenced government to use a beneficiary selection process based on the Oxfam "Poorest of the Poor" checklist for a government Program. The DS invited the CBO to train Economic Development Officers on the process

CBOs have connected with and become part of local, regional and national networks including:
- People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL) — a collective platform which has enabled **one community to get their lands back,** and **7 out of 30 families** in another have received land permits and the DS office has started the process for the rest
- System of Rice Intensification Network (SRIN)
- Community Coalition for Alternative Marketing and production program (CCAMPP)
- People's Voice — CBO network to take up common issues

DEPTH/LEVEL OF CHANGE

- The local structures established have successfully institutionalised the collaboration of different groups that were previously in conflict and have promoted peace and social cohesion after the post-civil war context

- Government has demonstrated a respect for local community structures
- Two-way engagement has occurred in which CBOs/local structures created through the program have become involved in the initiatives of government and vice versa: government has become aware of the plans and priorities of local community and has demonstrated responsiveness
- Engagement has resulted in poorer community members having new understanding of and access to some government services/ programs which they were previously unaware of
- Communities have an increased understanding of the need for greater collaboration with government and some individuals have developed skills to engage with and influence government constructively and successfully

- Becoming part of wider movements has supported communities to link with and leverage others (skills, knowledge, expertise and ideas) to become stronger and increase their ability to advocate effectively
- Joining specific networks has developed people's capacity to advocate more strategically around specific issues, allowing people to link with research and advocacy organisations
- Some community members have had successes, such as the Paanama in Ampara who lost their land and succeeded in claiming it back when they initiated the issue to a campaign level, and others continue to engage in campaigns and are still in the process of claiming their rights

Approximately **50% of people in small groups (2,500 women and 350 men**) are engaging in collective action resulting in:

- ILO is using the "Poorest of the Poor" checklist for its toilet beneficiary selection
- **12 elderly people** started receiving the government's monthly allowance scheme
- **15 men and women** obtained birth certificates
- **67 vulnerable female-headed families** received assistance
- **People with disability** accessed grants of Rs. 25,000-45,000 for livelihood activities
- **1,000 families** benefited from improved sanitation and hygiene through the eradication of mosquito breeding areas
- **500 families** benefited from the establishment of a routine garbage collection service

- Communities have had advocacy wins across a range of areas that have resulted in tangible changes and improvements to people lives
- Some of these outcomes occurred through lengthy engagement and advocacy processes which required CBOs and communities to try new strategies and persevere; for example, initially the CBO who worked with Tamil and Muslim communities to get the government to institute a garbage collection service advocated to the DS and local politicians to no avail. They then took up the issue with provincial and central ministries. While they were successful, the process took a significant amount of time and effort.
- This demonstrates that communities have developed the ability to organise and engage strategically on issues that they care about, and remain engaged and committed when challenges and obstacles are experienced.

- **9 Sustainable GBV help desks** have been set up in hospitals/shelters
- Strengthening of GBV complaint mechanisms and district/divisional level GBV taskforces has resulted in an increased number of women using GBV referral systems and better documentation of cases

- Government accountability and support to women experiencing GBV has been enhanced
- A stronger enabling environment for women has been created through enhanced awareness of government officials and improved GBV networks

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METHODOLOGICAL RATIONALE AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE OXFAM AUSTRALIA VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT TOOL

PURPOSE

This document outlines the theory behind the VfM assessment tool used to assess the Oxfam Sri Lanka ACRP3 program. It aims to orientate the reader as to why the particular approach has been taken and why certain elements have been included. The assessment framework draws on a range of VfM research and analysis that has taken place over the last 10 years. This document provides an outline of what the VfM tool does and does not aim to do and why, with reference to this literature.

THE APPROACH

The approach takes Oxfam's definition of VfM — "*the best use of resources to contribute to positive significant change in the most vulnerable people's lives"*[1] as the starting point for the tool. It aims to articulate the links between resources invested and outputs and outcomes achieved (with reference to the four Es: Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity) and examine if and how Oxfam could achieve greater change given the level and type of investment and operating context. It draws on aspects of the Basic Efficiency Resource (BER) approach by comparing outputs and outcomes to resources.

The approach recognises that Oxfam delivers rights-based programs in complex settings, and that assessment of VfM must recognise the context specific factors that determine VfM options and considerations. It draws on Bond's proposition that one way of approaching VfM is for NGOs to "build a robust and defensible case for how an intervention balances economy, efficiency and effectiveness and delivers the most value for poor and marginalised people."[2] Oxfam sees VfM as integrated throughout the program management cycle, and believes that if these processes are followed, its projects will deliver VfM. The tool provides a practical way to assess initiatives to see if this holds true and consider how VfM can be enhanced. It seeks to progress Oxfam Great Britain (OGB)'s finding of needing to "find ways to demonstrate VfM that are more than good management but may not go as far as monetary measurement of impact."[3]

DEFINING THE "VALUE" IN VFM

The approach does not aim to assign value in the way approaches such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) do, using proxy indicators to come up with an overall value proposition. This focus does not systematically answer the fundamental VfM question: "*could the use of resources be improved?"* The approach does not seek to determine or rate the value of the changes made and ask the question "*was it worth it in relation to the investment put in?"* as some other approaches do. This is because Oxfam has not taken this approach and there are competing interpretations of what value is, or should be, and who ought to define it[4] and because value takes time to deliver, especially at scale[5], and may only be realised after the program has completed. In addition, Oxfam works to progress human rights enshrined in national and international conventions (which arguably must be progressed regardless of their perceived value). Oxfam recognises that pathways to achieving rights are non-linear, context specific and must be strengthened through the application of strong MEL, and has therefore focused on better understanding and improving its change pathways with a VfM lens.

1   Value for Money Discussion Paper, Oxfam Australia, Program Quality Unit, Sept 2013, Page 1.
2   Bond for International Development, 2012, Integrating value for money into the programme cycle.
3   OGB VfM training slide pack, June 2013, Page 78.
4   LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 3.
5   OGB VfM training slide pack, June 2013, Page 64.

PLACING THEORY OF CHANGE AT THE HEART OF VFM

The central role of Theory of Change in VfM is being increasingly acknowledged as development agencies seek to apply VfM concepts at a programmatic level. London School of Economics (LSE) research conducted in relation to VfM approaches and debates notes that "many stakeholders mention a Theory of Change as it reveals the organisations' understanding of value, illustrated through their rationale connecting inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact."[6] Findings of an OGB evaluation that included a VfM assessment highlighted the importance of focusing on Theory of Change to advance VfM. It states, "by carefully identifying the point at which success is measured (between activity and impact), and carefully tracking the types of interconnected inputs into the activities which contributed to such change, the assessment of Value for Money — and program quality itself — can gradually be strengthened."[7] The assessment tool takes this suggested approach forward, using Theory of Change to locate these elements, examining VfM in relation to the change processes Oxfam and its partners contribute to. As highlighted by Oxfam, this is important to ensure that "the value is not considered in the achievement of an activity, but in the occurrence of change, progress towards the outcomes and final vision as expressed in the Theory of Change."[8]

Using Theory of Change is also important to ensure VfM assessment is strongly located in the programming context and is not reductionist and disconnected from context, which very much influences level of cost and investment required to achieve specific changes. As highlighted through the OGB evaluation, "the monitoring of Value for Money needs to be able to link outcomes to inputs and those to financial resources. It is important to build in ways to relate these elements together without losing the complexity and nuance of how change happens."[9]

COMPARISON AS A MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

"An intervention can only be VfM compared to a different option, not by itself"[10]; "Nothing is good or bad, except in comparison to something else."[11] While the need to build comparison into VfM assessment is acknowledged in the literature, challenges related to this undertaking such as determining comparable data sets, comparing programs that are implemented in different contexts, and finding available data to enable comparisons are also widely noted. The approach recognises that it is difficult to do this in any precise way, but aims to trial some comparative methods in a flexible way. As observed by a director of NGO performance, "we have to encourage comparisons. We're going to lose some nuance — that's OK. We cannot make decisions without losing some nuance."[12]

The tool aims to document the costs and inputs in relation to the different strategies/activities used to effect change in different thematic and sectoral programs. It also aims to document the contextual factors that affect VfM considerations to support comparison. In time, this may support Oxfam to compare across its own programs with similar desired outcomes[13]. The approach to comparison draws on work undertaken by OGB[14] which identifies three forms of comparison:

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6   LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, May 2011 Page 3.
7   Women's Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB's "Raising Her Voice" portfolio, June 2013, Page 59.
8   Women's Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB's "Raising Her Voice" portfolio, June 2013, Page 58.
9   Women's Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB's "Raising Her Voice" portfolio, June 2013, Page 13.
10 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011 Page 24. According to Nicholles "the objective of understanding VfM is to make decisions and these are usually between more than one thing. This is powerful and useful within an organisation, but not necessarily between organisations because often it is hard to compare like for like".
11 OGB Page 3, Bond OGB VfM Discussion Paper BER, Clair Hutchins, Page 3.
12 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011 Page 25.
13 This approach is also supported by LSE research which states "discussions with interviewees, as well as the analysis of the methodological underpinnings of VfM, suggest that one purpose of VfM could be to compare interventions with the same desired outcome. As such, VfM would refer to a way of achieving the same outcomes with more efficient use of inputs' (LSE Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 26. Ideally its programs could be compared to external agencies, however this requires other organisations to document their models and associated investments and make these publically available. Concerns have been raised regarding the competitive environment this approach would create and the 'race to the bottom". LSE Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 26.
14 OGB VfM training slide pack, June 2013, Page 89.

1. **Benchmarking measurement** (comparing program achievements with similar achievements outside the p rogram — external agencies)
2. **Trend measurement** (which shows progress over time can demonstrate cumulative effect or show comparative improvement over time)
3. **Stand-alone measures** (show what has been achieved within a reporting period and can be compared against the plan for that period). Those steering OGB's work argue that programs often undertake comparison in relation to stand alone measures, but need to move towards external benchmarking. In the early stages of the VfM assessment process, the assessor tied to work with teams to identify available external comparators. However, in practice when undertaking the three assessments, this could not be achieved at this early stage of formal VfM assessment and trend measurement and stand-alone measures were used.

LEVERAGING AS AN INDICATOR OF VFM

The VfM framework explicitly integrates "leveraging" as defined by Oxfam International in a 2014 paper *Leverage: Reaching scale in our work*: "Leverage is working strategically with others in a 'clever' way, in order to lever a bigger change than we could ever achieve on our own. It depends on developing a rich web of mutually beneficial relationships and alliances at country, regional and global level. Leverage emerges out of that connectivity."[15] Leveraging is not new and is something Oxfam does widely throughout its programs. However, integrating leverage in a VfM assessment aims to help program teams to consider how they are and can more explicitly harness the networks, resources, ideas and assets of others to achieve goals more efficiently and effectively and create larger change — enhancing VfM. It also ensures an assessment of VfM includes what others bring to the change process, rather than explicitly focusing on Oxfam's actions and resources. As highlighted in Oxfam International's paper, "a leverage approach means we must systematically strengthen these networks at all levels. Leverage is about being far sighted as to what we want to achieve, clear sighted and strategic about who will do it and especially, astute about understanding what kind of actions will create the alliances and momentum we need in order to bring about the big changes we seek."[16]

ASSESSING SCALE AND DEPTH OF CHANGE IN VFM

Christian Aid has developed a considered and eloquent approach to VfM. Its approach is about achieving the best results it can with the money and resources it has. It defines "best" results as the **scale** (numbers of people benefiting), **depth** (intensity and sustainability of change) and **inclusion** (in other words, a change has greater impact if it benefits people who are more excluded and marginalised)[17]. Oxfam shares this approach, and the VfM tool seeks to capture numbers reached, level/depth of change, and levels of equity within outcomes. While it is challenging to define and measure "depth" of change, the framework seeks to assess the extent to which changes in practice and structural/institutional changes brought about are expected to be sustained beyond the life of the program. Noting that impact can be difficult to measure and may not be realised until years later, the framework seeks to assess the strength of outcomes produced.

15   Oxfam International 'Leverage: Reaching scale in our work', 2014, Page 1.
16   Oxfam International 'Leverage: Reaching scale in our work', 2014, Page 1.
17   Christian Aid, How Christian Aid Assesses Value for Money in its Programmes, July 2012, Page 1.

PARTICIPATION OF PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY IN ASSESSMENT OF VFM

A VfM assessment must importantly consider from whose perspective value is defined. This VfM assessment tool is based on evidence collected through participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Community participation in this VfM assessment is encouraged through the methodology. There are different ways in which communities can be involved throughout the assessment and the approach aims to encourage teams to explore different ways of engaging stakeholders. This approach draws on DFAT's approach to VfM which incorporates ethics (transparency and accountability) into its definition of VfM[18].

EVIDENCE-BASED VFM ASSESSMENT

Assessment is based on evidence. This includes regular MEL data and program documentation and additional data collected by the assessor in the event of gaps in available data in relation to any of the four Es. Assessment is based on evidence obtained through traditional evaluation methods such as desktop reviews, stakeholder interviews and questionnaires, and participatory reflection workshops. The approach recognises that a VfM assessment can only be made on the basis of evidence, and does not seek to facilitate a process whereby assessment makes an unsubstantiated judgement due to lack of evidence, or penalises projects by rating VfM as poor due to a lack of existing data. It is recognised that in some cases it may be difficult to make a judgement due to lack of data. As with many evaluation methodologies, the judgement is ultimately the subjective interpretation of the evaluator. The approach uses VfM assessment as an opportunity to help teams strengthen their MEL (and application of the wider program management cycle), and explore how they can better integrate VfM into their MEL frameworks which is key to managing for VfM.

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18   An Oxfam presentation 2012 states, 'Ethics is described by AusAID as 'gives attention to the way VfM assessment is conducted to ensure that the research or data collection is undertaken with permission of participants and in a way that is honest and understood by those involved'.

T Priyanka is a volunteer with FOSDO (Federation of Social Development Organisation), Oxfam's partner organisation. She is explaining her experiences with using the tab in post-response monitoring.

PHOTO © Pavithra Jovan de Mello/Oxfam