Women's Right to Be Heard:

An evaluation of Oxfam GB's "Raising Her Voice" portfolio

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13 June 2011

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Evaluation of the Oxfam GB Portfolio

"Raising Her Voice"

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- Parmjit Takhar - SMS working group
- Rodrigo Alvarez - RHV Bolivia and Chile
- Rosa Garwood – MEECIS Gender Advisor
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Acronyms and Terms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDR	Indonesian Rupiahs
IFFI	Instituto de Formación Femenina Integral
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
POWA	People Opposing Women Abuse
RHV	Raising Her Voice
SMS	Single Management Structure
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women´s Rights
SP&G	Social Policy and Governance Team
UKAid/DFID	UK Department for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women

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Executive Summary

Introduction and methodology

This is the global midterm evaluation of Oxfam GB´s Raising Her Voice portfolio, which was undertaken between March and May 2011 by a team of external consultants. The assessment and recommendations are based on information and insights captured through direct interviews, surveys and focus groups, an in-depth case study of Raising Her Voice in Bolivia, and review of relevant material including 14 midterm reviews of individual Raising Her Voice projects.

The Terms of Reference focused on synthesising and complementing the national midterm evaluations, to highlight valuable approaches and learning. However, an initial needs assessment clearly pointed to the opportunity to evaluate the global coordination, identity and outreach of the portfolio and make recommendations for the second phase of RHV, and to draw out lessons for OGB on issues relating to managing multi-country projects in partnership.

The quality and focus of the national evaluations was incredibly varied making it difficult to compare or synthesise effectiveness and efficiency, and providing quite partial and incomplete information. This means that, although the report includes a lot of examples of work from Raising Her Voice projects in different countries, these should not be considered representative or proportionate to the quality of each national project. The evaluations also often failed to asses OGB's role at country level, thus making it difficult to capture Oxfam's global added value. However the team used participatory principles and feminist methods including clear positioning, open discussion and feedback sessions with key staff in RHV and OGB to overcome or ameliorate some of these challenges and ensure that the resulting report was as useful as possible.

Raising Her Voice has emerged out of the commitment and experience of OGB and its partners in many countries to women's rights and governance, and is largely funded by DfID's governance and transparency fund. It is the first time that OGB has brought together work on the themes of gender and governance in one portfolio, with a global coordination function to facilitate cross-learning and communication. This has provided the opportunity for OGB and partners to explore and engage in these multiple dimensions of gender and governance in 17 countries across four continents.

The first part of this report describes in some detail how the portfolio was developed and the shape it has taken, and highlights what has been learned about the need for work on gender and governance: women's right to be heard. It also brings together information from the Raising Her Voice proposal and documentation into a proposed theory of change, or logic model, to underpin and make sense of the wide array of work. The evaluators point out that having a clearly articulated theory of change not only helps to coordinate the different projects, providing a common framework and goal while allowing for flexibility to adapt to distinct contexts and priorities, but also helps to communicate the work to external audiences and peers.

The theory of change depicts work on women's right to be heard as necessarily multidimensional, complex and integrated. It articulates an overarching goal that "women's voices are heard", and sets out some assumptions and theories as to how that change will come about, and RHV's role within that. Building on gender theory, it identifies three broad spheres which influence women's opportunities to participate in

governance: personal, political and social. A woman's personal capacity, confidence and context will have a strong influence on her confidence to act, and be heard. The political and social spheres include both formal and informal structures and spaces, whether decision making structures and processes, organisations and groups which provide women with a platform for developing capacity and strength to ensure their voices are heard, or cultural and media institutions which help to define the space for women's participation, or set the norms for 'acceptable behaviour'.

The theory suggests that the political and social spheres influence each other, and have strong influence over a poor woman's ability to secure her political rights, but from her personal sphere a marginalised woman currently has little opportunity to influence them back. RHV aims to address this imbalance, increasing women's participation and voice in the social and political spheres, and thereby helping to make government more representative. This requires the use of diverse strategies for engagement at different levels of influence and decision making, from local to national and global. There are also a series of assumptions and values underpinning this theory, derived from OGB's own priorities, learning and experience, including a commitment to women's rights and understanding of the multiple dimensions of development and women's empowerment.

RHV in action - approaches and achievements

The second part of this report draws on the midterm evaluations of the individual RHV projects, and other key project documentation, to show the range of strategies and approaches being used to address each of these dimensions or spheres, at different levels, throughout the portfolio. These examples are inspiring, showing the dedication, capacity, strength and creativity of RHV partners.

There are examples of work on the personal sphere, to explore and challenge social attitudes and build women's own capacity and confidence. These experiences show that personal change is at the heart of any transformation of social and political spheres, creating greater demand for political representation, and more supportive attitudes towards women's participation in decision making. As one women's group in Nepal said, they now realised that "*We have to be there to decide for ourselves".*

Work on the social sphere aims to develop systematic and structural opportunities for women to engage in decision making and create a supportive social environment for women to secure their right to be heard. This includes a range of work to strengthen women's collective voice and capacity, whether through developing village level groups, district or regional networks of women's groups or platforms for women leaders to work together, or national and even international women's rights policy advocacy coalitions. Many RHV partners have provided women's groups and activists with training on leadership, advocacy and partnership and tools for gender budgeting, planning and monitoring. One South African activist commented: "*we used to just go to the relevant place marching and shouting but after this training I realised that there are some places where you have to initiate a meeting, where you have to network, where you have to bring on board policy and decision makers and engage with them*." A very important strand of the work on the social sphere has been raising public awareness of women's rights and the laws that support them, to ensure that people are engaged in protecting and promoting women's rights at all levels. This includes work to raise awareness at community level of relevant laws and how they can be used, through training or publications, as well as constructive engagement with national stakeholders in law and policy making, and public demonstrations and events to popularise and increase demand for women's rights legislation. Relationships with the media have also been well used to publicise events and information, and stimulate public debate especially through the use of radio programming and listener clubs.

The political sphere includes work with government stakeholders to strengthen the laws, policies and spaces supporting women's political engagement, and helping women to participate formally as voters and elected representatives, including work to promote more open and responsive planning and monitoring processes. The Nepal review found that "*giving priority to the sensitization of rights holders without commensurate sensitization of service providers and other key stakeholders creates a mismatch in the understanding of rights and duties between the demand and supply side.*"

In many countries RHV partners and coalitions have engaged in policy advocacy with government to strengthen women's rights legislation and policies using a mixture of research and analysis; relationship building with key stakeholders (based on stakeholder analysis and power mapping); engaging in the drafting of bills; lobbying and public mobilisation. Some RHV partners have worked directly with women candidates or elected representatives to increase their capacity to participate and represent marginalised women, or to support women to register to vote.

Taken as a whole, the RHV projects provide some very good examples of how to work on the different spheres and levels, and how different strategies build on each other to create real transformative impact. This seems to confirm the validity of the proposed theory of change, that: *women need confidence as well as legal spaces and social structures to enable them to raise their voices effectively,* influence planning, hold governments and service providers accountable and secure their rights. What's more RHV experience shows that women's voices need to be united in order to overcome historical power imbalances, requiring skills in building common objectives and including different visions of women's empowerment and gender equality. Annexed to this report are case studies from Bolivia, Armenia, Nepal and South Africa which show how *integrated work at different levels and across the different spheres*, with an emphasis on personal empowerment and collective voice, can have a transformative impact on women's lives, voices and communities.

Findings and recommendations for RHV

This is an exciting time for Raising Her Voice. Half-way through the five-year funding and with all the projects firmly established some signs of impact and transformation are already starting to be seen and plenty of learning about how and why to work on women's right to be heard is being generated. But RHV is changing, with a new global coordinator, and some of the shorter projects coming to a close, it will be a much slimmer project with a strong Africa bias. This evaluation not only highlights some of the learning from RHV so far and its potential uses, but also identifies recommendations for changes and adjustments at the global level.

Developing a strong RHV team and identity

At this stage, with less need for support on management and accountability issues and more learning to share, there is a real opportunity for the RHV 'team' to become less centralized and to leverage more of the global capacity and knowledge that is held there. Although human and financial resources are limited, there are a number of ways in which RHV project managers could build more of a horizontal structure for interaction, facilitated by the global coordinator. Making the most of online spaces and teleconference technology, working groups or facilitated reflection and debate on different themes and management issues should be possible without requiring too much time commitment from project managers. However, the issue of language, especially for the Latin American colleagues, does need to be considered. There are many solid examples from RHV projects of coalition building and strengthening collective analysis from village to international levels. This wealth of experience within the team and partners should form a strong basis for

developing effective collaborative working structures and systems between RHV team members.

Influencing and informing wider women's rights work

With strong learning and evidence emerging from RHV projects, and a renewed commitment in OGB to 'put women's rights at the heart of all we do', there is somewhat of a buzz about RHV in Oxfam's Oxford office. This provides an opportunity for RHV to communicate its findings and multidimensional theory, and influence and inform the wider work of the organisation. By validating the theory of change proposed in this evaluation, and building up strong evidence on the value of a multidimensional approach to women's rights from ongoing work, RHV could become an influential force to broaden the organisation's thinking and programming on women's right to be heard, and support arguments for a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of development.

Thinking of the future: beyond 'RHV'

This is also the time to think about what happens after RHV DfID funding finishes. At national level many RHV projects are well embedded in wider processes, although not always in OGB's own work, and these links need to be strengthened and extended in order to clarify the most appropriate role for RHV after 2013. On a global scale, RHV has the potential to become a 'brand' or space to connect, support and publicise different work in the organisation around women's rights and governance. At the moment, funding is the only logic as to why some projects are inside RHV and others working on gender and governance are not, restricting opportunities for shared global learning and support. At this time of change to a single management system in Oxfam, there is a great opportunity for RHV to plan for a future position bringing together these different areas of work, and highlighting ways in which they complement and link into other areas of Oxfam's programming. This may also build momentum for an eventual global campaign on women's rights.

Monitoring and evaluating the strength of women's voices

The systems which were set up to manage such a diverse and large set of programmes have effectively ensured good capture of relevant information for reporting to donors and keeping track of progress. However, many of the evaluations noted that women's empowerment itself was not adequately monitored. Sometimes the indicators were not strong enough or did not focus on women's empowerment and voices, in other cases activities were evaluated as outcomes – for example a training as a sign of change.

The RHV portfolio would benefit from effective developmental monitoring of progress towards objectives of women's empowerment, continual review and response to the learning. A lot has been learned already, and plenty of good work is going on which can help to understand how this can better be done. The South Africa review (and this evaluation) has employed feminist evaluation methodology, exploring the underlying patterns of relationships of power in the project and seeking participation at different levels to understand the impact and potential. This could serve as a starting point for discussion in the RHV team of relevant indicators for the core principles and objectives of the project, women's political participation and representation, building on the work of other OGB initiatives such as the WeCan campaign, or the multi-country Enterprise Development Programme.

However, it is very important that indicators, monitoring systems and informants are also identified and reviewed by the primary stakeholders – poor and marginalised women – using participatory monitoring and evaluation methods. This allows them to negotiate and include their own definitions of political empowerment, representation and participation at the heart of the work, and helps to ensure that real transformation is captured.

Recommendations for RHV Global Coordination

- Raising Her Voice partners need a collective theory of change to show how change happens in women's political participation and representation: how women's voices can be heard. This would provide the common basis for all the work, and help to situate and tell the global story of RHV. We recommend that the model theory of change suggested here be used as a starting point.
- We recommend that a global, participatory and facilitated RHV workshop be held in 2011 to validate the theory of change and establish more decentralised support and shared learning mechanisms and joint decision making structures for the next two years. The RHV respondents have clearly recommended that this, and other global meetings, do not take place in Oxford. The specific objectives should be set by the team, but might cover:
    - identification and sharing of relevant learning.
    - validation of the theory of change.
    - identifying structures and processes for collective decision making and analysis (including, for example, of response to the midterm evaluations).
    - identifying means of representing or including partners in global debates and communications.
    - monitoring and evaluation of women's rights to political representation and participation.
    - stakeholder analysis for global communication about RHV.
    - ideas of how the theory of change could be used more widely.
- The agenda, as well as the outputs, should be identified according to the expectations of participants, established before the workshop.
- Based on the outcome of these discussions, regular communication between team members based on issues of interest to them, including strategies and approaches for working on women's rights to political participation and representation, and funding and ideas for sustainability after 2013.
- The Global Coordinator and wider PRG team should expand RHV reporting from progress reports to donors to include strong evidence and learning about multidimensional approaches to women's rights and governance.
- Communication and outreach need to be based on a clear strategy and stakeholder mapping, within Oxfam (GB, international and affiliates) and beyond to DfID and other development and women's rights actors.
- Raising Her Voice is a multi-country – and multilingual – programme. Although English is a recognised common language many are not confident to participate in what is their second, or third language. RHV should explore some of the issues and impacts of English dominance in the team, and find ways to overcome them. In future, sufficient resources for interpretation and translation should be included in budgets for multi-country programmes.
- The global RHV team can use some of the suggestions and ideas in the 'value for money' and 'monitoring women's rights' sections of this report to define comparable and relevant data to be collected over the final two years.
- OGB and the RHV global coordinator can actively seek opportunities for integrating the learning and approaches from Raising Her Voice into other OGB and OI work, including advocacy, campaigns and development programming, and debates.

Recommendations on MEL

- The global RHV team, including partners and primary stakeholders where possible, should review monitoring and evaluation indicators and systems to strengthen reporting on progress towards transformative change in women's lived realities with regards their participation and representation in governance. Reference should be made to existing methodologies and systems referred to above.
- The RHV coordinator and Programme Policy team should work to identify sources of further funding for facilitated reflection and documentation of how change happens around women's participation and representation in governance.
- The methodology developed for the Bolivia reflection and case study, or the critical stories of change methodology, should be the basis for future reflections and documentation of the contribution of RHV projects to such change.
- Closer analysis of INGO best practice in monitoring and documentation of work on women's empowerment would be very valuable to RHV and OGB more widely.
- Partners may also need support and capacity to monitor, evaluate and document changes to women's political participation, leadership and representation. RHV should think about ways in which it can support, understand and track transformative change in capacity and impact within partners, for their own learning and to help assess sustainability.

Lessons for OGB

The final section of the report includes recommendations for the management of the second phase of Raising Her Voice, as well as capturing some lessons for OGB on women's right to be heard, and managing multi-country projects in partnership.

Developing a multi-country programme

Raising Her Voice is one of the first global programmes of work for OGB, and requires different types of relationships and coordination than the more usual project approach, and also works on the intersect between two different organisational aims. To develop such a complicated structure without much precedent has been a very challenging task, and a lot has been learned.

Coherence: For one, there are clear merits to allowing flexibility to interpret the portfolio's agenda according to local contexts and priorities. This has enabled RHV to be well embedded into local processes of change. However, too much focus on local processes limits opportunities for decentralised sharing, comparison and collective analysis. What's more, with staff turnover and multiple accountabilities and relationships, too much local focus can mean that projects drift away from the initial concept and design. A commonly constructed and held theory of change should allow some flexibility within clearly defined shared goals and vision, allowing people to make sense of their work together. Tools and methods for systematic and continual planning, such as outcome mapping, are also useful for developing a shared overview from which to plan and monitor work at all levels.

Integration: In a multi-country programme with UK based global coordination, and working largely through partners, the role and added value of Oxfam country offices can be obscured. Oxfam country offices, as well as being essential links in the funding and accountability chain, can add a lot of value to change processes in terms of capacity and skills, linkages and networking, and RHV is a potential source of capacity and learning to support their wider work on governance and women's rights. As the work and approaches mature, there is evidence that this type of internal communication has enabled the learning from RHV to be better

integrated, and the work to be better linked. These types of informal spaces and linkages need to complement more formal spaces and structures for reflection and shared learning, and will have even more potential as the Single Management Structure rolls out.

Resourcing: Despite seemingly large resources, as such a large and diverse programme, the final amounts for each project are limiting in terms of the scope of the work, and also opportunities for communication and coordination. This has various effects on projects in terms of limited focus of the work relative to the wider theory of change, inability to secure the full commitment of coalition members or fund follow up, or lack of capacity for management and monitoring. What's more, where funding is allocated in too much detail in advance, this limits the opportunities for projects to respond to opportunities on the ground for greater impact, reach or efficiency. And at global level, with one coordinator and one part time finance assistant to manage such a large and varied project, with such a centralised management system, the role can only ever be partially fulfilled, and the focus tends to lie with the skills and interests of the coordinator. There is a clear lesson here: global programmes add value when the resources are sufficient to generate and extract that added value.

Partnerships

RHV is an example of partnership working, with 87% of funding destined as grants to partners, and national partner organisations are the main implementers. This has many benefits. Strong partners, with clear shared focus and objectives, capacity and relationships to strengthen work on the ground have been given the support and freedom to implement some very impressive work. Partnerships have helped to ensure that the learning and analysis can have wider use and impact. In many cases, good selection of partners has enabled RHV to build on, and add value to, existing structures and processes. It has also enabled OGB to strengthen partnerships in support of future work. Engagement with RHV has enabled local and national organisations to build relationships and capacity, and in some cases the implementing partners have formed and managed working partnerships themselves with a much wider range of civil society organisations.

In many cases, OGB has been supporting partner capacity, in project management, monitoring and evaluation, planning and relevant methodologies for example. However, often the evaluations did not mention OGB as a partner, though sometimes as a funder. OGB is not presented as working closely on the substance and content of the projects, contributing its own capacity, organisational experience or objectives into the mix, beyond the initial concept. What's more the amount of human resource provided by OGB in some countries suggests that stronger day-to-day engagement is not currently possible. This is compounded by the Governance and Transparency Fund's 80:20 grants to partners and OGB management budget ratio criteria. This places a lot of emphasis on the capacity and intentions of partners and monitoring systems to ensure good quality work.

With partners implementing much of the work, and generating much of the learning around how change in women's political representation and participation happens, coordination and communication between partners and the OGB management structures becomes essential. Cooperation and coordination among partners and efficient and regular monitoring is fundamental to ensure that their work at different levels is coordinated towards the wider project objectives. Reflections from the global coordination and country teams also points to the fundamental importance of criteria and systems for partner assessment, including not only common goals and objectives, but also capacity and skills for project management and implementation.

This evaluation notes a distinction between implementing partners and partners in development, who build on each other's strengths towards a common goal. The latter are more likely to be long-term and integral to the identity and working culture of the organisation, providing a strong basis for collaborative planning. They are built from a clear intention to develop empowering and effective development partnerships, and strategies to ensure that capacities are well shared and appropriately built. Within the RHV projects there are several examples, and plenty of learning, as to the value and nature of these coalition style partnerships and learning as to how they can be built and sustained. With more time and space for reflection and documentation, these experiences could be an invaluable tool for OGB's own partnership development strategies. What's more, our own assessment of OGB's partnerships in RHV suggests that Oxfam not only needs to consider its own added value, but look at what it can learn and gain from the capacity of its partners.

Value for money

Because of the varying quality and methodologies of the different midterm reviews it has not been possible to make any meaningful overall or comparative assessment of efficiency or value for money. What's more it is very difficult to make a typical efficiency analysis of a programme so complex, with so many inputs, so many actors, but crucially requiring complementary and simultaneous work across different domains and levels. This means that measuring the cost and outputs of a single activity does not capture the 'value' part of the equation, the actual outcome or impact. For that reason, to explore what kinds of information we would need to make a reasonable analysis of how to best invest in transformative and empowering work, we have attempted to make a quantitative analysis of the efficiency of two RHV projects – Armenia and South Africa.

Women's Rights in Oxfam GB

During the process of conducting this evaluation we have often strayed into conversations and territory related to Oxfam GB's work on women's rights in general. We recognise that these are outside of the scope of this evaluation, but on reflection we think it is important to note here a perceived incongruity. We raise some of these concerns in the report partly because they have an impact on the potential of (and need for) RHV to influence wider organisational thinking.

Part One: Introduction and methodology

Introduction

This is the midterm evaluation of Raising Her Voice, a global portfolio of work on women's participation and representation in governance at all levels.

Raising Her Voice (RHV) is a global portfolio of work managed by Oxfam Great Britain (OGB), which aims to promote the effective engagement of poor and marginalised women in governance at all levels. The overall objective of the portfolio is to ensure that public policy, decision-making and expenditure, national and customary and traditional rights reflect the interests of poor and marginalised women, especially those excluded from political, social and economic life. Funded by the Governance and Transparency Fund of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) the portfolio has grown out of work across the world linking the promotion of women's rights with transparent and accountable governance.

This diverse portfolio, with projects in 17 countries across the world, includes many different approaches and strategies, but all projects share the overall objective of ensuring that public policy, decision-making, practices and expenditure reflect the interests of poor and marginalised women: supporting women to 'Raise Her Voice'. Strategies include supporting women's leadership; addressing attitudes and beliefs about the role of women in public decision-making through awareness-raising and media work; building women's collective voice and participation in policy through networking and capacity building of activists and civil society organisations; and working with public institutions and decision-making forums.

The seven African country programmes are managed within a regional pan-African element with links to a continent-wide coalition, also supported by RHV, working to ensure implementation of the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights. Nine country projects in South-East Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe have developed out of national priorities and capacity. A global coordination team support project management and accountability, share learning and global advocacy.

This mid-term evaluation

This evaluation focuses on the global identity, coordination and communication of the portfolio, to identify learning and suggest the most strategic ways forward at global level.

This evaluation is happening at the mid-point of the 5 year project (2008-2013), to review progress so far and collect learning on the approaches which have worked well and opportunities for cross-project sharing and support. The report also aims to advise on corrective actions and priorities for the global coordination in the final two years. It is an evaluation of the *global* RHV portfolio, based on the mid-term reviews conducted by each of the country projects, but drawing out lessons and recommendations for the global coordination function.

The evaluation comes at a very opportune time in the management of Raising Her Voice. With two and half years' worth of work to draw on, this is the point when the focus of the global coordinator can shift from supporting project managers to develop and implement systems for smooth management, coordination and communication; to capturing learning to facilitate peer support and sharing within the portfolio team, and to communicate it to a wider audience. With so much work completed, the global portfolio can now start to tell a story, based on the individual country experiences, of what Raising Her Voice is doing, what it has learned about the importance of work on women's participation in governance, and the strategies for achieving it. It is also good timing to be thinking about how the momentum that is building at global level around RHV can be sustained beyond the 5 year funding period. As we discovered during the initial needs assessment, the fact that the evaluation coincided with the start of a new global RHV coordinator has made this evaluation even more timely.

The Terms of Reference for this review focused on synthesising and complementing the national midterm evaluations, to highlight valuable approaches and learning. However, an initial needs assessment clearly pointed to this opportunity to build a stronger global identity and outreach and communication role, and to draw out lessons for OGB more widely on women's participation and representation in governance, partnership working and managing multi-country projects. In particular the areas we have focused on have been:

- **The implementation of the RHV portfolio to date:** what work was planned and carried out, whether the resources are being used effectively and efficiently, especially at global level.
- **Emerging impact:** identifying case studies which illustrate emerging impact as well as how change happens.
- **Learning about gender and governance:** the types of approaches being used and how they speak to a wider theory of change for influencing and informing work on women's right to be heard.
- **Management models**: Learning and assessment of the global coordination and project management, including managing and monitoring programme quality, focus and impact, managing global programmes and the added value of OGB in such complex and multidimensional work with partners.
- **Embeddedness and sustainability**: How well RHV is linked into wider processes for women's rights and accountable governance at different levels, the related partnership dynamics within Oxfam and the potential for RHV in the future.

Users and uses of the evaluation

The evaluation communicates the learning and impact from the portfolio of work on gender and governance for a general audience, with a particular focus on learning for the RHV team.

This evaluation is a public document and intends to inform readers both of the intentions and strategies behind Raising Her Voice, how the different projects are working to promote public decision making and governance processes which are more accountable and responsive to marginalised women's needs, and what they have achieved. We hope this will be interesting and useful for others in the organisation and the development sector in general to support future work on gender and governance. It also provides some insights and recommendations for OGB on managing global programmes of work, working across organisational aims and levels (personal, community, national, global) with diverse partners and working on women's rights issues. We hope it will help to clarify Oxfam's added value in the wider women's rights and anti-poverty movements. It is also designed to provide DFID with insights into the rationale and impact of using their funding to support transparent and representative governance at different levels.

The primary audience for this evaluation, however, is the Raising Her Voice team, to inform and link their work and provide clear guidance and recommendations to maximize the role of the RHV global coordinator in the second phase.

Methodology

The evaluators built an understanding of RHV's work from the national evaluations, which are not comprehensive or comparable, complemented by insights into the role and potential of the global function.

This is an independent assessment of the global Raising Her Voice programme, based on examination and analysis of the different components of the Raising Her Voice portfolio, and its links to wider OGB work. The approach has followed several interdependent steps, which build on each other, though not necessarily in a linear fashion. This began with engagement with key programme staff and stakeholders to understand the overall programme and the needs for this evaluation, based on which the terms of reference were refined and the evaluation methodology, questions and analytical framework designed. Those questions and framework guided us in gathering information from country MTE reports, interviews and group reflections,

from which we were able to develop key themes and insights to share for feedback and sensemaking with key stakeholders in RHV and Oxfam GB. Finally the evaluation team has finalized this report responding to feedback received, and attempting to make it as useful and useable as possible for the RHV team.

Research tools

More specifically, the research tools used were:

- **Desk review:** The bulk of the material which feeds into this evaluation comes from the mid-term reviews conducted in each of the country projects – 14 in total[i] - as well as other background documentation from the projects and the portfolio[ii].
- **In depth interviews, group reflections and email surveys**: To complement this information and get different perspectives from relevant Oxfam GB staff we also conducted 14 interviews in Oxford and the Africa regional office, one group reflection in Oxford, a survey of the relevant country directors and three feedback sessions with staff in Oxford and by teleconference with RHV project managers in English and Spanish.
- **Case study:** We also conducted an in-depth case study in Bolivia based on participatory interactions with over 70 stakeholders. This methodology for this case study has been based on participatory facilitation and reflection which we have also written up to support documentation of such complex multi-stakeholder, multi-levelled work in the future.

Through these means we have been able to collect ample information on the work of RHV projects and partners, the challenges and approaches, and ideas for future directions. We have also attempted to construct a 'value for money' assessment which includes quantitative information on inputs, linked to more qualitative information on 'value' or impact. By doing this, more than providing a meaningful analysis of efficiency we are highlighting areas of further data which should be collected.

Limitations to this evaluation

RHV is a huge, broad-ranging portfolio of work and it would be impossible to capture all of the learning, needs and issues in one evaluation process. Added to that the inherent subjectivity of any evaluator, and this will always be a limited process. We have tried to overcome that through transparency of our strong women's rights bias, and continuous feedback and validation with the RHV coordinator and team. However, some crucial limitations should be stated which affect the breadth and quality of the findings:

- The relatively **short time period for conducting the evaluation** (with 2 months for the whole process of needs assessment, stakeholder mapping and methodology development, data collection and analysis, feedback and reporting) has inevitably meant that some key actors have not been available to contribute directly.
- The 14 mid-term reviews varied enormously in quality and focus, all giving a **partial picture but in quite different ways,** and this has made it difficult to compare or synthesise effectiveness and efficiency. This has also made it very difficult to get a meaningful sense in quantitative terms of the scope and value of the project. What's more, since the evaluators were primarily assessing the work of RHV partners, the evaluations often failed to assess the role of OGB at country level, making it difficult to capture Oxfam's global added value.
- As well as the partial reviews, we also recognise that there are **gaps in information** which we have not had time or scope to fill within this evaluation, including an absence of voices from the ground. This is very important as we recognise that it distorts our own interpretations of significance and meaning.

However, following feminist principles and methods including clear positioning, open discussion and feedback of findings to key RHV staff in OGB we have made efforts to continually share, triangulate and readjust our process and findings to make it as useful and representative as possible. As a midterm review we are able to make practical recommendations as to the types of data collection processes which would enable a more comprehensive assessment in the future, including monitoring and evaluation and

participatory reflection and documentation processes as piloted in Bolivia. But given our approach of working closely with the new global coordinator and her colleagues, and providing ongoing and wide feedback of findings, we feel confident that we have been able to produce a fair assessment and an actionable report.

The broader context for RHV: Working on gender and governance

Women's access to political participation and representation are a crucial aspect of achieving gender equality – and Oxfam has an important role to play.

Oxfam GB is committed to putting women's rights '*at the heart of everything we do*'. This is a strategic priority for Oxfam and a statement of intent from the organisation's senior management. Although Oxfam has a long history of working on gender equality and women's rights, and in the process has built up awareness, understanding and commitment amongst staff and partners, these have tended to be standalone projects. Also, as an organisation which invests heavily in livelihoods work, the organisational capacity and focus tends to be focused in women's *economic* rights. Although access to and control over income is important for women everywhere, Raising Her Voice shows clearly that women's rights to political representation and participation in government and decision making are an equally important and complementary dimension of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

The mid-term evaluations of RHV projects share a variety of reasons and examples why these political rights of women are so important. Firstly, it is clearly *important for women to have a say over decisions which affect them*, their lives, families and communities. **Central American** RHV partners found clear evidence that political participation and representation is important not only for its own sake, but also for women to *access to other types of power*, including economic. It is also a matter of *government accountability*. As the **Pakistan** report notes, "*apathy and disengagement are a breeding ground for unaccountable governments and inappropriate priority setting and resource distribution*", and in these contexts the only way to ensure fair representation is through direct participation in decision making and policy processes.

Despite the obvious impact that local decision making, planning and budgeting processes have on women's lives, women are largely excluded from these processes in all countries were RHV operates. For example, a social assessment conducted by **Indonesian** RHV partners found that most people are unaware of women's rights or needs to participate and be well represented. In all contexts where RHV operates there are clear *social and cultural barriers* to women's political participation and representation, including traditional attitudes and roles which limit women's mobility or restricts their voices to certain domains. Marginalised women's own *lack of capacity and confidence,* lack of government capacity for participatory planning and monitoring, and lack of capacity for civil society to formulate and organise critical engagement are also key barriers to leadership and participation.[iii]

Evidence from RHV projects shows that, because of these multiple factors working against them, marginalised *women need targeted and sustained support to strengthen their political power*. While appropriate laws and policies are necessary for realising women's rights, they are not sufficient for transformative change to occur. Equally, quotas for women's participation in government processes and structures are helpful, but not without attention to women's capacity to participate meaningfully.[iv] The **South Africa** report recognises a need to "*institutionalise democratic norms of women's equality, autonomy and freedom in society, and translate the principles and values from laws and policy into the private spheres of women's lives*". [v] And yet, women's rights and gender equality are often amongst the least resourced government functions.[vi]

The role for Oxfam and its partners is clear, and RHV has much learning to contribute to strengthening the effectiveness of this work. In 2010, by making a renewed commitment to 'put women's rights at the heart of everything we do', Oxfam GB's senior management recognised the need for its work on women's rights to be

more consistent and strategic across its humanitarian, campaign and development work. New programmes of work now have to be based on clear analysis of how they will contribute to transformative change in the lives of poor women, and this also has to be shown in their core objectives and indicators. This is a real opportunity to broaden, as well as strengthen, the organisation's work and capacity on women's rights to include Women's Right to be Heard.[vii]

The Raising Her Voice Portfolio

Raising Her Voice is a broad and wide-ranging set of projects working in different ways and contexts towards strengthening women's participation in governance processes.

Raising Her Voice has been a great opportunity for OGB and its partners to engage in work to explore how women's political representation and participation can be strengthened in 17 very different contexts. But it has its roots in the gradual evolution of OGB's work on gender and governance. In each context the projects were designed to *build on existing work and local processes*, and globally it was derived from a *clear organisational commitment to gender and governance*, two of OGB's five organisational aims, in response to the funding opportunity of the 2008 DFID fund which aimed to explore issues related to the UK Government's *White Paper on Governance and Transparency*.

When the opportunity arose, there was a short turnaround period to develop a funding proposal, but given the potential and the clear need identified, Oxfam worked quickly to develop a broad and ambitious portfolio of work. Within the basic concept of strengthening women's participation in governance processes at the grassroots, OGB country programmes were offered the chance to submit relevant *proposals according to their, and their partners', capacity and focus*. In the end two proposals were taken from each OGB region.[viii] A summary logframe was developed and submitted with a global portfolio proposal to DfID, which formed the basis for each country to further develop their projects.

Raising Her Voice: different project objectives and focus

In **Africa**, all of the projects were developed within a pan-African framework to address the ratification, domestication and implementation of the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights (Maputo Protocol). In some countries the focus is more on *getting the laws in place*, in others the *awareness and use of them* to secure women's rights and hold the state accountable. In **Nepal, Bolivia, Honduras** and **Albania**, the objectives of RHV are to ensure that *public policies and priorities* reflect the interests of (rural/ marginalised/ indigenous) women.

The *capacity of women* (and women's organisations) for leadership, participation and influencing is a central focus of the work in **Armenia, Nigeria, Guatemala, Bolivia** and **Honduras**, with a special focus on networking and collective action.

A core objective of RHV **Pakistan** is to *address attitudes and beliefs* about the role of women in public decision making. More broadly, the promotion of gender equality is a central objective in **Nepal** and **Guatemala**.

This process was an effective way of building contextualised projects in many countries, for example allowing **Albania** and **Armenia** to strengthen the gender component of existing work on local government participation. The outgoing global coordinator explained: "*Competent staff could see opportunities and make it work.*" However, it was not followed in the same way for countries in the **African** regions where a portfolio focused on advocacy around the Maputo Protocol was developed by the Pan-Africa partner Equality Now and OGBs Pan African office, and rolled out through OGB in eight countries as part of a wider coalition advocating for African women's rights, SOAWR. The coherence within the Pan-Africa region enables linkages between local, national and global awareness raising and advocacy work, but has complicated to some extent the added-value and relationship of OGB country offices in **Africa**, as the concept was not developed based on their own priorities and experience, as in other countries, and they did not choose the partners with whom to work. This required support from the global coordinator to adapt and refine the project to suit priorities

and skills, and building partner capacity to work with Oxfam processes, in some cases in the face of some hostility.[ix]

Ultimately, as the outgoing coordinator reflected, "*In hindsight the overall goal was probably too broad*", and this flexibility has left a legacy of strong national (or in the case of **Africa**, regional) focus with relatively weak global identity and coherence. While this is what one would *expect* from a portfolio grounded in individual country experience, there is now the opportunity to work more carefully now on the global angle now that the country programmes are well established.

Using a theory of change

A collectively constructed theory of change helps to make sense of the different elements of work and contributions within a shared 'bigger picture' setting out how change is expected to happen.

The overall proposal for Raising Her Voice outlines key objectives and strategies, including networking, lobbying and advocacy; working with public institutions and decision-making forums, including traditional structures; and empowering and building capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in campaigns and policy work around women's rights, participation and representation. Within each RHV project, different elements and approaches to women's political participation and representation have been articulated. However, perhaps because of the portfolio nature of RHV, all of this information about the assumptions and values underpinning Raising Her Voice, and an understanding of how change will happen, are not expressed in a common theory of change that shows the cross-cutting, complex and integrated nature of the work and clearly articulating a global identity and vision.

A theory of change is more than a logframe. It is a way of constructing a common vision of how the broad goal of women's participation in governance at all levels can be achieved. The experiences of RHV projects so far show, as detailed below, that *working on women's rights to participation and representation in governance requires a multidimensional approach, with work across different domains and levels.* A theory of change provides a simple framework for understanding and evaluating the contribution of each element of work, and how each fits with wider change processes within and outside of the realms of the project. Crucially, a theory of change for RHV ensures that women's rights to representation and participation in governance are a central reference for all of the component projects, and provide a fundamental tool for quality monitoring and accountability. Without it the portfolio is structurally centralised, with the global coordinator acting as a hub for any sharing or peer exchange; the key piece making sense of the 'whole'.

As evaluators, we have developed a model theory, based on inputs from RHV project documents, which we recommend that the RHV team validate in a separate process. Feedback from RHV coordinators and people working on women's rights and governance in OGB has overall been very positive, and most people have been able to recognise their own strategies and approaches in it. Several people, including RHV project managers have commented that it helps them to understand the different elements of work which contribute to wider change, and develop their plans accordingly. The RHV coordinator ***in Armenia***, for example, noted that this theory had been very useful for the country office in developing the gender component of their national change strategy. However, a few informants did not feel that it adequately represented their understanding of how RHV is expecting to contribute to changes in gender and governance. In particular, the ***Pan-Africa*** office coordinator felt that the continental portfolio work fits better with the original project documents than the proposed, wider theory of change.

The value of any theory of change is that it is constructed collectively and provides a framework in which all actors recognise their own contributions. A participatory process whereby different perspectives within the broad RHV portfolio can test its relevance and usefulness would result in a much stronger theory. This can then be used by the global coordinator and RHV colleagues in country to promote more effective work on women's participation and leadership in other parts of Oxfam and beyond. In our brief engagement with RHV we have seen that even where work began with a focus on only one sphere this has gradually grown to

incorporate work on, or recognition of, other spheres. **Uganda** is a case in point, where the RHV team reflected after a peer review visit to **Nepal** that their existing work to build a policy advocacy coalition for ratification of the Maputo Protocol needs to be complemented with more work at grassroots level. A participatory and constructive process to validate and adapt the theory of change would enable this type of learning to be shared and debated and the group to construct something which could inform OGB programme work beyond the existing RHV portfolio.

It is important to recognise, also, that this theory of change should not stand alone, but be 'nested' into wider theories of change around women's rights and development in Oxfam. Women's rights to participate and be represented in governance structures and processes are complementary to other areas of work on women's rights, and to the broader goals of Oxfam to contribute to '*a world without poverty*'. OGB is currently undertaking work to clarify and build their organisational theory of change, and this is one of several smaller, nested theories, or logic models, which could contribute to that wider debate and thinking[x].

The RHV theory of change

The theory of change illustrated here (and attached in full below) works towards an overarching goal that "*women's voices are heard*", and sets out some assumptions and theories as to how that change will come about, and RHV's role within that. Building on feminist theory, and Oxfam International's own gender theory,[xi] we have identified three broad spheres which influence women's opportunities to participate in governance: the personal, political and social spheres. A woman's personal capacity, confidence and context will have a strong influence on her confidence to act, and be heard. The political and social spheres include both formal and informal structures and spaces. In the political sphere for example this includes public and traditional decision making structures and processes, and access to leaders who can represent marginalised women's concerns and needs. In the social sphere, this includes norms and attitudes as promoted or upheld by cultural institutions or the media, as well as civil society organisations and women's groups which provide women with a platform for developing capacity and strength to ensure their voices are heard. In our analysis, the political and social spheres influence each other, and have strong influence over a poor woman's ability to secure her political rights, but from her personal sphere a marginalised woman currently has little opportunity to influence them back. RHV aims to address this imbalance, increasing women's participation and voice in the social and political spheres, and thereby helping to make government more representative.

The theory requires the use of diverse strategies to work on the different spheres through engagement at different levels of influence and decision making, from local to national and global, which in this case represent RHV's contribution to change. These latter are represented in RHV project documents as four clusters: working with individual women activists; public institutions; civil society organisations (including women's organisations); and the media. There are also a set of programmatic structures through which RHV engages in supporting and facilitating this change. At the moment the internal structures and relationships are clear, with 17 national projects, one regional component working to a common focus in **Africa** and a global component to ensure that learning and cross-fertilisation of experience strengthen individual projects within the portfolio. However, the relationship between the global programme and OGB, and other global actors in women's rights and governance, is not so well-defined.

Some assumptions underlying RHV

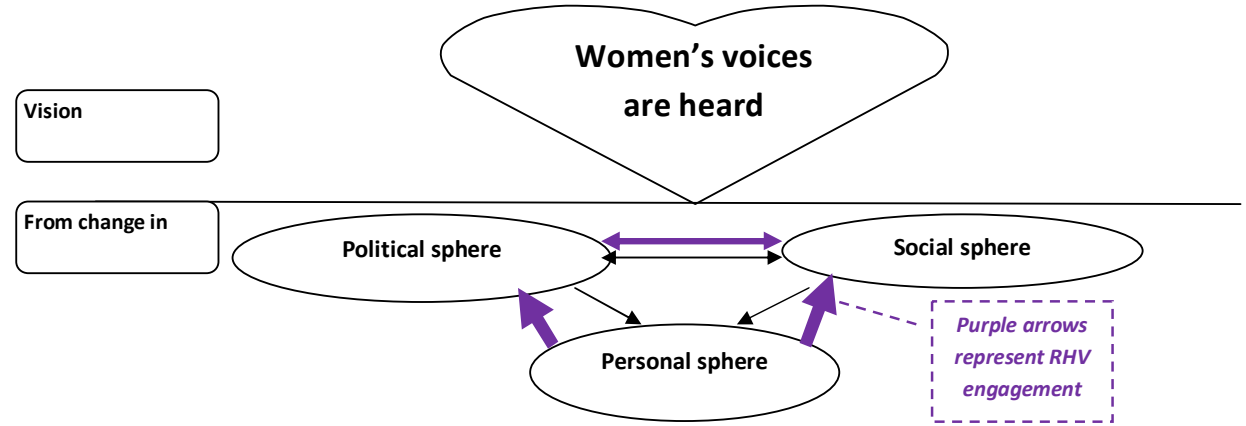
The RHV project proposal, and the learning on which it was based, suggest the following underlying assumptions:

- Personal power increases with strong *organization and networking*;
- *Strong and representative civil society* holds government accountable and improves the quality of governance;
- If you strengthen poor women´s voice and confidence, they can *influence social and political spheres*;
- Social and political change need to be addressed together at different levels with *foundations at the grassroots.* (Oxfam cannot act alone).

There are a series of assumptions and values underpinning this theory, which are derived from OGB's own priorities, learning and experience, including a commitment to women's rights and understanding of the multiple dimensions of development and women's empowerment. The RHV project document states that "*As citizens, women have equal rights to occupy public spaces and demand that their human rights be*

respected. In addition, poor women's roles as mothers and carers place them on the frontline of the fight against poverty. Amplifying their effective demand on the state is critical in ensuring the delivery of social protection and basic services."

Illustrative Raising Her Voice theory of change



Assumptions/ theory

- Personal power increases with strong organization and networking
- Strong and representative civil society holds government accountable and improves the quality of governance.
- If you strengthen poor women´s voice and confidence, they can influence social and political spheres.
- Social and political change need to be addressed together at different levels with foundations at the grassroots. (OGB cannot act alone)

Creating change with

Women activists	Public and traditional institutions	Civil society/ women´s organisations	The media

Strategies

• Linking them to each other • Linking them to policy processes • Providing tools and capacity • Lobbying together • HRD protection	• Influence them (lobby) • Build capacity to hear/ include women's voices • Link them to communities/ civil society • Develop good legislative frameworks. • Strengthening female MPs and those in executive positions to promote sound pro-gender bills.	• Capacity building on women´s rights, policy and campaigns • Mobilization • Awareness raising • Linking grassroots women with national decision-making processes • Ensuring CSO/women's movement accountability	• Spreading word of what RHV and partners are doing • Raising awareness of women's rights and participation • Shaping public opinion to influence political change • Promote pro-gender based bills for public support e.g. VAW

RHV contributions to change

OGB
- Adds value to existing processes by facilitating, linking, capacity building etc.
- This ToC links to wider organisational models of change.

NATIONAL
- Country level RHV projects developed in response to local needs and opportunities (national context influences project design)

GLOBAL
- Based on strong grassroots and national coalitions/ movements etc
- Develop alliances to strengthen women´s collective voice in international debate and policymaking.
- Links to wider OGB work.

Part Two: RHV in action - approaches and achievements

Raising Her Voice incorporates work on different issues and with diverse stakeholders, but together they show how work for women's right to be heard is necessarily multidimensional.

The theory of change as it is represented here depicts work on women's right to be heard, to political participation and representation, as necessarily multidimensional and complex, requiring a collaborative and integrated response from diverse actors. The **Bolivia** case study undertaken for this evaluation also shows that: "*Empowerment at the individual and social levels prepares the way for empowerment in the institutional sphere*."

Taken as a whole, Raising Her Voice provides some very good examples of work on the three spheres at different levels, and with different actors. This confirms the evaluators' understanding of how change happens, and the case studies attached as annexes here show that taken together these components can create true transformative change in the strength and influence of women's voices and actions.

However, within the individual country projects a good balance has not always been achieved between different dimensions of the work. As this is a global evaluation of Raising Her Voice, we have not focused on those individual stories unless they tell us something about the global portfolio. These individual stories are better told in the individual midterm evaluations, to which the global coordinators and project managers need to –and are already formulating - appropriate responses. Here we focus on the lessons that can be taken from the work appropriate to the global function, and some lessons about managing and developing such diverse programmes of work which are covered in the section three.

The personal sphere: space and confidence

Many Raising Her Voice projects have had a strong impact on women's personal confidence and capacity through strengthening social spaces, as well as through direct training and support.

Looking across the range of work and learning that had come out of it, the outgoing coordinator of Raising Her Voice, remarked that: "*Common across the portfolio you will find that key to success is building women's self-confidence.*" The case studies attached as annexes show that, with confidence, women have been able to use their knowledge of laws to defend and access their rights, such as in **South Africa**; to challenge negative stereotypes and cultural norms which hold them back from participating in public life, such as in **Armenia**; or to take over defunct spaces for influencing local decision making, such as in **Nepal**.

These examples show that personal change is at the heart of any transformation of social and political spheres, creating greater demand for political representation, and more confidence and support for women's participation in decision making. RHV partners have worked on both sides of the equation: exploring and challenging social attitudes which limit women's meaningful participation, and building personal capacity and confidence to participate and lead. In some cases, work to build and strengthen social spaces for women to organise and construct collective analysis has had the effect of building the confidence and awareness of the women involved. In other projects, specific activities and focus has been paid to strengthening women's capacity and confidence as a basis for their participation in governance, for raising their voices and presenting themselves as leaders. Often it is a mixture of both. Several evaluations observed the challenges of ensuring that the ability to participate in governance processes was not only available to already privileged women.

For example in **Nepal**, 2000 women in 80 villages have been able to join daily community discussion groups which increase their understanding of their rights and enhance their confidence and motivation towards equal participation in governance, saying "*We have to be there to decide for ourselves*". In parallel, local partners have worked with community members and service providers to challenge traditional attitudes to domestic violence and women's political participation. The **Nepal** evaluation found that nearly 60% of participants expressed greater confidence to raise their voice for women's rights, and that the decision making process no longer felt out of their reach. One participant, a mother of three who was married at 13, explained the impact that this group awareness had on her: *"I always thought it was my fate that I had to suffer from an early age. Only when I started to attend the CDC, I realized that there are many women like me who had to go through this ordeal without any fault of ours. This was not fate but just a manmade social imposition severely limiting women's liberty and her rights."* She is now a strong advocate in her village for girls' education and putting an end to child marriage.

In **Papua, Indonesia**, two women were supported to take part in local decision making forums, where previously only men had participated. One participant explained the impact that this support and opportunity had on her behaviour, saying: "*I used to watch only. I am glad because this programme always encourages and gives mamas the opportunity to talk … I was afraid [of being] laughed at by the men. But men can be wrong too. So, after a while I think…why should I worry to say what's in my mind if it is the truth?"*

In **Bolivia**, RHV partners worked through the regional women's platform to create spaces and develop activities expressly to empower women leaders and their organisations, exploring and debunking stereotypes of rural and urban women, and of feminists, and constructing their own ideas of empowered women, women leaders and so on. "*In the Platform there is exchange and understanding among diverse women*", affirmed the leader of one of the 100 local women's organisations represented in the platform. Coming together has been at the heart of women's political participation, allowing them to reflect and gain understanding as a precondition for making proposals, participating in and influencing public institutions and holding them accountable. As the report author explained: "*Empowerment at the individual and social levels prepares the way for empowerment in the institutional sphere*."

In **Armenia**, Youth Advocacy Groups in three geographic areas allow young men and women the space to engage in decision making, and also to explore social attitudes regarding women's political rights and develop their own vision of gender and social equality. In the same areas, Women's Advocacy Groups engage in local planning processes, and the learning and networking has been personally empowering. One group member explained: *"I was speaking very little before. Now I can express my thoughts and speak out in public. I have my own vision and can initiate something on my own."* However, partners are aware that such changes in thinking need to be supported by wider and sustained interventions using the media and community campaigns.

In **South Africa** RHV partners work with 6 local NGOs and 30 women activists to build their capacity to be leaders and advocates for women's rights. One activist explained that RHV: *"...focuses on women, empowering them, giving them skills, making a woman realise that she has rights and giving strategies on how to ensure that they enjoy their rights, how to challenge issues and make sure they make their voice heard."* The case study attached shows how powerful this knowledge and confidence can be.

While it appears that work on the personal sphere within the RHV portfolio is relatively weak compared to focus on the other two spheres, this is not necessarily a fair assessment. Given that the theory of change which makes these distinctions has not yet been validated or applied, these three

domains have not been the underpinning logic for planning, data collection or reporting in RHV so may not have been identified as such. As mentioned above, a lot of the examples of personal empowerment have come naturally from work on the social domain, to build collective voice, capacity and action, and raise public awareness of women's rights and issues.

Insights

- In section 3, we recommend that the RHV team construct or validate a common theory of change, to recognise the fundamental importance of work on women's personal confidence and capacity as a foundation for sustained personal, social and political change.
- We also recommend a review of the global portfolio indicators, data collection and monitoring systems to ensure that women's rights stay central. This should enable the RHV team to better capture and articulate the ways in which work on the personal sphere is happening, and the future impact.

The social sphere: public awareness and organisation

The social sphere includes work to build and link organisations and networks working for women's rights at different levels, to raise public awareness and challenge stereotypes.

Partners working on the personal sphere noted that achievements also depend on systematic and structural opportunities for women to engage in governance. Work on the social and cultural sphere aims to create such a supportive social environment for women to secure their political rights. This includes work to strengthen women's collective voice and capacity, supporting them to organise, mobilise, debate and agree priorities and strategies for effective engagement in governance. It also includes work to raise public awareness of women's rights, priorities and needs, to influence the opportunities and social support for women to actively participate in governance processes, and the openness to hearing women's voices.

Strengthening women's collective voice and capacity

The RHV **Bolivia** case study clearly shows the value of building women's collective voice and power. It is the story of a broad and diverse coalition of women's organisations which has looked inward to debate concepts and definitions around women's leadership and empowerment, construct collective values and priorities, as a basis to reach out to engage in political and decision-making processes.

The **Pakistan** evaluation, too, noted the value of bringing together women from different political parties to focus on issues of interest and importance to women, develop trust and collaboration. RHV projects have helped to build and broaden these kinds of coalitions of women's organisations, or for women's rights, in villages, districts, countries and even at continental level in Africa.

The **Nigeria** evaluation explained that: *"coalition-building accelerates ownership, synergy and commitment beyond the life span of donor project funds. It also reduces costs based on the leverage of existing work by the partners while endearing [sic] a culture of contributions by partners to the cause."* Members of one women's group in **Nepal** put it another way: "*Our unity is our strength. For showing us where our strength lies, we would like to thank RHV.*"

Working together at village level

In **Nepal** RHV local partners have worked to provide women with space, information and facilitation to build shared analysis and devise collective action. From a rights-based approach, the basis of the work has been 81 community discussion classes, where women meet every day for 2 hours with

trained facilitators to support their debates and analysis with information, and strengthen their organisation with training and guidance. The facilitators use posters, fliers and booklets to share information and initiate discussion on different rights issues and community problems. They then use participatory methods to provide space for participants to air their views and opinions to build towards common decisions or action plans. Community discussion classes are focused on enhancing women's participation in four key community-level structures: management committees and user groups on community forests, health posts, sanitation and schools. Over 400 women now hold leadership positions in these structures.

By working as a group, women have been able to explore and challenge some of the cultural and social norms which have kept them quiet for so long, and through example begun to obtain the support of their families and local men. For example, the evaluation found that nearly 40% of participants were now actively engaged in efforts to stamp out domestic violence, 65% of whom stated that this had come about because of participation in RHV. Cases of domestic violence are no longer confined within the home but openly discussed in the classes where women agree on ways to tackle and address cases of violence. One group explained: *"Though the RHV project does not provide us with food, clothes or money, still have become rich with solidarity, confidence and awareness. Our girls no more feel ashamed of themselves for somebody else's behaviour. They have learned to fight against violence and abuses with dignity and pride."*

Linked to wider RHV advocacy strategies and processes, and complemented by training of women leaders and facilitators on leadership, advocacy and facilitation, the community groups have been able to feed into work at all levels. What's more, as the attached case study shows, many women have been inspired and motivated by the new information, skills and resulting confidence, to take up leadership positions in their communities, transforming the political sphere not only through influence but also direct participation.

It is important to mention here that, although **Nepal** is the best documented example of working with women at a local level, projects including those in **Guatemala, Honduras, Pakistan** and **Liberia** are engaging to some extent in this kind of work.

Bringing groups and activists together at district level

Several RHV projects have developed or supported district level platforms to enable different women's organisations and leaders to develop common priorities and engage more coherently and effectively with government authorities. In **Indonesia**, RHV partners have established a multi-ethnic 'Women's Community Partnership Forum', which organises hearings, training and media campaigns, and builds relationships with government to strengthen members' advocacy on women's rights and interests. Forum members have received training on government functions and processes at different levels, and meet regularly with village administrators to formulate village development plans, considered a key entry point for women's participation and representation.

However, with so many interests represented, this is not an easy process. Proposals at the village level are mainly to do with infrastructure, and the special needs of women are difficult to promote. As one activist noted: *"Lots of women in the credit union want training to build their capacities. The need for this kind of training was proposed at the village development planning forum, but participants felt that a breakwater was more important because otherwise the village lands would be lost…The forum has never discussed the needs of women in the village."* Legitimacy and effectiveness clearly depend on creating a strong unified voice, a challenge in such a diverse community. The project model anticipates that the relatively low number of women participating in the Forum will have a wider impact as they act as 'agents of change' in their communities, sharing the information and skills they receive and gathering views and concerns. However, the evaluation

found that unless these women receive skills and support to be representative and consultative leaders, the approach can create envy and misunderstanding, and this can threaten to undermine their leadership and legitimacy. To be agents of change, women need local organisations to provide support and spaces to gather and represent the interests of marginalised women in their communities. With this support, and as the forum builds in recognition and legitimacy, the work of RHV should create a sustainable impact and process, beyond the funding period.

In **Pakistan** RHV partners set up 30 district level 'women leader groups' to bring together women elected representatives and increase their influence, dialogue and relationships with key stakeholders in government and civil society. 50 women from different political parties in each women leader group came together for the first time on one platform, developed mutual trust and strengthened the collective voice of local women. The women leaders think alike on many women's rights issues despite different ideological backgrounds, and have worked together to resolve local problems. For example, in the aftermath of the 2010 floods members helped rescue stranded women and children and provided medical aid to flood victims. Groups in unaffected districts raised funds for groups in flood-affected areas, held press conferences and rallies - activities women had rarely carried out in those districts. The women leaders also noted the impact of their work to share information on women's rights laws, including laws on harassment. One group commented that women from remote areas were beginning to approach them to discuss cases, including a woman college teacher who told of harassment by a senior colleague. They explained: "*We took up the case with the inquiry committee constituted under the Harassment Bill in that college and the accused was removed from the post*".

Collective voice has been key to the work of RHV in **Bolivia**, where partners are engaged in a longstanding platform for women's rights organisations and have worked to extend membership to more rural and indigenous women's organisations. This has required the platform to incorporate different visions of women's empowerment and gender equality, and develop a collective vision which revolves around complementarities, and concepts of 'depatriarchalisation' and 'decolonisation'. Workshops, conferences, seminars, meetings, festivals, forums, campaigns and courses have all provided spaces for women to increase their power, organise themselves, negotiate, build trust with each other, share their visions of reality and agree on collective actions. In this way they have been strong and effective actors in processes to make local policies and laws to implement the new constitution. In 2009, the Platform developed a collective proposal to present to the council drafting local statutes based on the constitution, and was a proactive actor in the preparation process. Members of the Platform explained that "*200 people participated in this space through intensive debate and strong questioning*", and the final draft included 51 proposed additions by the Platform.

These cases show how a basic consensus on women's rights is an important foundation for advocacy efforts at different levels, as well as monitoring and participation in local governance. The **Pakistan** evaluation in particular recommended that with clearer advocacy strategies and demands, these groups could build on this consensus and strengthen their influence on decisions, policies and government processes.

Building strong national coalitions for women's rights

National level women's organisations and networks at the national level can be very strong advocates for women's rights, with connections to grassroots women and access to decision makers at different levels. Many RHV projects have built or strengthened national coalitions of women's organisations, such as the broad coalition which brought about ratification of the Maputo Protocol in **Uganda**, or of organisations advocating for women's rights. For example, in **Nigeria**, RHV has helped to build a coalition of 17 civil society organisations working on women's rights issues at different levels, who

themselves link to other organisations. This has enabled faith-based groups to strengthen the commitment of senior Catholic and Muslim leaders to women's rights. The fact that the national coalitions draw in terms of strategy, information and funding opportunities from the RHV-supported pan-Africa Coalition enhances their effectiveness.

In **Africa**, coalitions have been built to work on the ratification and implementation of the Maputo Protocol in **Uganda, the Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia** and **Mozambique** - each drawing on support and information from the **Pan-Africa** Coalition partner. This regional component has also enabled RHV to bring the voices of poor African women to key international processes such as African Union and The United Nations meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women. In **Mozambique**, an informal pressure group was developed to work together proactively on the domestic violence law from a women's rights perspective. Members not only mobilised members to lobby for the bill to be passed, but worked together to discuss the detail of the draft bill and develop proposals to improve it, ensuring quality and appropriate legislation.

In **Honduras** a network of women's networks brings local voices to district and national levels. In **Honduras**, RHV has helped to reactivate and reorganise ten women's networks covering more than 1000 women in 11 areas of the country. This network of networks aims to strengthen women's capacity to act together to influence the state and society to prioritise policies, projects and programmes in their interests. In each of the local areas, women's networks have a clear management structure and broad membership from across their area, ensuring participation of rural and urban women. Brought together, this creates a strong multiplier effect for the work, but also requires work to define a common mission and vision. RHV has enabled partners to design and develop capacity on public policy and budgeting, and women have begun to see and use the budget as a practical tool for advocacy and engagement in planning. The evaluation found that work to build the capacity of member organisations for network management is essential to ensure the sustainability of such initiatives. Other regional networks, such as the Platform in Cochabamba, **Bolivia**, are connected into larger national networks.

In December 2010, a global learning event was held for RHV project managers working on coalition building to share experiences. They recognised several benefits of working in coalition, including creating a broader base of support and reach; reinforcing a message through various channels; increased visibility and access to decision makers; pooling of expertise and learning from each other and, crucially, providing links between different levels of work and information.[xii] Recommendations include building on existing networks, while being very clear about the added capacity, funding streams and work being brought in. Coalitions should have a broad scope from the start, including organisations with rural reach and experience, and working with the media. Coalitions require attention, balance and an appreciation of strengths and weaknesses. More specific lessons around building trust and common vision are included in the RHV 'Companion to Coalition Building' and projects in **Nepal, Liberia** and **Uganda** are now looking to integrate learning into future coalition work.

Training and capacity building for women's groups and activists

Skills and capacity, and sharing of experience, are an essential element of quality policy advocacy work, monitoring and influence of governance. RHV partners have supported women to engage more effectively in governance processes with training on issues and skills such as leadership, advocacy, partnership, planning, gender budgeting and monitoring.

For example, budget advocacy trainings in **Nepal** enabled local women to influence local investment in women's development, getting village councils to allocate money for women's empowerment and income generation activities. Communication training in **Guatemala** enabled women's organisations

to think about their positioning, gain legitimacy and broaden recognition of women's rights issues. Many projects also provided training on advocacy and campaign tactics. In **Bolivia** and **South Africa**, organisations explored the power dynamics which make it difficult for women to raise their voices, and think through ways to challenge them more strategically.

The training and capacity building has not only strengthened the organisations but also individual activists. A member of the women's network in **Guatemala** explained: "*Civitas provides the framework, tools for advocacy and taught me how to develop campaigns. They helped us identify partners and they facilitated coordination with local, departmental and national organizations ... We improved the work of the Ixil Network and have been accepted by women in many communities.*" A **South African** activist commented: *"we used to just go to the relevant place marching and shouting but after this training I realised that there are some places where you have to initiate a meeting, where you have to network, where you have to bring on board policy and decision makers and engage with them."* The RHV annual report shows that the UNDP in **Pakistan** had commented on the value of the training given to women by RHV to increase their participation in council meetings, funding decisions and serving their communities.

Raising public awareness of women's rights and the laws that support them

Public awareness is central to much of RHV work, to ensure that people are actively engaged in protecting and promoting women's rights at all levels. In some cases this is part of wider policy advocacy strategies to raise the profile of important issues and increase pressure for policy change, and for individual and community action or response. In others, the work aims to challenge social attitudes and norms which restrict women's participation and mobility.

Raising individual and community awareness

At community level, many RHV partners[xiii] have provided training and information materials on women's rights and laws, and how they can be used to protect and uphold women's rights. For example, **South African** partner, POWA, developed a series of materials for lobbying and training, including a simple guide to the Maputo Protocol and a policy brief on its potential use, and a compilation of stories showcasing women's lived realities. The **Uganda** RHV programme pinned notices about gender and women's rights on village notice boards, as the most marginalised rural women lack access to the conventional channels of communication. In **Armenia**, RHV used electronic media such as community websites, blogs and a newsletter to encourage awareness and transparency of local development activities and promote dialogue between the community and local authorities. There are many examples of participants sharing this knowledge with wider networks and organisations, creating a stronger basis for upholding women's rights. One **South African** workshop participant, and HIV/AIDS treatment activist, noted that: "*When it comes to the laws nationally, regionally and internationally I did not have much information on them ... For instance if I want to challenge something and do not understand the laws, then I am going nowhere but now through RHV I am empowered*."

RHV experience shows that work on Women's Right to be Heard, to participate and be represented in governance, often hit a cultural nerve. This has especially been noted in **Africa**, where RHV work to domestication the Maputo Protocol crosses with areas such as abortion, polygamy or FGM. **Liberia** and **Tanzania** are both working on messages to deal with this, and the **Uganda** Coalition agreed to "reservations" on abortion as a way to build consensus around ratification of the Maputo Protocol. In **Nepal**, RHV anticipated resistance by dominant family members and planned to respond by getting participants, project coordinators and facilitators to visit "problem families", invite them to observe and attend meetings and other events. Community gatherings helped the family understand what the women are doing and how they are benefiting. Some family members who did this are now very

supportive, and this has been fundamental to women's capacity to participate and act. A key learning is that anticipation and planning is important, but flexibility and openness to debate and reflection is key, and needs to be budgeted for.

Media and public events

Local and public awareness has been further built with the media and public events. In many countries, including **Armenia, Bolivia, Mozambique** and **Nigeria**, RHV partners organised demonstrations and public events on international women's day, to raise awareness of violence against women, sexual harassment and other key issues. The **Bolivia** women's Platform co-organise an annual festival on the day of the Bolivian Woman with art, dialogue and debate to highlight issues of concern for women in the country. In **Honduras**, campaigns and public events were widely publicised by the media giving women more voice and visibility as social actors and citizens.

Media partnerships enabled several RHV projects to share and stimulate public discussion on women's rights issues. For example, partners in **Mozambique, Nigeria, Liberia** and **Nepal** have produced and aired radio programmes, soap operas, jingles and debates on women's rights issues, and the latter two established listener clubs to encourage discussion, feedback and action. In **Nepal**, RHV partners have engaged media professionals in gender training to encourage greater and more sensitive reporting of women's rights issues and there have been regular targeted RHV press briefings in **Nigeria**, including space for sharing lessons and challenges on reporting women's rights issues. In **Tanzania**, RHV identified the media as a strategic ally for popularisation of the Maputo Protocol and involved editors and senior journalists in workshops to create buy-in for engaging journalists more widely in women's rights and VAW issues. Initial engagement was followed up with collaboration to produce programmes with appropriate messaging.

RHV experience shows that culturally appropriate media work is key[xiv]. In the original planning documents for RHV, we found that work with the media was not well conceived, focusing on disseminating lessons learned rather than more strategic partnerships for raising awareness and putting pressure on the government. Perhaps as a result, most projects are doing more media work than anticipated and the need for media skills for partners is great. A lot has also been learned on using relevant and accessible media, considering issues such as language, technology access and literacy. In **The Gambia**, RHV used traditional communicators to popularise the Maputo Protocol through songs, which can be reproduced and shared.

Building awareness and pressure at national and global levels

All of this has contributed to raising awareness and visibility of the issues at national level, through constructive engagement with key stakeholders. **Tanzanian** partners organised round table discussions on women's rights issues with national stakeholders in government, the law and the media. This has helped to popularise the Maputo Protocol and strengthen demand for domestication, although the observation was made that community activists are way ahead of political representatives in terms of demanding the implementation of women's rights. In **Nigeria**, RHV partners also worked with UNICEF to develop a report and campaign materials on the extent of gender based violence in the country, part of the groundwork for the comprehensive Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill now before Parliament.

At regional level, the **Pan-African** SOAWR coalition, which includes all seven RHV African partners and works alongside the RHV Pan Africa project, has engaged with regional and global policy processes. They have brought the voices and demands of poor African women to key regional and international processes such as the African Union Summits and the 2010 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Representatives from RHV partners from **Guatemala, Honduras** and

Indonesia organised a side event at CSW called "Voices from the Grassroots", networking with official, national delegations, and reading key messages to the General Assembly. In addition, RHV **African** partners shared their experiences on changes in gender equity, and the intersection of VAW and HIV/AIDS.

For the 2010 African Union Summit with the theme of maternal and child health, RHV **Pan-Africa** partners convened a rural women's conference to enable women farmers to participate in a preparatory meeting on agriculture, and participated in the East African Caravan on Maternal Health to raise the profile of the issue and encourage participation and debate by women and men across the region. This also generated follow up action for specific issues at national level including pressure on national governments in **Kenya** and **Uganda** prior to ratification in 2010. The **Pan African** coalition has developed a lot of information and campaign materials including an electronic newsletter on the status of the Protocol in different countries.

Insights

This section highlights work to strengthen the social domain for women's participation and representation in governance at different levels. However, the message is clear that these levels work together, to mutually reinforce the personal and collective power of women. The outgoing coordinator explained: "*With strong grassroots organisations and strong national partners there is a marked increase in individual and collective empowerment and self-confidence – then they become unstoppable*."

The second annual report of RHV found clearly that this grassroots engagement was an important basis for informing and giving legitimacy to work on other levels. However, clear learning from **Honduras, Guatemala** and **Bolivia** was referenced, that: "*Grassroots groups are not simply a source of legitimacy for national level (or international) advocacy. An extractive approach may work in the short term but is counterproductive in the mid to long-term as grass roots groups feel that their work and good will has been taken advantage of*." In other words, work at the grassroots must have an empowering and organising element for local results, and the linkages relating to information and legitimacy should not be one way. The report states: "*Projects need to take time to work in detail with local agendas and issues as well as to develop a deep and shared vision of the action to be taken.*"[xv]

The political sphere: laws, spaces and engagement

For women's voices to be heard requires active conversation with government – and often they lack the capacity to encourage and facilitate women's participation in monitoring or planning.

The political sphere includes work with government stakeholders to strengthen the laws, policies and spaces to increase the number and influence of women, and helping women to participate formally as voters and elected representatives.

Policy advocacy

RHV partners and coalitions have engaged in policy advocacy with government to strengthen women's rights legislation and policies using a mixture of research and analysis; relationship building with key stakeholders (based on stakeholder analysis and power mapping); engaging in the drafting of bills; lobbying and public mobilisation**.** In **Bolivia** the Cochabamba women's platform sits at the

table with local, district and national governments as legitimate and active actors, to put forward concrete proposals developed with their members. In many **African** RHV projects these efforts achieved new laws to be drafted and approved protecting women's rights. In **Nigeria** and **Mozambique**, partner coalitions were able to engage constructively in the drafting of bills on domestic violence, improving the content and lobbying to get them passed. Partners also responded to opportunities, such the African Union Summit held in **Uganda** in 2010, to get their messages across.

In **Nepal** and **South Africa** partners developed advocacy strategies linking women's lived realities, analysis and activism on the ground with national level policy advocacy, and providing a resource for future women's rights advocacy in the countries. In **Nepal** RHV partners developed a People-Centred Advocacy Strategy for work to increase the representation of women in decision-making and eliminate violence against women. The strategy links local analysis and activism with capacity building and national advocacy and lobbying. In this way partners were able to link women's analysis and stories from local level to national policy advocacy engagement with the National Human Rights Commission, the Police and high level government officials.

Supporting women elected leaders and candidates

In some RHV projects partners have worked directly with women candidates or elected representatives to increase their capacity to participate and represent marginalised women. For example in **Armenia** RHV supported women local election candidates on their election campaigns for the community council and in some cases as mayoral candidates, supporting their campaigning and arranging meetings with voters. One partner explained the significance of this in the traditionally male preserve of politics: *"We put forward our female candidate and she was successful, she was elected. We supported her through the election campaign, organized meetings. She is very active. Thanks to her the communication with local government is very simple and quick now."*

Some evaluations noted the number of women participants in RHV activities who have gone on to become elected leaders in their communities, such as women participants of RHV advocacy training in **Nigeria** who were elected to their Community Development Associations, and over 400 women participants in village level groups in **Nepal** who have assumed decision-making roles in community organizations and committees. In **Nepal**, total participation of women in the monitored bodies has increased from 28% to 43%. In **Indonesia**, too, rapid progress is being made in women's leadership and representation in local government. Five women were elected to the village board in Aceh, which were previously only attended by men, and in **Papua** an RHV participant became the first native women in local government, while two women are candidates to the Papuan People's Assembly.[xvi]

Strengthening spaces for women's political engagement

Representation of women in government spaces needs to be strengthened at all levels, from national government to engagement in, and monitoring of, local decision making and services. Some RHV projects have supported local structures for women to engage in decision making. For example in **Albania**, RHV partners established Local Action Groups with a minimum of 50% women leaders, after an EU model which enables local people to prioritise rural development needs and engage with local planning. Each group carried out needs assessments of their local area with strong participation of women and formulated a local development strategy, prioritising investments and seeking local funding and partnerships to see the plans into action. Investments were evaluated according to how representative and relevant they were to women, and how financially viable and sustainable they were and used to leverage 15-25% municipal funding contributions. In **Armenia** a similar model was used to develop women's advocacy groups to prioritise local issues and submit

proposals to government. In **Pakistan**, where the law has provided for women elected representatives at local and district levels, RHV supported Women Leaders Groups have fought to ensure that women are included on different local government committees and services, and mounted a campaign to prevent amendments to the bill which would limit opportunities for women's elected representation.

Others have focused on supporting local authorities to make their own processes more transparent and open to participation. For example, in **Uganda, Nepal, Honduras** and **Indonesia** RHV partners have worked with local government and leaders to raise their awareness of women's rights and their legal responsibilities to uphold them, and promote more open and responsive planning and monitoring processes. One participant in **Guatemala** explained: "*Before [RHV], women didn't participate in meetings but now we are involved in school boards, where all members are women, and the COCODE [development councils], where half of the members are women.*"[xvii]

In **Papua, Indonesia**, women's groups were able to engage in local processes for development planning and investment decisions to ensure government funding of IDR 10M – 15M (£750-1000) per village for health services and women's programmes in economic empowerment. This programme, like others in **Guatemala, Pakistan** and **Bolivia** are closely linked into decentralised government structures and programmes, to increase impact and sustainability of development planning processes. For example, in **Pakistan** RHV groups worked with the national database registration authority in several districts to send mobile units and organise mobilisation and awareness raising events to 107,546 encourage women to register for identity cards enabling them to vote and participate in politics. This helps to ensure that women receive the full benefits of these programmes and opportunities, and communities see the value and importance of women's participation.

Working with local authorities

Local authorities can be instrumental in upholding and protecting women's rights, but often need awareness and capacity to listen and relate more to women citizens. As the **Nepal** review noted, "*giving priority to the sensitization of rights holders without commensurate sensitization of service providers and other key stakeholders creates a mismatch in the understanding of rights and duties between the demand and supply side*".

RHV partners in **Uganda, Nepal** and **Indonesia** have held workshops for local government officials and leaders to raise awareness of women's rights and their legal responsibility to uphold them, and help them make their development planning and monitoring processes more open and responsive to women's needs. In **Honduras**, RHV partners contributed to processes demanding greater transparency and some local councils have begun to hold regular open meetings to facilitate women's participation. In the case of Papua, **Indonesia**, RHV supported a public consultation for the development of the district budget where recommendations from RHV groups on standards for public services, and spending on nutrition and education, were accepted. The Regent committed to adopting RHV in all villages, using local government budgets. The participatory planning was attended by 296 people (44% of whom were women). [xviii]

The **Nepal** evaluation found changes in the attitudes of service providers to local women, which they noted in terms of increased invitations to participate in meetings and gatherings and changes in the quality and relevance of services. However in **Indonesia** and **South Africa** the evaluations noted that it can be difficult to engage government stakeholders actively and effectively. They can be difficult to contact, or want to dominate the agenda or abdicate responsibility. There needs to be active follow up of leaders and officials who participate in training or RHV activities to build on that engagement and monitor plans and commitments.

Mozambique, Nigeria, Liberia and the **Gambia** RHV partners have also engaged with traditional and religious leaders on some of the issues which have the potential to undermine progress in implementing the Maputo Protocol. The **pan-Africa** evaluation found that such use of previous relationships, credible information and constructive dialogue has helped to generate better understanding and positive outcomes.

Insights

The experiences here show that work on the political sphere should not be limited to advocacy to strengthen the legal basis for women's rights. The legal framework for women's participation and representation is vital. However, women also need support to engage in legal and political spaces, and those who manage them may also need support to make them accessible. The **Uganda** coalition was very focused on achieving national policy change and this shared objective was motivating for joint mobilisation and action. However, once this was achieved there was an inevitable lull in action, while methods and spaces were found to discuss and agree new objectives to build on this success. The recommendations in the next section suggest that tools such as outcome mapping, linked to the theory of change, can help partners understand each activity and objective within the bigger picture, and plan and monitor accordingly, allowing also for more flexibility to respond to opportunities and changes happening in the context.

Supporting transformation: a holistic approach to women's political rights

All of these areas of work address different, interlinked conditions for women's voices to be heard. Where they have been addressed together, there are signs of real transformation afoot.

The picture of RHV presented above illustrates the different strategies and how they build on each other and confirms the validity of the proposed theory of change: women need confidence as well as legal spaces and social structures to enable them to raise their voices effectively, influence planning, hold governments and service providers accountable and secure their rights. A visual representation is provided in the theory of change. What's more RHV experience shows that women's voices need to be united in order to overcome historical power imbalances, requiring skills in building common objectives and including different visions of women's empowerment and gender equality.

The attached case studies from **Bolivia, Armenia, Nepal** and **South Africa** show how integrated work at different levels and across the different spheres, with an emphasis on personal empowerment and collective voice, can have a transformative impact on women's lives, voices and communities. However, taken alone many of the RHV projects are imbalanced with more work on one sphere or level than the others. This is especially visible in **Africa**, where OGB **Pan-Africa** office and Coalition partner defined the RHV concept as working on the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol, resulting in an overall imbalance towards work on the political sphere. The concept of RHV was initially interpreted quite narrowly in the **Pan-Africa** programme and projects, with the goal of getting legislation on women's rights implemented, rather than women's influence on and engagement in governance processes per se. As a result, some projects have lacked an emphasis on building the confidence that would empower women to hold their governments to account in relation to the Protocol, and the multidimensional approach set out in the theory of change and validated by the case studies. This is something which has been recognised by some RHV partners after a peer review visit between **Nepal** and **Uganda** which prompted the latter to focus more on grassroots empowerment to complement their successful lobbying for ratification of the Maputo Protocol.

Insights

The recommendations below highlight the role for the global coordinator and her colleagues to package and communicate the Raising Her Voice learning and approach. This requires drawing on the wide range of work within Raising Her Voice, of which this section gives just a taste, into a coherent story about how change in 'Women's Right to be Heard' happens. The message that has come through to the evaluation team is that this story has to be one of multidimensional, collaborative work to address with others the range of conditions for strong and equal participation of women in governance.

Part Three: Findings and recommendations

This evaluation focuses on insights and recommendations which can help shape and focus global coordination and outreach of RHV for the next two years, and inform the exit strategy.

This is a pivotal time for Raising Her Voice. Half-way through the five-year funding and with all the projects firmly established, lots of signs of impact and transformation are already starting to be seen and plenty has been learned about how (and why) to work on women's rights to political representation and participation. With the global identity of RHV getting clearer and the big picture more detailed, the global coordination has a stronger story to tell about this kind of work, and more to share with others involved in programming and policy beyond the portfolio itself. With a new global coordinator starting as this evaluation got underway and this inevitable shift in focus, this evaluation is a chance not only to highlight learning from RHV so far, but also to recommend the most strategic and effective focus for the global coordination in the next two years.[xix]

The experiences of Raising Her Voice staff and partners can tell us much about how progress in women's participation and representation in governance happens. But as a multi-country programme, implemented largely by partner organisations with a wide range of priorities and links to other communities of practice, RHV also has a lot of useful experiences and learning for OGB's future work. This section explores these findings and suggests some ways for RHV, and OGB more widely, to use them. The recommendations included in this section are not intended as a comprehensive strategy, rather providing ideas which have emerged from respondents, with some filtering from the evaluators, and our own analysis.

Where now for Raising Her Voice?

Raising Her Voice is now able to tell a coherent story of how change happens in women's political participation and representation, based on strong evidence and experience.

Raising Her Voice is in its adolescence. The early work of defining the concepts and approaches, setting up project management systems, establishing relationships between partners, OGB in country and headquarters has been done. The 'teething' problems have been sorted out. The Governance Advisor who was instrumental in setting up the project reflected that at the beginning, with such a short timeframe in which to turn around the development of such a complex portfolio of work, "*we were doing a jigsaw*[xx] *without a picture to guide us*". The picture has now emerged much more clearly.

If RHV were set up now, based on this picture which has emerged, there are many things which might be done differently, and we mention these here as an aid to OGB's future work. At this half way stage, the programme can build on these experiences not only to produce strong and mature work in the continuing country projects over the next two years (based on recommendations and analysis from the individual country evaluations), but also to build a more mature understanding of how change happens around women's rights to political participation and representation. The work of the global coordinator in facilitating shared learning and collective analysis across the projects will be crucial to this latter aspect.

Recommendations

- Raising Her Voice partners need a collective theory of change to show how change happens in women's political participation and representation: how women's voices can be heard.

This would provide the common basis for all the work, and help to situate and tell the global story of RHV. We recommend that the model theory of change suggested here be used as a starting point.

Developing a strong RHV team and identity

There is a lot of knowledge and experience amongst the staff and partners working on Raising Her Voice which could be better shared and used across the different projects.

The outgoing coordinator considered shared learning to be a crucial element of the portfolio, capturing, aggregating and sharing local level learning from OGB, partners and other CSOs, which needs a good amount of resources. During the first two years some one-off learning events took place, including a peer review to Nepal, a Latin American exchange meeting and a global workshop on coalition building, and public electronic platforms were established. But most of the time and energy of the global coordinator was spent on setting up the management systems, and supporting partners to use them, alongside accountability to the donor. But now that intervention and direct support is not so necessary, a more facilitative role – to identify potential linkages and opportunities for sharing and support between programmes and connect people with questions to others with relevant learning and experience – is much more appropriate and possible.

In our brief engagement with Raising Her Voice, the evaluators have got a sense that the structural role of the global coordinator is currently quite centralised. The national RHV project managers, OGB country staff with multiple commitments, communicate and share learning widely within their own programmes. Wider sharing, however, tends to happen through Oxford, either by routine progress reporting and monitoring, or direct contact. Though the new coordinator has a strong background in gender and women's rights, it is unreasonable to expect her to know the best answer to any question or problem the country coordinators might have, especially when there is so much knowledge and experience within the global team of country Project Managers, partners and SP&G colleagues. The annual reports to the donor do bring together the different learning and achievements into a single report, but there do not seem to be systematic spaces and processes for RHV colleagues to share issues of concern and experiences, or build collective analysis and strategies.

Although human and financial resources are limited, there are a number of ways in which RHV project managers could build more of a horizontal structure for interaction, facilitated by the global coordinator. Making the most of online spaces and teleconference technology, working groups or facilitated reflection and debate on different themes and management issues should be possible without requiring too much time commitment from project managers. However, the issue of language, especially for the **Latin American** colleagues, does need to be considered. There are many solid examples from RHV projects of coalition building and strengthening collective analysis from village to international levels. This wealth of experience within the team and partners should form a strong basis for developing effective collaborative working structures and systems between RHV team members.

Recommendations

- We recommend that a global, participatory and facilitated RHV workshop be held in 2011 to validate the theory of change and establish more decentralised support and shared learning mechanisms and joint decision making structures for the next two years. The RHV respondents have clearly recommended that this, and other global meetings, do not take place in Oxford. The specific objectives should be set by the team, but might cover:
    - Identification and sharing of relevant learning.
    - Validation of the theory of change.
    - Identifying structures and processes for collective decision making and analysis

(including, for example, of response to the midterm evaluations).
    - Identifying means of representing or including partners in global debates and communications.
    - Monitoring and evaluation of women's rights to political representation and participation.
    - Stakeholder analysis for global communication about RHV.
    - Ideas of how the theory of change could be used more widely.
- The agenda, as well as the outputs, should be identified according to the expectations of participants, established before the workshop.
- Based on the outcome of these discussions, regular communication between team members based on issues of interest to them, including strategies and approaches for working on women's rights to political participation and representation, and funding and ideas for sustainability after 2013.

Influencing and informing wider women's rights work

Over the next two years, RHV needs to engage others with a view to supporting programme learning and continued work on women's rights to participation and representation in governance.

In the evaluators' view, as RHV projects mature, the global coordination role needs to move beyond facilitation of shared learning between RHV project managers (and accountability to the donor), and strengthen communication with other actors in OGB and the women's movement. In our short engagement with the programme we have noticed a growing buzz about RHV in Oxfam's Oxford office. As well as staff engagement in this evaluation process, there has been a lunchtime presentation on learning from the **Nepal** programme, and the global coordinator has received several requests for information about RHV's logic model, learning and funding needs. At the same time there is a growing focus on women's rights in different areas of the organisation, at least partly in response to the renewed commitment to 'put women's rights at the heart of all we do', mentioned earlier. There is a receptive audience in Oxfam for examples and experiences of working on different aspects of women's rights and RHV can now start to feed that. As mentioned below, the ongoing process to bring different Oxfam offices under a single management structure within countries, broadens this opportunity even further. The Oxfam GB gender advisor noted: "*RHV offers a model of how promoting women's leadership and participation at country and local level can lead to positive change. This offers OGB an opportunity to expand their approach to gender and women's empowerment*."[xxi]

At the same time, there are many ongoing debates and shifts in the external environment for development, including a change of government in the UK and consequent changes in approach at DfID. On the one hand, debates and theories about the complexity and political nature of development suggest that impact needs to be understood in terms of a contribution to wider processes which bring about fundamental transformation in power. This transformation is not a direct consequence of any one action, but requires many actors working at different levels in very different contexts. Experience shows that this requires an adaptive, constructive and collaborative approach. At the same time there is a call for greater clarity in how effectively money is being spent on development, for accountability to poor and marginalised people as well as donors. This fits with recent recommendations put to the United Kingdom's Independent Commission on Aid Impact by the Overseas Development Institute, which – amongst other advice - calls for them to "*measure what is meaningful*."[xxii]

OGB's DfID partnership manager reflected that "*RHV has been a valuable experience for Oxfam to develop approaches on governance and crystallise what we do, especially with women's*

organisations." The evaluators feel that RHV is already providing clear evidence of the need for, and value of, a multi-dimensional approach to women's rights and governance. The case studies annexed to this report corroborate the theory that parallel or connected work on all three domains of political engagement – personal, political and social – are needed for transformative impact. In our view, RHV needs to continue to collect and share evidence of the value and potential impact of such a multidimensional approach, and explore ways in which this can be monitored to show how funds are used effectively to support transformative change. With this evidence and the validated theory of change, RHV will be able to support and influence the organisation's thinking and programming on women's rights and governance, and feed into arguments for a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of development.

Recommendations

- The Global Coordinator and wider PRG team should expand RHV reporting from progress reports to donors to include strong evidence and learning about multidimensional approaches to women's rights and governance.
- Communication and outreach need to be based on a clear strategy and stakeholder mapping, within Oxfam (GB, international and affiliates) and beyond to DfID and other development and women's rights actors.
- Raising Her Voice is a multi-country – and multilingual – programme. Although English is a recognised common language many are not confident to participate in what is their second, or third language. RHV should explore some of the issues and impacts of English dominance in the team, and find ways to overcome them. In future, sufficient resources for interpretation and translation should be included in budgets for multi-country programmes.
- The global RHV team can use some of the suggestions and ideas in the 'value for money' and 'monitoring women's rights' sections of this report to define comparable and relevant data to be collected over the final two years.

Thinking of the future: beyond 'RHV'

Some RHV projects are already ending, and some continue until 2013. Now is the time to start thinking about how to build on this momentum when the funding ends.

This is also the time to think about what happens after RHV DfID funding finishes. At national level many RHV projects are well embedded in wider processes, although not always in OGB's own work, and these links need to be strengthened and extended in order to clarify the most appropriate role for RHV after 2013. This is already starting to happen in some places, for example in **Armenia** where the project is ending, the proposed theory of change has been fed into OGB's national strategy planning process to ensure continuity of the work. In **Asia**, there are plans to develop a wider Raising Her Voice programme building on the work in **Indonesia, Nepal** and **Pakistan**. A strong team with clear communication channels will be important to support RHV project managers to make the necessary links and where necessary find more funding.

On a global scale, RHV has the potential to become a 'brand' or space to connect, support and publicise different work in the organisation around women's rights and governance. At the moment, funding is the only logic as to why some projects and processes are inside RHV and others working on gender and governance are not, and this restricts opportunities for global shared learning and support. At this time of change to a single management structure in Oxfam, there is a great opportunity for RHV to plan for a future position bringing together these different areas of work, and highlighting ways in which they complement and link into other areas of Oxfam's programming such as We Can or the new GROW campaign. Opportunities already exist, and as colleagues get to know

RHV's work and approach these will grow. With already tight resources for global coordination it may not be possible to formalise links between RHV and related OGB work at this stage, but there is interest and value in these opportunities being pursued to build RHV as an umbrella providing support to new or existing projects funded and managed by different means. This may also build momentum for an eventual global campaign on women's rights.

Recommendations

- There are no specific recommendations for this section, but for OGB and the RHV global coordinator in particular to actively seek opportunities for integrating the learning and approaches from Raising Her Voice into other OGB and OI work, including advocacy, campaigns and development programming, and debates.

Lessons for OGB

Some of the learning from the process of managing this broad and diverse portfolio is relevant not only to the remainder of RHV, but OGB more widely, on women's rights, partnerships and managing multi-country projects:

Monitoring and evaluating the strength of women's voices

Women's rights and empowerment should be central to the monitoring and reporting of RHV projects, and this requires time and space for reflection.

The **Pakistan** midterm evaluation notes that: *"Whether the role of certain groups of women in governance has been strengthened and whether this has resulted in better accountability and pro-poor development is something that <u>can</u> be measured and should not be brushed aside merely as an ideal or a vision."* [xxiii] However, the RHV experiences so far seem to show that the central aim of raising women's voices is not easy to monitor, and can get lost in a complicated and technical set of mechanistic indicators and monitoring systems. That signs of impact are visible at this relatively early stage of such complex work is impressive. However, we sense that much more transformative change is going unreported, and in some cases opportunities for more effective work and greater impact are missed, because of lack of capacity and resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

What is being monitored and reported

An approach to monitoring and evaluation which is too mechanistic and focused on donor accountability can lose sight of the central objectives of women's empowerment and voice.

The systems which were set up to manage such a diverse and large set of programmes have effectively ensured capture of relevant information for reporting to donors and keeping track of progress. However, many of the evaluations noted that women's empowerment itself was not adequately monitored. The project logframe does set out to monitor changes to women's participation and influence in government planning, policies and practices from different perspectives. However, some evaluations noted a lack of clarity around the types of data which need to be collected to do that, and the indicators which need to be used. For example, the **Pakistan** evaluation found that the indicators and data collection tools themselves were not appropriate for monitoring women's empowerment, focusing on quantitative indicators. For example *"the baseline study did not provide data on the phenomena such as women's existing role in governance",* and there were no indicators to measure the process of group formation, even though this was a major objective. The **Mozambique** evaluation too found that important baseline information on the

incidence of gender-based violence was not available to partners, and that indicators used were too vague to measure the impact of specific actions taken.

Although it is important to monitor the effective and efficient implementation of planned activities, some evaluations found that in project reporting and monitoring, activities and outputs had been confused with achievements and impact. Attendance at a workshop in itself does not equal change, which only comes about when the capacity attained is put to use. For example, the **Pakistan** evaluation found a tendency to consider awareness-raising and advocacy activities as objectives rather than means to a greater goal of women's voices being heard, for example: "*Many Women Leader Group representatives perceive civil registration as an objective whereas on project design it comes across more as a means to an end, which is presumably enhancing women's role in decision making and leadership positions.*"

Some evaluations noted that this emphasis on reporting of activities and outputs left insufficient opportunity or support for reflection on the direction and impact of the work. For example, the **Indonesia** evaluation found that partner coordination meetings did not leave sufficient time for joint reflection, or to build linkages across sectors or activities. And the **Pan-Africa** evaluation also found a need to move beyond reporting of activities towards more reflective and deeper analysis of the achievements made within the context of broader project goals and the bigger picture, "*weaving an elaborate picture of change*".[xxiv] The **Bolivia** case study was developed using participatory techniques to facilitate reflection across the range of actors, and the feedback overwhelmingly pointed to this being a very useful experience for staff and partners to think about how their work is contributing to the changes RHV is working for. This enables them to adapt and adjust their approach, and identify new opportunities for linkages, relationships and strategic interventions.

On the other hand some projects which appear to be catalysing real transformation in women's participation and representation, such as **South Africa** (see case study), were not represented well by the internal monitoring mechanisms, perhaps because of weak relationships in country between OGB and partners.

Capacity and resourcing

For monitoring and evaluation to have a strong impact on programme quality and learning, requires attention to capacity, sufficient human and financial resources, and time for reflection.

RHV project management is multilayered, with partners implementing much of the work in coordination with national RHV project managers in OGB country offices, who link them to global coordination and reporting. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) requires a high level of awareness and some skills to be able to convert project aims into useful indicators, work out the kinds of data which will inform the status of these indicators, and link monitoring to planning and learning. This does not mean it should be left to MEL experts. People at the grassroots are more likely to understand the changes expected from participation in the project, and how they can be noticed and tracked. By involving them in development of an MEL system they will be able to suggest appropriate indicators, collect relevant data and report accordingly. Spaces for project staff and partners to share and reflect honestly on progress towards the wider objectives, and consequent adjustments to strategies are central to effective monitoring.

The **Nigeria** evaluation found that, although the project had measurable indicators and targets with which to assess their achievements, there was not sufficient capacity and resource support for monitoring and evaluation considering the scale. The **Pakistan** evaluation noted that activities are documented by local activist volunteers with limited capacity and time for this kind of work, recommending that staff and partner training for effective documentation and analysis of learning

and results should be a priority. For monitoring and evaluation to go beyond progress reporting and truly capture and support effective strategies and transformative change, requires a significant input of time and money. The need for more funds was recognised in several evaluations, including **Nigeria**, which also called for more monitoring tools and training for partners and beneficiaries to track and measure the impact of their work with RHV and revisit their strategies and interventions. The **Nigeria** evaluation also recommended more systematic feedback mechanisms to facilitate documentation by project beneficiaries of relevant developments. However, Raising Her Voice dedicates less than 10% of its funds to this vital aspect of accountability, programme quality, sustainability and communication.

Learning on monitoring women's rights and empowerment

There is work within RHV and OGB which can be used to build a more effective monitoring and learning system for women's right to be heard.

In our view, the RHV portfolio could benefit from more effective developmental monitoring of progress towards objectives of women's empowerment, continual review and response to the global learning. A lot has been learned already, and plenty of good work is going on which can help to understand how this can better be done.

The **South Africa** review (and this evaluation) has attempted to employ feminist evaluation techniques, exploring the underlying patterns of relationships of power in the project and seeking participation at different levels to understand the impact and potential. In other parts of OGB, such as the We Can campaign and the multi-country Enterprise Development Programme, a lot of work has been done to identify appropriate and useful indicators to monitor changes to women's access to rights and empowerment. This could serve as a starting point for discussion in the RHV team of relevant indicators for the core principles and objectives of the project, women's political participation and representation. What's more, the **Bolivia** case study shows that it is very important that indicators, monitoring systems and informants are also identified and reviewed by the primary stakeholders – poor and marginalised women – using participatory monitoring and evaluation methods. The RHV partner in **Bolivia**, IFFI, mentioned the need to develop more qualitative methods for documenting women's processes of empowerment and stories of transformative change, something backed up in feedback with other RHV project managers[xxv]. This would allow them to negotiate and include their own definitions of political empowerment, representation and participation at the heart of the work, and helps to ensure that real transformation is captured.

Gender and women's rights need to be considered the crucial factor for quality control and evaluation of all RHV projects. But these experiences show that project indicators derived from a goal such as increasing women's participation in governance do not necessarily ensure effective monitoring of the goal, and even when followed can allow projects to stray from the heart and meaning of the original proposal. Because this evaluation is based largely on the secondary data available from the project midterm reviews it is not possible to assess whether the problem lies in the evaluation methodology or the projects themselves. This will be followed up by the global coordinator and individual project managers. However, it points to a need to review the monitoring and evaluation framework and build on the experience gained so far across RHV to develop stronger indicators of women's empowerment, political participation and representation.

Recommendations

- The global RHV team, including partners and primary stakeholders where possible, should review monitoring and evaluation indicators and systems to strengthen reporting on progress towards transformative change in women's lived realities with regards their

participation and representation in governance. Reference should be made to existing methodologies and systems referred to above.

- The RHV coordinator and Programme Policy team should work to identify sources of further funding for facilitated reflection and documentation of how change happens around women's participation and representation in governance.
- The methodology developed for the **Bolivia** reflection and case study, or the critical stories of change methodology, should be the basis for future reflections and documentation of the contribution of RHV projects to such change.
- Closer analysis of INGO best practice in monitoring and documentation of work on women's empowerment would be very valuable to RHV and OGB more widely.
- Partners may also need support and capacity to monitor, evaluate and document changes to women's political participation, leadership and representation. RHV should think about ways in which it can support, understand and track transformative change in capacity and impact within partners, for their own learning and to help assess sustainability.

Developing a multi-country programme

Multi-country programmes are a new, but growing, way of working for Oxfam. Understanding the added value and planning to support that is crucial.

Raising Her Voice is unusual in Oxfam. First, it is one of the first global programmes of work, which requires different types of relationships and coordination than the more usual project approach. Secondly, it works on the intersect between two of the five organisational aims: the right to be heard (governance) and gender equity. According to OGB's DfID partnership manager, this structure fits well with donor trends, as well as Oxfam's own shifts in approach towards more facilitative engagement with partners[xxvi]. This means that there is a lot of interest in, and potential use for, RHV learning about establishing, managing and working in a multi-country programme and the added value to projects of being part of a wider programme.[xxvii] Here we share some lessons for both OGB and DfID.

To develop such a complicated structure without much precedent has been a very challenging task, and a lot has been learned. Section one describes in more detail the process of constructing the portfolio, the intention to keep the overall concept flexible and loose and the different processes followed in **Africa** and other regions. This has resulted in some structural weaknesses including overly centralised shared learning and an underdeveloped sense of global identity, and difficulties in mainstreaming the national projects within the wider work of their OGB country offices. These weaknesses are being overcome as the project matures and the value of the approaches becomes more evident, and many of the recommendations here are aimed at supporting this process.

Balancing coherence and flexibility

A common understanding of the added value for projects of coming together in a portfolio is important to inform planning, communication and coordination systems and decisions.

There are clear merits to allowing flexibility to interpret the portfolio's agenda according to local contexts and priorities. This has enabled RHV to be well embedded into local processes of change. Indeed, where projects have *not* been aligned to national change strategies, as in **Africa,** the development of OGBs role in supporting effective partnerships has often been slower. However, too much focus on local processes limits opportunities for decentralised sharing, comparison and

collective analysis. What's more, with staff turnover and multiple accountabilities and relationships, too much local focus can mean that projects drift away from the initial concept and design. For example, the **Tanzania** evaluation found that the link or rationale between the project design, baseline analysis, implemented activities and follow up was not clear, with resulting inconsistencies in project documentation and action. As mentioned above, several of the evaluations seemed to evaluate the projects on terms not consistent with the central concept of women's right to be heard, for example their work to directly protect women from domestic violence in **Mozambique**, or to organise local participation in investment decisions in **Albania** and **Armenia**.

However, where commonalities between approaches have been identified, the value of exchange and shared learning has been keenly felt and articulated. Many noted the importance of having a link to a broader perspective, beyond the country level. For example staff and partners from **Bolivia** stated that the added value of being part of a global programme was in the opportunity to obtain "*a new vision of work beyond our national context*". RHV staff from **Pakistan** and **Honduras** commented that it was important to advocate for Women's Right to be Heard as a group: that there was great value in creating and connecting to global spaces to develop a stronger challenge, with bigger results across a wider population.[xxviii]

This tension between flexibility to respond to local needs and build on existing relationships, and coherence between the different elements of work, is very common in multidimensional, multi-stakeholder and multi-country working. It is dynamic, and requires some strategic choices and compromises to be made, which are best made as a group with full discussion of the different options, and agreement on strategic priorities. A commonly constructed and held theory of change should allow some flexibility within clearly defined shared goals and vision, allowing people to make sense of their work together. But feedback to our proposed theory of change showed that, while some RHV project managers felt that it was very helpful to locate their strategies and approaches within a bigger picture, others were concerned that it somehow undermined their own specific focus. The case of RHV is unusual in retrofitting such a theory of change, incorporating learning from the first two years. While we recommend that this be done, the message is clear that this collective construction of a coherent whole approach is an important first step in setting up an effective multicounty programme.

Using Oxfam's capacity effectively

RHV experience shows that valuable linkages and learning can be lost (and duplication is more likely) when programmes are generated without full participation of the country programmes.

Oxfam country offices, as well as being essential links in the funding and accountability chain, are considered an important ally in making change happen, and can add a lot of value in terms of capacity and skills, linkages and networking. What's more, RHV is a potential source of capacity and learning to support their wider work on governance and women's rights. For example, Oxfam **Nepal** considers RHV to be a key resource in realising the organisation's commitment to 'put women's rights at the heart of all we do', and is also building on RHV for the design of future projects on women's leadership and their participation and influence in local governance.

However, in a multi-country programme with UK based global coordination, and working largely through partners, the role and added value of Oxfam country offices can be obscured. This is also evidenced by the fact that the country RHV evaluations usually assessed only the project partners and implementation, and did not tend to give information on the quality and added value of the contribution of Oxfam's country offices. Several interviewees noted that, while central coordination helps to strengthen coherence and share good practice, because most of the implementation is done by local partners, it can mean that the programme is not sufficiently integrated at county level and

lose some local ownership and integration[xxix].

Some evaluations picked up on missed opportunities for linkages and learning between RHV and other work of OGB in the country. For example, the **Mozambique** evaluation noted that activities of the project should complement other work on domestic violence in Oxfam, such as a gender-based violence project implementing more or less the same activities as RHV by Oxfam **Belgium**. This would allow RHV funds to be used more effectively, to develop and integrate components of political participation into the existing project structure and partner relationships. The **Pakistan** evaluation also noted that RHV was not well integrated into wider work, including the We Can campaign and other OGB initiatives on disaster preparedness or climate change, resulting in some duplication of activities at partner or local level. For example, on their own initiative, the women leaders and citizen action groups supported by RHV provided rescue and relief services to women in the aftermath of the 2010 floods, and linkages to OGB partners with more capacity and experience in disaster management would have been very useful. OGB's official HD response also missed an opportunity to collaborate with extensive local networks of women leaders and community action groups. The **Pan Africa** evaluation also found "*gaps in attaining stronger buy-in, support and integration of the work by the respective Oxfam country programs*." A 2010 OGB Central Management and Council commitment to embed the Right to Be Heard across all programmes could provide a useful vehicle for addressing some of these gaps.

In some cases the individual project managers are able to strengthen linkages between RHV and other internal processes because of their own multiple commitments, or relationships. And as the work and approaches mature, there is evidence that this type of internal communication has enabled the learning from RHV to be better integrated, and the work to be better linked. The story of how RHV has become integrated in Oxfam's work in **Uganda** is a case in point. The Country Director explained[xxx]:

> *"The country office was not involved in the development of the programme or the choice of partners but was informed after the fact and requested to manage the grant at the country level. As a consequence it was stood apart and was not integrated into the country programme or national change strategy. However, the programme and partner are valid and do have strong programmatic links with our country programme and our work on rights and accountability. When redesigning our gender programme we were able to better integrate RHV programme into our work and staffing structure."*

These types of informal spaces and linkages need to complement more formal spaces and structures for reflection and shared learning, and will have even more potential as the Single Management Structure rolls out. **Bolivia** is a pioneer of the SMS process, which seeks to coordinate the different Oxfam offices within each country and the work they do under a single brand and public image. Our engagement with RHV in **Bolivia** showed that this new management structure is increasing the scope of interest and relevance of RHV's learning and approaches to include other Oxfam bodies, to strengthen or draw on their working on gender and women's rights. For example, Oxfam **Canada** has positioned itself within the alliance as a champion of women's rights and could support and strengthen the integration of RHV learning into wider programmes of work.

Beyond donor accountability: managing a portfolio as a team

To bring out the added value of a global programme, while allowing flexibility to respond to local priorities and opportunities, requires facilitation, communication and commitment to a shared purpose.

Until now, RHV has been operating with strong focus on the local projects and as a result RHV coordinators are part of quite different communities of practice and peer groups. The feedback from

RHV coordinators showed that peer exchange was very valuable, and a key added value of being part of a global programme. We have made recommendations above about building a stronger RHV team, to allow RHV to be more than a funding programme and capitalise on this opportunity for coordination and collective analysis. Interviews with the current and outgoing coordinators and the governance lead also brought to light more specific learning about managing this role.

The RHV portfolio is very large, and the smooth flow of learning and decision making between local stakeholders and partners, national projects and the global portfolio requires a number of different spaces to be managed and linked together. Yet people tend to represent and push for their own projects and priorities, rather than working to a bigger picture and broader objective. Add to that the high staff turnover on the RHV project (though probably no higher than in Oxfam generally) and this has caused a lot of disruption to continuity at a global as well as local levels.

The outgoing coordinator reflected that it is important to be clear about the different roles and responsibilities, and the multiple accountability and communication lines for the RHV project managers and coordinator. With fewer people involved, and attention to the capacity required for constructing and working to a common picture of change, this task becomes more manageable. Log-frames can be too unwieldy for practical day-to-day use to this end. Tools and methods for systematic and continual planning, such as outcome mapping, are also useful for developing a shared overview from which to plan and monitor work at all levels. If RHV grows, especially beyond the initial rationale as a separately funded portfolio of work, it may want to include and incorporate other projects and processes with different management structures. Strong systems which keep an identity without constraining management flexibility will be essential for this to happen effectively.

The outgoing RHV coordinator identified several **key lessons** for future programmes of this size and scope, including:

- working with fewer countries;
- ensuring that the planning processes build on existing work, capacity and priorities;
- using systematic planning tools such as outcome mapping to give a shared overview, and to plan and monitor work;
- building in representative programme governance structures. This would have required additional lead-in time and resources to establish- likely resulting in smaller grants to partners.

Investing in effective multi-country work

Shared learning, coordination and communication require human and financial resource investment, but are of immense value to programme quality and impact.

As such a large and diverse programme, RHV is relatively under-resourced. Its £5 million UKAID/DFID funding, and £800,000 additional organisational resources, are spread over five years across 17 countries, between OGB and partners. This means that the final amounts for each project are often too small for this type of multi-dimensional, multi-stakeholder, multi-level engagement. This has various effects on projects, noted in the reviews, in terms of limited focus of the work relative to the wider theory of change[xxxi], inability to secure the full commitment of coalition members or fund follow up, or lack of capacity for management and monitoring. What's more, where funding is small and allocated in detail in advance, this limits the opportunities for projects to respond to opportunities on the ground, which could result in greater impact, reach or efficiency.

At the global level it has also had an impact. With one coordinator and one part time finance assistant to manage such a large and varied project, with such a centralised management system, the role can only ever be partially fulfilled, and the focus tends to lie with the skills and interests of the coordinator: the previous post-holder was an expert in management systems, and the new one has more interest and experience in the substance of women's rights programming. Both of these aspects of the role are equally important, as is building a strong team for collective analysis, decision

making and shared learning. OGB's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning advisors recommend that for such a complex project at least 10% of the budget be dedicated to this area. In RHV the actual figure is more like 8.8%[xxxii]. However, our review of the figure was not detailed enough to see what that 8.8% is spent on at the different levels. It will be worthwhile to look into further to see what would be the real figure needed to have a useful and comprehensive set of MEL activities as recommended here. There is a clear lesson here: global programmes add value when the resources are sufficient to generate and extract that added value.

Partnerships:

RHV national projects work through partners in a range of ways, creating a well-embedded and more sustainable process and effective use of resources.

87%[xxxiii] of RHV funding is destined as grants to partners, and national partner organisations are the main implementers of the projects. In some places RHV is adding and extending existing processes of partners, in others it is funding a new component or focus. Strong partners, with clear shared focus and objectives, capacity and relationships to strengthen work on the ground, have been given the support and freedom to implement some very impressive work, as seen in Section 2 of this report and annexed case studies.

The struggle to promote and protect women's rights cannot be won by a single organisation or project, but requires work on many levels and by many actors. Many RHV partnerships have helped to ensure that the learning and analysis undertaken within the Raising Her Voice project can have wider use and impact. For example, in **Uganda** the baseline study to identify discriminatory provisions and gaps in laws relating to women's rights was distributed to partners, policy makers, and allies thus supporting their own strategic planning and action for women's rights. In **Indonesia**, the RHV project carried out a baseline survey to analyse the local context for women's political rights, mapping women's groups and stakeholders, which served as a basis for selection and capacity assessment of partners, and their subsequent development of project logframes. This helped to ensure that the process was well embedded in existing processes, and linked to other initiatives from the government and civil society.

Equally, the implementation of RHV in **South Africa** was based on and guided by a conceptual framework based on a strong contextual analysis and baseline study of current approaches used by civil society and the state's responsibility and provision. The conceptual framework was developed in consultation with women facing the problems of HIV, poverty and violence, and related community based organisations and as such was informed by women's lived experiences. They found that this created stronger commitment and ownership from community based organisations to the project. The RHV partner, POWA used this conceptual framework to interrogate and reflect on their own work, which has had a strong influence on their work, services and ways of working. POWA plans to use the conceptual framework analysis as part of its 2011- 2014 strategic plans.

Local partnerships

OGB works through a variety of partners who implement the work, build on each other's strengths, learn from each other, and expand their scope through partners of their own.

<u>Building onto ongoing processes</u>

Good selection of partners has enabled RHV in some places to build on, and add value to, existing structures and processes. For example, the main implementing partner for RHV in **Pakistan** is one of

the best-known NGOs in **Pakistan**. Their work to establish Citizen Action Committees in villages across the country has been an important foundation for RHV, and the project's work to establish 30 new Women Leader Groups. The implementing partner also has relationships with women parliamentarians and some relevant government committees and human rights oversight mechanisms. In **Bolivia**, RHV was able to contribute to and extend existing work of OGB partner IFFI to support and build a platform of women's organisations. With resources from RHV, the platform has been able to extend to include rural and indigenous women's groups into what had initially been an urban women's network. This has required a prolonged and intense period of debate and reflection to broaden and review aims and objectives, and concepts of empowered and politically active women and gender equality. POWA, the **South African** partner, is using the opportunity of RHV to support and network the women's movement to build an interconnected understanding and response to the problems that women face and their lack of access to rights.

It has also enabled OGB to build on and strengthen partnerships in support of future work. In **Albania**, Oxfam purposely involved local partners with whom they had long-standing relationships in rural development and women's empowerment as this provided a stronger basis for joint implementation of the project. In **Nepal**, RHV works with different organisations than OGB usually partners with, partly because most local NGOs are run by men with little female participation. A monitoring and evaluation adviser from Nepal noted that this has been a good chance to expand the organisation's partnerships to include more organisations working on women's rights and empowerment, who could work with them on future livelihood programmes, for example[xxxiv].

Supporting linkages and shared capacity

By selecting a range of partners, RHV has also enabled local and national organisations to build relationships and capacity. For example, RHV **Nepal** has been implemented by partners at local and national levels. The three local partners work directly with poor and marginalised women at the community level and facilitate their interaction with duty bearers and lobbying of district level policy makers. The three national partners support the project goals through training, capacity building and media and advocacy work. Oxfam supports the partners to successfully deliver the project, according to project grant agreements which set out the activities to be completed, budget outlay, and the responsibilities and reporting requirements of each partner. OGB **Nepal** consider this combination of partners with different capacities and relationships to have been a major strength of RHV, enabling local communities and NGOs to link with national networks for effective inclusion of grassroots issues in national policy advocacy processes.[xxxv]

In **Mozambique**, a combination of partners with different focus and capacity has been a strength of the RHV programme. Working with Forum Mulher, a national network of women's rights organisations with a strong reputation and wide reach, and N'weti, an organisation working on communication for social change, has allowed the project and partners to benefit from each others' strengths. The **Mozambique** evaluation found that both partners were already working on gender-based violence, and RHV has allowed them to build on this existing work with new components and resources. The **Indonesia** evaluation also found that the range of partners brought different strengths to the programme and support and learn from each other. In Aceh the capacity building of local women's groups is done by KPI, a women's organisation, whilst planning and budget advocacy is carried out by GeRak, an anti-corruption organisation and ADF focuses on campaigning and governance issues.

Partners with partners

In some cases the implementing partners have formed and managed working partnerships with a much wider range of civil society organisations. For example, in **Nigeria** 17 strategic partners from government institutions, gender platforms, faith and culture institutions, community based organizations and influential individuals have been selected based on shared objectives, to provide a strong network with broad coverage. They also worked closely with another coalition on affirmative action which has some crossover in membership and campaigns for the adoption of quotas and other mechanisms for women's leadership and representation. The **Nigeria** evaluation found that "*a deep understanding and endorsement of the project goal was achieved among stakeholders using [a] tool designed to evaluate the capacity of partner organizations to deliver self-selected activities based on the work logframe.*"[xxxvi]

The RHV **South Africa** implementing partner, POWA, also have informal partnerships with other organisations working on relevant issues through policy advocacy and awareness campaigns, peer education, communication and research. Most were involved in the planning and conceptualisation of the project, but have not been involved in its management. The informal structure works well, bringing together people with diverse expertise and enriching the work, but it also means that POWA does not have much control of the partners' implementation of the project as there is no binding agreement. With many of the informal partners running on very limited resources, including lack of access to basic equipment like telephones, it can be difficult to ensure that work is followed through. In Guatemala, the hierarchy of Oxfam funding one partner, who then works with four further grassroots groups, has been challenged and this is considered a positive indicator of local empowerment.

We feel that there is a distinction between implementation partnerships and partners in development, who build on each other's strengths. The latter are more likely to be long-term and integral to the identity and working culture of the organisation, providing a strong basis for collaborative planning and responses to funding opportunities such as the Global Transparency Fund. They are built from a clear intention to develop empowering and effective development partnerships, and strategies to ensure that capacities are well shared and appropriately built. Within the RHV projects there are several examples, and plenty of learning, as to the value and nature of these coalition style partnerships, processes for developing common objectives, recognising and working with diversity and building on each others' strengths. With more time and space for reflection and documentation, these experiences could be an invaluable tool for OGB's own partnership development strategies.

Coordination among partners

Where partners are not well coordinated there can be duplication or missed opportunities for shared learning and joint activities.

With partners implementing much of the work, and generating much of the learning around how change in women's political representation and participation happens, coordination and communication between partners and the OGB management structures are essential. What's more, with the well-noted value of multiple partners sharing and building on each others' strengths, cooperation and coordination among partners and efficient and regular monitoring is fundamental to ensure that their work at different levels is coordinated towards the wider project objectives. There are many examples of this being done well, although always with room for improvement which requires time, and often resources.

Challenges in coordination and communication

The **Indonesia** evaluation found that while the multilevel approach allows partners to address and meet different needs, it has not achieved optimal results because the different levels and types of activities have not been knitted together properly, and the common ground has not been fully understood. In part this is the role of the OGB programme manager, but it would also have been an outcome of effective partner coordination and discussion. However, partners noted that quarterly coordination meetings tend to focus on administrative issues such as finance and reporting, at the expense of time for discussion and reflection on partnership dynamics and the direction or effectiveness of the work. This lack of synergy among the partners ultimately led to the community misunderstanding the overall programme goals, and perceiving different activities carried out by partners as separate and distinct projects.

The **Mozambique** evaluation also noted a need for more spaces to facilitate joint learning and reflection on practice between partners, to allow them to develop skills, approaches and monitoring capacity in the field of women's rights. Currently the two partners do not meet to discuss their own plans or potential for joint activities, and members of the Forum do not have information about the wider RHV project.

The **Tanzania** evaluation found that the broad-based partner coalition had not managed to construct a culture of openness and sharing, "*still operating in their small boxes*" [xxxvii], and that RHV had not been well integrated into the strategy of the implementing partner. From the perspective of the coalition members on the other hand, they feel dependent on OGB and the RHV implementing partner for direction, and do not feel ownership. With such centralised management and ownership, frequent turnover of staff has left many members disengaged or inactive. The **Tanzania** evaluation recommended clearer and regular communication among members for the division and sharing of roles. Coordination and networking between actors requires a deliberate effort to construct a common but independent mandate for the coalition. The evaluation also found that the coalition was largely urban based – but these challenges in communication and coordination are magnified in contexts where partners are in remote areas, often with no access to the internet, or do not have sufficient literacy to produce or use information, such as noted in **Uganda** and **Indonesia**.

Ways forward and good practice:

Examples of strategies to improve partner coordination and communication exist within the RHV project, and from the midterm evaluations.

The **Nepal** project has gone some way to overcoming these challenges, with regular monitoring reports from partners detailing their work and achievements complemented by regular review and reflection meetings and field visits. Furthermore, social audits are conducted at district level to allow project partners to hear feedback on the direction and value of their work from representatives of the community, local government, community based organisations, political parties and the media. This helps them to maintain transparency and quality, and be accountable to their communities and stakeholders. However, the review found that there is an appetite for even more investment in routine and systematic sharing and coordination, with partners and participants remarking that field level learning and impact had not yet been adequately captured and shared. **Nigeria** RHV partners spent time developing and strengthening their relationships with each other and the project at the start. An orientation exercise was organized for project staff and implementing partners to build their capacity to deliver on the project, develop strong working relationships and deepen the understanding of the project.

The **Pan Africa** evaluation found that regional coordination of advocacy adds a lot of value in terms of information and capacity. The Pan-Africa coalition (SOAWR) use a combination of means to encourage coordination and shared learning, including quarterly reporting, face-to-face meetings for RHV partners to share experiences and learn from each other, documentation of different country experiences and success stories and email lists for the steering committee to share information. However, the evaluation found that the communication was overwhelmingly one-way, and identified a need to develop a culture of mutual sharing and support – two-way sharing - based on clear needs, including information on available funding opportunities and joint activities.

Partner coordination is supported by country level management plans and processes, and some midterm evaluations had recommendations to help them to improve this aspect. For example, the **Mozambique** evaluation recommended a common format of reports from partners to contribute to an overall report, highlight spot opportunities for linkage and allow each partner to see how it is contributing to the overall project goal. This could aid a transition from technical project management and implementation partnerships towards more strategic relationships, giving input into methodologies, approaches to work on women's rights and gender-based violence, knowledge sharing and quality control criteria. The **Pakistan** evaluators recommended that both OGB and the implementing partner increase the frequency of their visits to the field to both motivate activists on the ground and ensure effective capture of learning and monitoring. By meeting with key advocacy targets at district level, they could also add their weight to work undertaken by local NGOs and activists.

Partnership with Oxfam

Oxfam is highly valued as a partner, but their role and contribution is not always clear. More reflection and analysis should be done with partners to clarify this.

Given resources, support and freedom – and commitment to a common framework - partners can do great things. In many cases, OGB has been supporting partner capacity, in project management, monitoring and evaluation, planning and relevant methodologies for example. However, often the evaluations did not mention OGB as a partner, though sometimes as a funder[xxxviii]. OGB is not presented as working closely on the substance and content of the projects, contributing its own capacity, organisational experience or objectives into the mix, beyond the initial concept. Although this may be because of the terms of reference and emphasis of the evaluations themselves, we assume that if OGB was a significant and influential partner in project implementation and learning this would have been evident nonetheless. What's more the amount of human resource provided by OGB in some countries suggests that stronger day-to-day engagement is not currently possible. This is compounded by the Governance and Transparency Fund's 80:20 grants to partners and OGB management budget ratio criteria.

The **Pan Africa** evaluation shows a mixed picture of partnership with OGB. The Pan-African partner Equality Now reports smooth support from the OGB team in Nairobi where there is a dedicated staff member committed to managing the project and overseeing the relations, and who was part of the initial project design. However, in some of the **African** countries the relationships have not been so smooth, in large part because of staff turnover. For example, in **Nigeria** the Oxfam office has undergone several leadership changes and currently has no gender focal staff. This has had a negative impact on the support available to the RHV partner in the country with delayed disbursements of up to four months resulting in the cancellation of some activities. The **South Africa** evaluation found that the partner had problems establishing good working relationships and maintaining links with Oxfam, because of repeated staff changes. Interestingly, this programme – identified from our reading as one of the strongest with most transformative impact – was considered by the outgoing coordinator as one of the weakest, because of weaknesses in the communication and information

flow. The **Tanzania** evaluation found that staff turnover and inadequate handover in both OGB and the partner organisation had created some disconnect between planning and implementation of the project, and low awareness of the rationale for the project.

OGB's presumed hands-off approach at country level places a lot of emphasis on the capacity and intentions of partners and monitoring systems to ensure good quality work, and limits the opportunities for RHV to influence wider OGB programming or capacity. The extent to which OGB staff understand and are personally committed to women's rights also has a significant impact on the relevance and quality of RHV partnerships. The **Nigeria** evaluation recommended that OGB should assign a specialist staff member responsibility of the RHV Nigeria project, to aid information flow and capacity support.

What makes partnerships work?

Reflections from the global coordination and country teams points to the fundamental importance of criteria and systems for partner assessment, including not only common goals and objectives, but also capacity and skills for project management and implementation. The **Guatemala** RHV project manager had found various lessons in their midterm evaluation about strengthening partnership working. Partnerships need to be formed on deep common objectives, and experience in the types of work to be undertaken. She reflected that their relationships with community based organisations were often on a stronger footing than national partners, despite their relative lack of administrative capacity, because of their stronger experience of working in a rural setting. Added to that they considered it fundamental to good partnership that the project aims and objectives be well shared and discussed, and that monitoring processes be designed and implemented together. Finally, she noted that partnerships get stronger and more effective over time, accumulating results, and should be considered part of a long-term process.[xxxix]

Many RHV projects have found that greater ownership and sustainability is fostered when project partners participate in the conceptualisation and planning processes. Another key learning from RHV is that money and time for building partners' capacity for project management is an important part of the process, as recognised by the outgoing coordinator and agreed at the **Africa** partners' meeting.[xl]

OGB as a partner: reflections for future work

However, this also points to some confusion as to Oxfam's role in a programme or project implemented with partners. As with most international NGOs, Oxfam started as a service delivery organisation, providing help and support to those who most needed it. Now, with a more nuanced understanding of development, the organisation sees partnership working as an opportunity to support indigenous and grassroots change processes. Internal guidelines on partnership state: "*By working with partners, we can help build a strong, vibrant, independent civil society that can understand, represent and address the rights, needs and aspirations of poor people*." [xli]

It can do this by providing funds to partners selected on the basis of strong criteria and shared objectives. These include compatibility of objectives and values, and the strategic fit in terms of sharing and building on each other's capacity or constituencies.[xlii] This latter points to another reason for OGB to work in partnership, that "*by working with others, and pooling our skills, expertise and resources, we can achieve so much more than we would working on our own*." This statement clearly shows that funding is only part of what Oxfam has to offer to the wider anti-poverty and pro-equality movement. The Head of Programme Policy Team explained that "*Oxfam is increasingly acting as a convener, facilitator or broker –convening people who can provide solutions to problems -*

rather than a direct implementer. This is a more effective way of doing things."[xliii] The corporate gender lead also pointed to this new role, stating that: "*The next generation of Oxfam programming will be as a facilitator: networking, making connections, bringing people together and generating new practice and opportunities.*" [xliv]

The same interviewees who pointed to this change in relationship and role of Oxfam also noted the consequent need for different types of evaluation methods and management skills. For working in partnership requires reflection and analysis processes to understand what Oxfam's contribution and role is, to evaluate its impact when this is not tangible, and flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities. Some of this is about capacity, some is more structural. The experience of Raising Her Voice can help to understand the types of contribution partners expect or want from OGB, and the challenges of monitoring and planning for that role. What's more, our own assessment of OGB's partnerships in RHV suggests that Oxfam not only needs to consider its own added value, but look at what it can learn and gain from the capacity of its partners.

OGBs partnership companion outlines different types of partnership: project partners, strategic partners and alliances. However, RHV experience seems to suggest that the distinctions should be reviewed, and that where strategic partners are used to implement projects the development is smoother and the rewards richer and longer lasting. Because of previously noted limitations in the evaluation methodology and available data, we are not able to give comprehensive information here, but do suggest that OGB make attempts to ask questions of a broad range of RHV stakeholders, and collect relevant insights and learning over the next two years, to better understand the expected and actual value they add to partners' work.

As the main donor, DFID has an important stake and contribution to Raising Her Voice. Now that the learning being generated and captured now is so much more persuasive and clear, there should be more opportunities to inform and interest DFID staff. This is important to promote sustained funding and support for multidimensional and collaborative approaches to women's empowerment and participation in governance.

Value for money

It is important to be able to show the value obtained for the funds spent on RHV, but depending on definitions of 'value' this can be a tricky task requiring new ways of collecting and assessing data.

Because of the varying quality and methodologies of the different midterm reviews it has not been possible to make any meaningful overall or comparative assessment of efficiency or value for money. What's more it is very difficult to make a typical efficiency analysis of a programme so complex, with so many inputs, so many actors, but crucially requiring complementary and simultaneous work across different domains and levels. This means that measuring the cost and outputs of a single activity does not capture the 'value' part of the equation, the actual outcome or impact. For that reason, to explore what kinds of information we would need to make a reasonable analysis of how to best invest in transformative and empowering work, we have attempted to make a qualitative analysis of the efficiency of two RHV projects – **Armenia** and **South Africa**.

To do this we have first written short case studies showing the intentions, activities, outcomes and impacts of the work in each country. These are attached as annexes to this summary report. We have tried to define the *value* of the project – the transformation that happened – and in this case

we are doing so with partial information, looking through the window of the midterm evaluations. Of course this should be done in a more participatory way, as the definition of value is very subjective and should not be left to people in head offices. However we hope that by exploring the possibilities of a qualitative assessment of value for money, which acknowledges the complexity and multidimensionality of work on women's rights, we can start to identify the types of questions which need to be asked, the types of processes to be followed and the types of data collected to do this properly, and in a way which allows for projects and processes to be compared not just based on cost and quantitative factors, but on *quality* of outcome and *value* for money.

In **South Africa** this was a story of a woman who after training on the legal rights of women had been empowered to challenge the local police in their handling of a rape case, and mobilise other women to ask questions, attend meetings and make change happen. Based on this story, we identified the various strategies and activities behind this value, in this case training inputs, and estimate the price tag attached. In **Armenia**, the analysis has included two complementary strategies: working with youth and women's advocacy groups and working with women candidates to elections. Quantifying the inputs into each, we can see how they in fact both contribute to a common set of values or results.

Women's Rights in Oxfam GB

Many respondents to this evaluation commented on weaknesses in the organisation's wider work on women's rights. Beyond the scope of this evaluation, we sense a clear need for more debate and assessment.

In 2010, in making the renewed commitment to '*put women's rights at the heart of everything we do*', Oxfam GB's senior management recognised the need for its work on women's rights to be more consistent and strategic. This means that all of the organisation's humanitarian, campaign and development work needs to be based on clear analysis of how it will contribute towards achieving transformative change in the lives of poor women, evidenced in its analysis, core objectives and associated indicators. This is supported by a commitment to build the capacity of staff and partners to focus on women's rights as a priority impact of programmes and campaigns.

During the process of conducting this evaluation we have often strayed into conversations and territory related to Oxfam GB's work on women's rights in general. We recognise that these are outside of the scope of this evaluation, but on reflection we think it is important to note here a perceived incongruity - from informants in OGB Oxford, regional and country offices - between OGB's stated commitment to put women's rights at the heart of all they do, and the actual investment in programmes, resources and systems for quality control, monitoring and reporting. We raise some of these concerns here partly because they have an impact on the potential of (and need for) RHV to influence wider organisational thinking. But given the feedback on these observations, which have prompted some lively and strong internal debate, we perceive a need for further reflection and debate, and possibly a comprehensive independent evaluation of OGB's work on gender and women's rights[xlv].

These discussions leave us with many questions about OGB's work on gender and women's rights, such as:

- Could OGB systems for project design, quality control and evaluation mechanisms do more to ensure that adequately ensure strong gender analysis and effective work on gender equality objectives?
- How, in the absence of a network of gender experts can OGB mainstream gender most

effectively, keep up to date with relevant methods and information, and support peers and colleagues to work on women's rights?

- How can OGB mutually reinforce its work on both women's political participation and women's economic rights and livelihoods to ensure the broadest possible, multidimensional understanding of women's rights and strengthen impact?
- How can OGB support and develop consistency amongst individuals in key positions responsible for quality assessment and approval of the gender component of projects?
- Recognising that work on women's personal, social and political empowerment can be difficult to monitor, how can OGB staff and partners communicate and report on gender in ways that can really help understand how change to gender relations and women's lives happens, and the contribution OGB can make?

This last question in particular is crucial for the Raising Her Voice team. If the RHV global coordinator and global team are able to pull together evidence and learning on how to work effectively on women's political rights, this could be of great value to OGB staff working in country offices and programming across the organisation. This evidence and learning then needs to get into informal and formal spaces for shared learning throughout the organisation, stimulating interest and demand for more. In the end, if Raising Her Voice can be better integrated into learning and debate within wider country teams it provides OGB with a great opportunity to strengthen its global practice on gender.

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[i] Albania, Armenia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Pan-Africa, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Bolivia and Chile were submitted too late to include, and The Gambia, managed through the OGB Pan Africa office did not conduct a country specific review

[ii] Including annual reports, OGB peer review visit reports of Nepal, project proposal and start up documentation and OGB documentation on women's rights, governance and theories of change

[iii] From Indonesia baseline assessment and Nepal report

[iv] From the Nepal evaluation

[v] South Africa review points out that despite great progress with regard to political and economic rights of women, severe inequalities remain and the society is still patriarchal at its core.

[vi] From the Uganda report

[vii] Ref Internal document from the Programme Leadership Group from July 2010 '*Putting Poor Women's Rights at the Heart of our Programme: PLT Agreed Proposition to Achieve a Step Change*"

[viii] Three African sub-regions plus Pan-Africa region, Latin America, Central America, Eastern Europe/Middle East, South Asia and East Asia

[ix] For example in Sudan, where the OGB office were dealing with a humanitarian crisis and a very fragile relationship with the State and did not feel comfortable to take on a project which could be very controversial in that context

[x] Including an upcoming meeting of senior OGB staff to discuss organisational models of change.

[xi] For example, Oxfam International's Gender Justice conceptual framework states: "*As feminist theories highlight, the relationships through which forms of power are exercised, created and reproduced occur in specific institutions and at different levels (local, national, global) … Formal and explicit, and informal and implicit structures and rules guiding such institutions determine who will have and control what tangible and intangible resources, authority, even the ability of defining the rules themselves. Cultural and ideological constructs specific to different times and societies are powerful means through which the more personal, informal and implicit gendered inequalities are upheld. Similarly, the common absence of women from positions of power and leadership (in structures of the state and elsewhere) are both symptoms and cause of the formal and explicit rules that create inequalities*."

[xii] From 'Companion to Working in Coalitions, lessons from RHV"

[xiii] For example in Mozambique, Tanzania, Nigeria

[xiv] Reflections from Year 2 annual report to KMPG/UKAid

[xv] Taken from the year 2 annual report of RHV to KMPG/UKAid.

[xvi] From feedback from the Indonesia RHV project manager

[xvii] From the second annual report of RHV.
[xviii] From the second annual report of RHV
xix Corrective actions for national RHV projects have been identified in their respective evaluations and should be picked up and dealt with directly from there
[xx] Feedback session with Jo Rowlands
[xxi] Interview with Ines Smyth
[xxii] See blog post by Alison Evans from the Overseas Development Institute "Top tips for the UK's Independent Commission on Aid Impact" http://blogs.odi.org.uk/blogs/
[xxiii] See Pakistan midterm evaluation report
[xxiv] See Pan-Africa midterm evaluation report
[xxv] Ref feedback teleconference with Honduras, Guatemala and Bolivia
[xxvi] Interview with Ben Heaven Taylor
[xxvii] Especially interviews with Steve Jennings, and Audrey Bronstein
[xxviii] Opinions expressed in the feedback teleconferences with RHV colleagues
[xxix] Ref Ines Smyth interview, Audrey Bernstein interview
[xxx] From response from Mark Adams, OGB Deputy / Acting Director in Uganda, to this evaluation's email survey of country directors
[xxxi] We recognise that the theory of change is not a valid means of evaluating project effectiveness until it has been validated, so this is more of an explanatory comment than a criticism
[xxxii] Interview with Claire Hutchings and review of financial reports. Subject to verification by RHV PMs.
[xxxiii] 74% DFID and 13% OGB co-financing grant to partners. A further 4% is contributed via additional OGB expenditure in direct support of partner activities
[xxxiv] Interview with Karuna Amatya, MEL adviser OGB Nepal
[xxxv] From response from Nepal country director to this evaluation's email survey of OGB country directors
[xxxvi] From the Nigeria RHV midterm evaluation
[xxxvii] See Tanzania RHV midterm evaluation
[xxxviii] For example, the South Africa evaluation describes RHV as "*POWA's Raising Her Voice Project funded by Oxfam.*"
[xxxix] From the feedback teleconference with RHV staff.
[xl] From Year 2 annual report 'learning on partnerships'
[xli] See The Partnership Companion: Oxfam GB's partnership policy and guidelines
[xlii] Ibid.
[xliii] Interview with Steve Jennings
[xliv] Interview with Audrey Bronstein
[xlv] Following on from internal Council reviews in 2002 and 2009