



“Freedom” Poem
I don’t want to think about the past
I won’t forget what happened
I won’t say I’m a victim
But I’m a strong woman
I want to live freely
Previous sufferings are enough
I’ve beaten fear and broken vacant rules
I want to live freely
I won’t accept to be lonely and forgotten
I don’t want to think about the past

*Kareema Kareema AlRejaji
As facilitated by Hanan Kwinana
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**Final Evaluation of the AMAL
Programme: “Supporting Women’s
Transformative Leadership at
Changing Times in the MENA
Region”**

**Final Report
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Acronyms

ADFM	Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc
AFTURD	Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche et le Développement (Tunisian Women Association for Research and Development)
AIF	AMAL Innovation Fund
AMAL	in Arabic means 'hope'
APPSDS	Association pour la Promotion de la Scolarisation et le Développement Social
ATFD	Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (Tunisian Association of Democratic Women)
ATMDAS	Association du Troisième Millénaire pour le Développement de l'Action Associative
CAWTAR	Center of Arab Women for Training and Research
CDCs	Community Development Committees
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CFTA	Culture and Free Thought Association
COs	Country Offices
CREA	Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSW	Commission on Status of Women
DoCs	Domains of Change
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FLDDF	Fédération de la Ligue Démocratique des Droits de la Femme
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HQ	Head Quarter
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INDH	L'initiative nationale pour le développement humain
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRADA	Enhanced Productivity Centers Program, a Jordanian Organisation
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
LAS	League of Arab States
LDDF	La Fédération de la Ligue Démocratique des Droits des Femmes
LET	Ligue des Electrices Tunisiennes
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North America
MIFTAH	The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MP	Member Parliament
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGOs	Non Government Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PCCDS	Palestinian Centre for Communication and Development Strategies
PFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestinians
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PWWSD	Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Technique
RFP	Request for Proposal
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TI	Transparency International
TL	Transformative Leadership
TLWR	Transformative Leadership for Women's Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TV	Television
TWL	Transformative Women's Leadership
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence Against Women
WAC	Women's Affairs Centre
WCLAC	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling
WNC	Women National Committee
YWU	Yemeni Women's Union

0 Summary

AMAL, meaning ‘hope’ in Arabic, was born of hope in a time of hope, but was a project implemented in a period where that hope in many of the original Arab Spring countries was becoming increasingly threadbare. The challenge for AMAL has been how to continue to push for women’s advancement in the region, through improving and transforming women’s leadership, despite the considerably more difficult times now being experienced. Four countries have been involved: Tunisia, Morocco, the OPT and Yemen.

Project and Evaluation Aims

The overall aim of AMAL has been ‘to promote active participation and leadership of women in the MENA region, including the poorest and most marginalised women, in local, national and regional governance structures and decision-making processes, therefore, ensuring that they have a say in formulation and/or their needs and priorities are reflected in socio-economic policies and practice at all levels’.¹ There have been four objectives around increasing women and girls awareness of their political and social economic rights, and their ability to play leadership roles; capacity building of a diversity of women’s organisations; changing attitudes of decision makers and opinion formers, in order to change policies too; and generating and sharing learning, to strengthen women’s participation and leadership across the region.

This final evaluation itself has had multiple aims in terms of: identifying the achievements and impact so far of AMAL and ways this may be sustained; sharing good practices and lessons based on the challenges experienced; verifying the effective and efficient use of donor and Oxfam funds; identifying Oxfam’s added value to project partners and stakeholders in the design and implementation of the project; and identifying the added value of having a regional/multi-country programme as opposed to single country projects.

Methodology

Endline surveys immediately preceded this evaluation – or in the case of Morocco was conducted simultaneously – and thus the methods we used focused on the qualitative exploration of the types of changes that had taken place through the project. The methods used in each country were based around interviews and focus group discussions, two with partner beneficiaries and one with AIF participants. For Yemen, a single FGD with REFLECT group participants was held via skype.² In addition, a series of case stories were also collected. In each country, the main researcher was supported by a national research assistant, who helped with the understanding of context, and supported the documentation of FGDs, interviews and case studies. Most meetings were conducted in Arabic, the common language between the researchers and all involved. Subsequently each of the two researchers produced a draft report from their country visits in English, responding to the detailed questions set out in the original TOR.

For the regional component, a series of Skype meetings were held with representatives from each of the three Oxfam affiliates that had been involved in AMAL – GB, Intermon and Novib. Then meetings were held in Beirut with the regional team members; some of these took the form more of extended discussions, rather than being interviews per se. This gave much more opportunity to explore

¹ Full Grant Application for ‘AMAL: Supporting Women’s Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa’, Oxfam, September 2012

² The main method used for working with women leaders in Yemen was via mixed REFLECT groups.

management, organisational and programmatic issues in depth. AMAL has been a complex project, with fractured participation and diverse perspectives. No one person has been involved in the project from design initiation to completion. Accordingly our challenge has been to triangulate these different perspectives in order to attain an account of AMAL that goes some way to representing and reconciling the varied experiences of the project from poor rural women through partners to past and present Oxfam staff. It has been a complex enterprise; AMAL has been an accretory, layered project and no-one understands it the same way.

Analysis of Findings

Relevance. AMAL was conceived as an ambitious, progressive project that would work with 'new' women's organisations post the 2011-12 Arab uprisings. In practice, the actual design was tempered down in part because the country offices wanted to continue existing partnerships, but also because of (changing) contextual circumstances. Altogether, the design and implemented strategy for AMAL was relevant to its four diverse contexts; a few limitations are noted. There were inevitable challenges through the project's implementation in achieving a degree of coherency and connectedness across countries, and between the main project and the smaller AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF) component, given the diverse nature of the inter-affiliate management model, and the inevitable differences between implementing partners. Despite this, through the six meetings held with all partners, mutual relationships were developed and agreement reached, for instance, on a regional advocacy strategy. The final end of project meeting held in Tunisia in January 2016, which was the first time the AIF grantees had been included in a meeting with the other grantees, acted as a celebration of what had been hard won across the three years, both in terms of relationship building and strategic achievements. This emphasises our major concern, that AMAL exists only as a single, three year regional initiative that does not have a fully planned and funded follow up. To realise the full potential of the relationships and connections established in this first phase, especially with the new organisations brought in through the AIF grants, the one component where a range of new women's organisations were supported, and the benefit of the regional dimension, it would be highly desirable to turn AMAL into a longer running programme.

Effectiveness. In spite of some of the initial constraints encountered, and the concerns expressed at the end of the first year of AMAL's implementation by the slow start up and low burn rate, the project was effective in achieving its stated aims in the second and third years of implementation. This was achieved owing to changes in the steering committee, improved communications between the regional team and the country offices, the growing familiarity of the programme manager with the demands of the project, the improvement of HQ support, the eventual recruitment of an advocacy coordinator, and a successful end of year one joint planning meeting that helped bring all the country and regional actors involved much more on the same page. With the roll out of capacity building and leadership development activities, the project team and partners gradually grew in confidence in terms of understanding the concept of women's transformational leadership, and what it required to achieve, aided by the ongoing learning and sharing meetings. In the final year of the project, the leadership development and advocacy initiatives began to show more results, especially with the successful focus on increasing the number of elected women in local and national elections in Morocco and Tunisia. Effective final year activities included the activities of the nine AIF grantees and the regional 'Time to Lead' advocacy campaign.

Efficiency. Whilst the AMAL project could have been implemented more efficiently, many of the factors involved lie in the new Oxfam federated structure, and were beyond the control of the direct project management. The new OI structure shows a tension between the desire of the confederation to be democratic and the requirements of management efficiency and the demands of the project highlighted this tension. In the circumstances the regional project management team did the best that could have been done in difficult circumstances. It is however inefficient to manage a single project like AMAL with such indirect lines of management. This was exacerbated by unfilled staff

positions, especially the regional MEAL advisor positions, and the lack in Morocco of a full time project coordinator. Given these constraints it is remarkable what the project did achieve.

Participation and Empowerment. Issues around the participation and empowerment of various women's groups included within AMAL was one of the subjects of ongoing debate in the project, particularly in terms of what it takes to encourage poor and marginalised women to become more effective leaders within their homes and communities. Within the project different ways were identified in which such women can benefit economically through an activity that is more focused on civil and political rights. For instance if they are able to access free or subsidised services to which they are entitled but currently have denied rights, such as the advocacy to receive the health cards they are entitled in Tunisia, or organise to advance their labour rights (minimum wages, and the right to unionise), as in the OPT. In this way, the measures taken by women leaders benefiting from the capacity building of AMAL partner organisations have often had an economic focus to them, and this has helped the inclusion of poorer groups of women. Many of the labour rights issues also serve to redress some of the marginalisation of women, or specific groups of women workers. What many of the case examples below show is also the ripple effects of the leadership development work. Several women, from small beginnings, have started initiatives that have begun to include larger numbers of women. This role of emerging women champions is one of the interesting features of AMAL, and it would have been good to consolidate approaches around this so that this approach can be pursued more in the future.

Impact. It takes time to piece together what AMAL is as a project, because of its very indirect nature, with activities being implemented by local partners across four countries, with only very dotted lines of authority and reporting running between the partners and the country offices, to the regional programme team. The key activities undertaken by the partners involve forms of capacity building, advocacy work, and some, mostly belated, MEAL activities. Yet despite this, AMAL has resulted in achievements that have quietly begun to add up, particularly in the last year of implementation. There are three major impacts that have been achieved. One is the progress made with the actual achievement of promoting women's transformational leadership, for which a range of small cases have been presented. Of these, the most significant in terms of scale is the number of women that have been elected to roles of political leadership for the first time, particularly in Morocco and Tunisia. Second, is the strengthening of partner organisations as WTL capacity builders, with several innovative methods having been explored. And third, is the growing, significant role that collective advocacy efforts have played at country and regional levels, in securing policy changes and arguing the justice of promoting women's leadership within the Arab world.

Sustainability. Although AMAL has been described as a programme, the current lack of broader programme resources and a clear, contextualised framework within which AMAL is contributing, does raise concerns about the sustainability of AMAL's promising initiatives and relationships, achieved during the latter half of the project. When it was proposed at the final AMAL regional meeting in Tunisia that the 30 country partner organisations, including the AIF grantees, form a regional network, they favoured the idea, but without a clear sense on how to initiate it. To establish such a network would likely require initially an INGO. Similarly, whilst country partner organisations were keen to continue the capacity building and advocacy activities they had been conducting, and would not necessarily require large ongoing resourcing levels, the Oxfam COs themselves, saw the acquisition of further programmatic resources as being essential for them to continue to support the initiatives. Those women leaders who have indeed experienced the benefits of transformation will likely continue what they are doing, but there is promise in what AMAL has achieved so far, and it would be unfortunate if Oxfam were not able to follow up on this. Some activities that are likely to be continued are at the level of establishing a regional advocacy platform, though a first commitment would need to be to the building of a platform that supports Arabic.

Oxfam Added Value. Although it took time to generate some form of overall coherency to AMAL, with the complexity of the project, its management and oversight arrangements, the delays in start up, including the two month delay in recruiting the programme manager, and then the time it took the manager to understand more fully how to operate within the complex structure, Oxfam nevertheless did deliver value. This became clearer in the last two years of the project, once greater clarity around resource management was established, the AIF became operational, and the regional advocacy component was planned. Overall, Oxfam added value through the creation of local and regional platforms to advocate, network, share experiences and challenges, and the lessons learned between and regionally across partners in the four countries. This was particularly the case by the final year of implementation, when relationship building was most thriving, and the Time for Women to Lead advocacy campaign had added something of substance to the regional dimension. Again though, it should be reiterated that this ‘added value’ can be diminished quickly, if there are not clear plans to consolidate and sustain key gains that have been made, since there is not yet evidence that the activities initiated by AMAL can be sustained of themselves given that the time period has been so short. This is particularly with respect to the regional role of connecting, supporting additional capacity building, and platform building.

Overall Lessons Learned

The AMAL project has provided a rich learning experience for all those involved, and for OGB in particular, managing the first regional initiative of this type within the context of the new Oxfam International arrangements, there has been a steep learning curve. A strength of the project was its inculcation of a reflective learning approach. This allowed many of the range of lessons that the collective experience was producing to be acted upon during the project’s three years.

Building a programme. By the end of the AMAL project, OGB had gone through a range of approaches towards building a regional gender justice programme. This had started from having a charismatic leader of the regional hub with her own clear ideas as to how the hub should evolve, to having a much wider and participatory meeting in November 2015 that sought buy in from different affiliate members into a regional proposal. This strategy still needs to develop a clear vision for the future that would incorporate and build on the gains made by AMAL.³ The AMAL experience has been rich and by the end, largely positive and can contribute to the development of a rich, experiential regional programme ToC, which it would be hoped can still evolve.

Managing a regional project (or programme) and lines of authority. ‘If you want to involve country people, there has to be some direct authority established, as otherwise, it is a matter of constant negotiation. This depends very much on the personalities of the people.’⁴ Regional projects are never easy to manage because of the almost inevitable matrix management structures that evolve. With Oxfam International’s new democratic, inter-affiliate model, the structure for AMAL was not even a matrix but even more indirect, and whilst these indirect lines of authority are as a result of good intentions rooted in Oxfam International’s new confederate model, they are at odds with principles of good management practice, and the kinds of resource management efficiencies that a donor expects.⁵ There is a tension here, and OGB struggled to find the right balance for AMAL between one set of (democratic) rules for a federated organisation, and then a traditional, hierarchal set of donor accountabilities. It is understood that Oxfam International will be establishing regional managers in the future, to try and simplify some of these lines of authority. Whilst there are naturally different perspectives on the AMAL experience, all that is important here is that the lesson to be learned is that no regional project should be managed this way again.

³ Interview with SIDA portfolio manager for AMAL, January 2016.

⁴ AMAL Programme Manager Discussions, Beirut, January 2016.

⁵ Interview with SIDA portfolio manager for AMAL, January 2016.

Oversight and Role of the Steering Committee. The first Steering Committee for AMAL consisted largely of representatives from each of the Oxfam affiliates involved, but apart from one country with a representative who was not part of the line management of the Country Offices involved. This model was revised after the first year so that the Country Directors were now included in the committee, rather than the affiliate HQ representatives. The SC subsequently worked more effectively, since it now included at least the people responsible for the overall accountability of resources allocated to their country offices. Nevertheless, they were not the staff persons most directly involved in AMAL activities in each country, and thus had a view of strategy, performance and challenges still at some remove. Partners also had no representative on the overall steering committee, and at the country level, participants had no representation on the country equivalent. .

Advocacy planning and campaigning. There were several key lessons to be learned from the advocacy component. First, at the country level, some of the early struggles and conflicts (owing to competition between and different priorities of partners), suggests that planning for such work should begin early, and requires strong leadership and support. In a regional gender justice theory of change, advocacy necessarily needs to loom large, since as shown in Morocco and Tunisia it provides the pathway to leveraging women's rights and providing the space for women's transformational leadership, at scale. At the regional level, the final year advocacy initiative, the 'Time for Women to Lead' campaign achieved considerable success in terms of the publicity it garnered, with its plus 900,000 site hits, and conventional media exposure. This was thanks in no small way to the role of Marcel Khalife, the famous (in the region) Lebanese composer and musician, as a celebrity ambassador, and his free giving of considerable time and energy (and willingness to provide further support if required). A priority for Oxfam is the establishment of an Arabic social media platform. At the moment the organisation is still yet to embrace what it needs to do to be effective as a regional gender justice player in the Middle East, if indeed that remains an ambition.

Defining and empowering women as transformational leaders. It is intriguing that a single word, 'transformational' had such an indelible impact on AMAL. Inserting the word in the middle of two others, 'women's leadership', turned a term everyone is familiar with (even if not widely practiced in the MENA region), into one that required considerable ongoing debate in order to define and understand. This debate was extremely healthy to AMAL, and played a significant role in terms of the level of innovation that occurred within the project. It caused all partners, including the AIF grantees, to look at the familiar words, 'women's leadership' through new lenses, and thus to develop some less familiar ways of encouraging and nurturing women to become leaders in ways that would truly challenge patriarchy and lead to some fresh opportunities for fulfilling women's rights through advancing their political leadership.

Collective approaches to capacity building. It is always a challenge for a project like AMAL to deal with anything other than small handfuls of women, because of the challenges involved in implementing complex activities at any form of scale (and particularly in terms of such a short time period). The numbers were still often small, but in Tunisia and Morocco especially, working with women at local community levels in groups, aided the breadth of women reached by awareness raising activities, which in turn facilitated more potentially far reaching achievements than might have been expected in the project's short time frame. The working with groups, plus the focus on forms of leadership that could challenge cultural boundaries, did help with the creation of ripple effects, even if mostly still of a limited nature.

Debates on strategies and approaches for poor and marginalised women's empowerment and leadership. We have commented on the debate about the respective roles and sequencing of activities focused respectively on the civil and political, and on the economic empowerment of poor (and marginalised) women. In any theory of change for the empowerment of poor women, their economic empowerment will feature large, and loom large in their own minds. It might be possible

to focus only on indirect strategies of economic empowerment, but the issue cannot be ignored, since political empowerment is hard to achieve amongst those with neither voice nor income, and so some form of complementary or indirect initiatives focused on social rights and protection measures, are likely to be required. A further debate was on how best to involve men (and boys) within such a leadership initiative, in order to gain their support, and reduce patriarchal resistance, to the forms of cultural and institutional change that are required.

Key Recommendations

The recommendations laid out in this section follow from some of the most important of the lessons learned, set out above, with these lessons also acting as conclusions about the project and its operation.

- ***Incorporating AMAL learning in the development of a regional gender justice programme***

This is important for the future of the regional gender justice programme, but will prove more difficult now that many of AMAL's regionally based staff have already left Oxfam, or will do so shortly, since there is much 'know-how' or implicit knowledge they have learned during the implementation of AMAL that cannot be easily documented.

- ***Ongoing reflection and learning around regional (and country) gender justice ToCs***

Reflective learning played an important role in the relative success of the AMAL project and should play an ongoing role in ToC development and evolution, where the ToC and results chain are revisited for coherence, testing and validating sets of assumptions, developing or updating a risk register, and in developing necessary modifications in response to changing country contexts, whether political, social, or economic.⁶

- ***Programme versus project management***

OGB has reorganised the structure of the regional gender justice programme twice since the start of AMAL. It would be preferable for the future that the overall regional gender justice strategy is managed by a person with strong programmatic experience, whilst specific projects, like AMAL, should be managed by a project manager, reporting to the regional programme manager. This will make the lines of accountability and responsibility clearer, and also ensure that the levels of experience of the respective positions are appropriate. It should also resolve some of the confusions that occurred with the management of AMAL.

- ***Continuity of activities***

It will require a longer term effort on the part of the partners if women are to become more effective in fulfilling their rights in this respect, and be able to play a more significant role as transformational leaders in public life. The number of women who have taken up or become more confident in their leadership positions since the start of AMAL, suggests this can happen. It is likely though that many of the specific groups and individuals involved will still need support. In Morocco alone, AMAL has played a significant role in helping nearly 3,000 women be elected as councillors or parliamentarians. This has been a huge success for the project, but it also provides a responsibility not to abandon the women at a time when many are still very inexperienced and vulnerable as new political leaders, and hence still requiring support.

- ***Documenting good capacity building and leadership development practices and guides***

Training and capacity building activities across partners and countries appeared particularistic, perhaps partly because partners saw the training services they could provide as part of their business model, and were reluctant to share with other partners. However, for a project like AMAL it would be helpful to document good practices and guides for these, where they are identified. For instance,

⁶ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

as the project sought largely an indirect approach to the economic empowerment of poor women, one area that did benefit them in this regard, as well as advance their political leadership skills development were the few instances where advocacy work was conducted on women's social service rights. An example was the campaign around women's access to health cards in Tunisia. This type of right and other social service and protection rights of women, are something that the project could have pursued more systematically, with clearly guidance being developed on how to undertake the work methodologically. Another issue that proved effective of this type, particularly in OPT, but also to some extent in Tunisia and Morocco, was a focus on women's labour rights.

- *Incorporating Men and Masculinities into the capacity building work*

More attention is needed with regard to the targeting of men, in order that they support more fully the aspiration of developing women's leadership, and understand the benefits this will provide to them and their families, rather than seeing it only as a threat to their masculine control. Such targeting of men in trainings related to gender, leadership skills and women and political participation was one of the needs identified in the final AMAL annual report, and a requirement noted by the evaluators too, during their country visits. This needs investment in building skills and capacities of local facilitators on men and masculinity, but may initially require the training of Arabic speaking trainers.⁷

- *Advocacy activities*

A recommendation for future advocacy work is that because of its large potential impact, it is given more attention, time and resources. Campaigning in a project or programme as large and complex as AMAL requires time to plan, to conduct policy and legal reviews, to develop media relations and tools, communication plans, and so on. Advocacy work planning should also begin as early as possible in order to build synergies and complementariness with other project activities, such as capitalising on awareness raising sessions and youth networks to attract attention and visibility to advocacy work.

- *Partner Financial Reporting and Participation*

It is recommended that Oxfam should reduce and simplify the administrative procedures, such as the financial tools and procedures related to compiling and completing financial reports and related verification of expenditure documents, document translation, for local partner organisations. These consume considerable effort, time and resource of partners, whilst more simplified procedures can better meet the underlying objectives of accountability and reporting timeliness. This can be substituted by more frequent capacity building and spot check visits to mitigate risks. More time and resources should also be invested in ensuring partners and (intended) programme participants are able to play roles in all the different programme phases; specifically early design phase, activities design, and setting performance targets.⁸

Conclusion

The Arab Uprisings – or more colloquial Arab Spring – were a brief moment in time. It remains perhaps too soon to assess what difference they have really made in the aiding of greater levels of democracy and social justice in the MENA region, especially given the pessimism that (re-)engulfs the Middle East. In the Maghreb region, thus far the effect of the Uprisings has been more far reaching and durable. From inception to completion, the AMAL project for 'Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership at Changing Times in the MENA Region' has certainly borne witness to temporal turbulence. There is less hope in the region now than when AMAL was conceived, yet conversely it makes an initiative such as this even more vital. There were seedlings of a more

⁷ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁸ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016, and AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

inclusive and equitable future planted during the eponymous spring of 2011 and even if they prove slow growing, they require nurturing. What AMAL has shown are both the opportunities that can be opened up if the seeds of change are nurtured, and the many challenges that remain to be faced in doing so.

AMAL was a project that experimented with a word, that of 'transformational', and what it meant to sandwich this work between two others, 'women's' and 'leadership'. As such it turns two familiar words into a question – yes, we understand 'women's leadership' but what does 'women's transformation leadership' mean? The thinking and learning that was generated from this debate helped spark off a capacity building and leadership development process that sought to be innovative and adaptive, rather than formulaic. Through AMAL, Oxfam have shown that they can play a role of value as a facilitator of this leadership journey, and that this role is more significant if it is performed across countries, rather than just within each country, separately. To continue and add to this work would therefore be of further value to women's transformational leadership in the region. It would be a challenging commitment, however, and would require some rethinking of the best organisational mechanisms to deliver such programming within the new OI confederation.

If AMAL means hope and was born in a time of hope, then what the project has shown is that providing women with opportunities to engage in more transformational leadership can still produce hope, in a world that needs as much of this commodity as can be fostered.

Acknowledgements

AMAL has been a project of many voices and an array of endeavours. It has been complex in its design and making, and consequently so too, to explore, with an array of faces and perspectives, that continued to emerge as this work was conducted. It has been an emergent project, which theories of complexity emphasise is the way of complex processes. We would like therefore to acknowledge all those that have contributed to this study, of which there are a wide range of people, participants, partners, and staff, who have been variously involved in AMAL from its conception through to its completion. As such it has been a challenge to incorporate all perspectives and to weave a balanced path between the different voices and perspectives. AMAL began to generate some stimulating processes and exciting outcomes; it was also never easy. We would like to thank all those that participated, and acknowledge that our own representation will inevitably fall short of being able to represent satisfactorily all voices and perspectives that have contributed to this evaluation, and this we regret and accept responsibility. What we hope mostly is that the evaluation does do justice to what was initiated by AMAL, and plays a role in assisting the work initiated through it to be continued.

1 Introduction

Now tomorrow will be exactly like today and yesterday and all the days preceding and all the days following. I have no influence over anything.

But one thing I do remember, one thing I know: the sense of possibility was real. It may have been naïve to believe our dream could come true, but it was not foolish to believe that another world was possible. It really was. Or at least that's how I remember it.

Alaa Abd El Fattah, Egyptian Blogger

This quote¹ as much as any other expresses how much times have changed since the early heady optimism of the Arab uprisings, that the MENA region might be on the verge of experiencing much greater levels of democracy and human rights.

The word *amal* in Arabic means 'hope', and when Oxfam's AMAL project was designed, it was a time of hope that women's rights and status might finally undergo a period of positive change within the region.

Unfortunately, the start of the ongoing civil war and humanitarian crisis in Syria, coupled with the debacle in Libya, marked the turning point of a reversal that seems to have dashed the early gains made in the two more optimistic years of 2011-12. Now in countries like Egypt, the situation and status of women appears as grim as ever, and their role and voices shuttered once again, after their having dared to speak up along with the other Tahrir Square revolutionaries like Alaa Abd.

The challenge for AMAL therefore has been how to continue to push for women's advancement in the region, through improving and transforming women's leadership, despite the considerably more difficult times now being experienced. This intent and the challenge was to continue to find ways to build on the highly visible role that women played during the early period of the Arab uprisings (or the so called 'Arab spring'), especially in countries like Yemen, where women previously had been highly repressed and sequestered within the home. In this 'grimmer' time, therefore, with 'a large scale war and humanitarian crisis in Syria, conflict escalation in Iraq, war in Yemen and the threat of control or sporadic actions by extreme terrorist groups across the region',⁹ the overall question we

⁹ TOR for this Consultancy to evaluate 'Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership at Changing Times in the MENA Region'

have sought to answer in our evaluation of the AMAL project, is what hope remains for the improvement of women's status, rights and leadership within the MENA region?

It is also of note that within the Oxfam confederation, AMAL has represented also another kind of experiment, the first multi-country project conducted within the MENA region involving more than one Oxfam affiliate. In this regard, the internal management challenges of AMAL have also been noteworthy. Altogether it is a project from which there is much to be learned, both in terms of what is possible with respect to ongoing efforts to promote women's leadership in the MENA region, and in terms of some of the requirements of managing a project effectively across a series of countries with very different contexts led by different affiliate members within the Oxfam confederation.

2 Project Aim, Objectives and Scope

The overall aim of AMAL has been 'to promote active participation and leadership of women in the MENA region, including the poorest and most marginalised women, in local, national and regional governance structures and decision-making processes, therefore, ensuring that they have a say in formulation and/or their needs and priorities are reflected in socio-economic policies and practice at all levels'.¹⁰

Altogether, AMAL has been implemented in four countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: Morocco, Tunisia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), and Yemen, with a first year research activity that included Egypt too. In the last year, of these four countries the situation has deteriorated markedly in Yemen, in particular, with it proving difficult to continue the work there, and with it now being extremely difficult even to visit Sana'a. Originally the project had been going to include Egypt rather than OPT, but due to difficulties obtaining approval to implement the project by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Government of Egypt by partners, SIDA requested to add another country, therefore, the decision was made to include OPT. This was not untroubled either, since the implementation period was marked by a 51 day war in Gaza – the longest in the history of this conflict ever! The project itself has operated at three levels, which have included country level projects, a regional component, and global advocacy and exchange work. Overall, the overall project has been in line with Oxfam's Gender Justice Goal which states that, 'Many more women will gain power over their lives and live free from violence through changes in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations, and through increased levels of women's active engagement and critical leadership in institutions, decision making and change processes'.

The AMAL project has had four overall objectives:

Objective 1: RIGHTS AND LEADERSHIP – Women and girls will have increased awareness of their political and socio-economic rights and are more confident to voice their rights and play leadership roles at all levels (household, community, national, regional);

Objective 2: CAPACITY-BUILDING – A diversity of women's organizations and their allies will have increased skills, resources and capacity to advocate a women's rights agenda with a collective voice and influence decision-making;

¹⁰ Full Grant Application for 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa', Oxfam, September 2012

Objective 3: CHANGING ATTITUDES AND POLICY – Decision-makers and opinion formers at all levels are more aware of and their positions are more reflective of the needs and priorities of women

Objective 4: LINKING AND LEARNING – Oxfam, its partners and others generate and share knowledge, to strengthen women’s participation and leadership approaches in the region and globally

Given these objectives, and the ‘changing and challenging context’ the programme has sought to achieve eight outputs in Morocco, Tunisia and the OPT and six outputs in Yemen, with a total budget of US\$ 6,808,060 over the duration of 3 years (Oct 2012- Sep 2015), which was extended till end of January 2016. In addition, buried away as a small output (3.2.15) under Outcome 3.2 in the original proposal was the formation of an Innovation Fund to support local CSOs, and the effectiveness of this component shall be examined too.

The evaluation will focus on examining these, as a way of exploring how far the overall objectives have been achieved, and the extent to which it has been possible to overcome some of the challenges faced, in order to point a way to the future for the continued pursuit of women’s rights and gender justice in the MENA region.



Fig. 2.1

2.1 Aims of the Evaluation

Given the complexities of AMAL, the aims of this evaluation are multiple.

1. Identify the achievement and any impact so far of the AMAL programme and ways that this may be built on and sustained.

2. Record and share good practice and lessons based on the challenges that the programme experiences whether strategic or operational.
3. Verify that donor and Oxfam funds were used effectively and efficiently to deliver results.
4. Identify Oxfam's added value to programme partners and stakeholders in the design and delivery of the programme.
5. Identify the added value of having a regional/multi-country programme as opposed to single country projects.
6. Make recommendations for how future programme management and implementation could be improved to feed into a second phase of the programme which would be developed by the time the evaluation is completed.

3 Methodology

In its evaluation work, WayFair seeks to adopt mixed approaches that provide an understanding of the contexts and challenges faced, and in relation to these, how the programme or project has contributed to the changes that have taken place. For this particular evaluation, given its complexities and the multiple countries to be covered, and the relatively restricted size of the available budget, the methodology was limited to a qualitative investigation. Where possible the project's own numbers are drawn upon, including from the baseline surveys, to the extent that these were available to us on time.

We also utilise approaches that are appreciative in nature, in which we explore participants' own views on what has been achieved, what issues have been encountered, and how these have been addressed. This also means, that even when programmes have encountered considerable difficulties, we are still starting from the perspective of seeking to understand that part of the glass which is full, and how that has been achieved, and then to use this as the starting point for looking at a) what might have been done differently, and b) how the gains that have been achieved might be sustained and built upon.

The AMAL project has encompassed the four country programmes for each of Morocco, Tunisia, the OPT, and Yemen; a regional component, managed by PMU located in the Gender Justice Programme in Lebanon, where Oxfam's regional team is based, and which includes the AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF). The nature, challenges and performance of each of these will be analysed during the evaluation.

Actors involved

- The AMAL Regional Programme Team
- The Oxfam Offices (Oxfam Intermón in Morocco, Oxfam Novib in the OPT , Oxfam Novib in Tunisia, Oxfam GB in Yemen) Associate/country directors and AMAL Programme Country Teams
- Intermón MEAL Lead, GB Research Project Manager
- AMAL Country Partners (ATMDAS, ADFM, FLDDF, Al-Nakhil in Morocco, AFTURD, ATFD, LET in Tunisia, WNC and YWU and Abs in Yemen, MIFTAH, WCLAC, PWWSD, and WAC in the OPT)
- Grass root CSOs as recipients of AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF) in Morocco, Tunisia, the OPT , and Yemen
- AMAL Beneficiary Groups and beneficiaries: women in the communities, men in the communities, targeted youth, women political leaders, new women leaders, collective

- groups, local leaders, national decision-makers, media institutions and journalists, including those from among beneficiaries of the innovation fund grants
- AMAL Steering Committees at both country and regional levels; SIDA Sweden Donor representative
- Other Oxfam staff who were involved on an ad-hoc basis in the project.

There were three phases to the evaluation: an initial inception phase, during which a detailed methodology and work plan were developed¹¹; then a sequence of country visits were undertaken to the OPT, Tunisia and Morocco by the team's two Arabic speaking consultants, with a final visit being made to Beirut to examine the regional dimension of the project; and then the last phase focused on the analysis and report writing. Since it was not possible to visit Yemen directly, this component of the evaluation was undertaken solely through a limited number of Skype interviews with the project team, including partners.

The methods used in each country were based mainly around interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). For each country a minimum of 3 FGDs were planned, two with partner beneficiaries and one with AIF participants. For Yemen, a single FGD with REFLECT group participants was held via Skype.¹² In addition, a series of case stories were also collected. There had been an intent to use the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, since partners staff had been trained in this, but owing to overlap with the endline surveys, this was dropped, and a simpler format of documenting accounts of a few participants was used. In each country, the main researcher was supported by a national research assistant, who helped with the understanding of context, and supported the documentation of FGDs, interviews and case studies. Most meetings were conducted in Arabic, the common language between the researchers and all involved. Subsequently each of the two researchers produced a report from their country visits in English, responding to the detailed questions set out in the original TOR.

For the regional component, a series of Skype meetings were held with representatives from each of the three Oxfam affiliates that had been involved in AMAL – Oxfam GB, Oxfam Intermón and Oxfam Novib. Then meetings were held in Beirut with the regional team members; some of these took the form more of extended discussions, in the case of the programme manager for over 9 hours, rather than being interviews per se. This gave much more opportunity to explore management, organisational and programmatic issues in depth.

The final report was drafted by the team leader, who also conducted the regional interviews and visit to Beirut, using the two country reports, the range of documentation made available by Oxfam, and the regional interviews and discussions conducted. Extensive triangulation of information and perspectives was carried out during this reporting process. This was complicated since AMAL was a regional project with a great many, very different actors involved in the implementation and voices.

Methodological Limitations

There were some constraints with respect to the conduct of the evaluation research, mainly owing to overlap with ongoing work for the end line study, particularly in Morocco. In this instance, it created some confusion with partners and project participants, since they were unsure of the methodological distinctions between the two, as initial communications referred to both studies as 'evaluations'. Unfortunately, to avoid some of the confusion, for our evaluation, site visits were restricted to Rabat and Casablanca, though the original intention was to cover others area, such as the south-east, rural

¹¹ WayFair Associates, 'Final Evaluation of Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership at Changing Times in the MENA Region Programme: Inception Report', October 2015.

¹² The main method used for working with women leaders in Yemen was via mixed REFLECT groups.

region, where partners had been operating. This limited the number of people who could be met with face to face in Morocco, but in both Tunisia and the OPT the evaluation visits went well.

One further issue, which represented a challenge for the project itself, is that in Morocco and the OPT, there was a high turnover of staff experienced by Oxfam in particular, which meant that to obtain a fuller story of the project's performance over the three years of implementation, it was necessary also to speak with current and ex-employees of both Oxfam and partners. In Morocco, there were some limits to what was feasible.

In the OPT due to movement restrictions imposed by Government of Israel which made access to Gaza and travel within the West Bank difficult due to security concerns, most of the interviews were conducted virtually over Skype and also did not allow for face-to-face interviews/interactions.

The evaluation was most limited with respect to Yemen, where no country visit was possible, and only some skype interviews were undertaken, including with some participants. It was only possible to gain a restricted perspective by this means.

Additionally we should reiterate that AMAL was a complex project, and understanding its story takes time. There were not a lot of 'big' activities, but the accretion of effects from some of the leadership training and capacity building activities emerges gradually. In this sense, seeking to understand the effects AMAL has had and the changes it has wrought is a little like following the ripples on a pond, the process of perturbation has been more widespread than it might initially seem. It also takes a little time to grasp this. This is especially so given that the project's own MEAL systems were established late and imperfectly and thus did not provide us much information. Much more instead was provided through the AMAL annual reports, and the documentation of the regional meetings held, and then through the country documentation available to the country evaluators.

It is important to emphasise therefore two points. One is that although a great deal of care has been taken during this writing to triangulate voices, it is inevitable that no one person will agree with all the sentiments expressed here. The views expressed are too diverse for this to occur. Two, this also means that there is no one story that can be told about AMAL, even in an attempt to evaluate it as rigorously as we have. However, this report does represent an attempt to triangulate between multiple perspectives, and in that sense does not represent a single voice or perspective. However, it is inevitable that some voices are given more weight than others, given their importance in the construction of the overall narrative. One voice we did give more weight too was the programme manager, since she was responsible for the project's evolution, and the construction of some form of overall coherence. Her voice in general also triangulates the most consistently with AMAL's multiple other, diverse voices, though where required, we have still tried to balance this voice with other perspectives.

This leads to one final note on the subject of 'evidence', and the request 'that findings are based on analysis of facts and evidence that would not let space for perceptions'. Our response to this is that as a project about transformative leadership, AMAL is inherently a tale of narratives. Although we have tried to provide information where available on the numbers of women affected by some of the change processes initiated through the project, these are imperfectly available. Trying to understand AMAL was described above as seeking to follow the ripples on a pond and seeing where the perturbations have occurred. However since these ripples are caused by the actions of individuals and collectivities, to understand the effects of the ripples is necessarily an exploration of the narrative accounts of those involved. This evaluation itself attempts to create a weave from these different narrative voices, since this is the most visceral information available to us. We recognise that this is imperfect, but to enhance validity, we have sought to triangulate all voices as much as possible, given the constraints and limitations noted.

4 Analysis of Findings by OECD-DAC + Criteria

The analysis undertaken here draws from the two analytical reports written by the consultants who undertook the country visits, plus the set of Skype interviews and meetings conducted to cover both the regional and management related, organisational components of the work. The separate country documents are both lengthy, and so this analysis represents a synthesis of this work, with the attempt made to highlight the main findings and related factors. Appendix 1 sets out the methodology used in each country and Appendix 2 details those consulted during the evaluation process. In the main text here, footnotes are used to indicate the source of information and narrative statements.

It should also be noted that in undertaking this analysis, there are times where it may be apparent that the perceptions of members of the evaluation team will vary depending on the level of the project being focused upon, and the level of understanding of the broader management picture. To resolve this a great deal of triangulation of information and views of participants, staff and partners across countries, as well as through AMAL's various reports and documents, was undertaken in writing this final report. In addition, the analysis here seeks to situate the findings within the broad picture of the management as well as contextual constraints within which AMAL was implemented, something that became much clearer when the regional analysis was being undertaken.

4.1 Relevance

Summary: AMAL was originally conceived as an ambitious, progressive project that would work with 'new' women's organisations post the 2011-12 Arab uprisings. In practice, the actual design was tempered down from the initial Oxfam GB intent, once Oxfam affiliates in the four implementing countries were involved in the design, in part because in most cases the country offices wanted to continue existing partnerships, but also because of (changing) contextual circumstances. Altogether, the design and implemented strategy for AMAL can be considered to have been relevant to its four diverse contexts, albeit with some limitations that are noted in the analysis below. There was through much of the project's implementation inevitable challenges in achieving a degree of coherency and connectedness across countries, and between the main project and the smaller AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF) component, given the diverse nature of the inter-affiliate management model, and the inevitable differences between implementing partners. Despite this, through the six meetings held with all partners, mutual relationships were developed and agreement reached, for instance, on a regional advocacy strategy. The final end of project meeting held in Tunisia in January 2016, which was the first time the AIF grantees had been included in a meeting with the other grantees, acted as a celebration of what had been hard won across the three years, both in terms of relationship building and strategic achievements. It emphasises perhaps our major concern, that AMAL exists only as a single, three year regional initiative that does not have a fully planned and funded follow up. To realise the full potential of the relationships and connections established in this first phase, especially with the new organisations brought in through the AIF grants – this is the one component where new women's organisations were supported – and the benefit of the regional dimension, it would be highly desirable to turn AMAL into a longer running programme.

The starting point in considering the relevance of AMAL is to note that it is an extremely ambitious project. We should also note at the outset that although AMAL has consistently been labelled as a programme, Oxfam recognises that it is in fact a project that fits within a broader gender justice programme. A project is a short term (under 5 years, and AMAL has only been implemented for 3 years), discreetly funded entity, with a clearly defined beginning and end. To be part of a programme, AMAL would need to fit into a longer term, theory of change based strategy (minimum 5-10 years), and be linked clearly to other ongoing project activities in time and space. AMAL was aligned with the Regional Gender Justice Programme's strategy for 2010 – 2015, and to some extent it is the case in the countries, however this is in a rather ad hoc rather than planned manner. This does consequently raise questions about the legacy and contribution of AMAL, and these are important to acknowledge and address. In particular, it is important that Oxfam GB, as the lead organisation, consider how the gains and lessons from AMAL can be built on, in particular with respect to the future of the Regional Gender Justice Programme in Beirut, a point we will return to in the recommendation section.

In exploring the design process for AMAL, it was helpful to understand how some of the original intentions behind AMAL were reshaped as the design process proceeded. First, in initial design discussions regarding AMAL in Oxfam GB, the project was seen as 'an opportunity to do something real new and bold' and 'to have sharing, [create] a pressure group in one area'. The challenge once the country offices were consulted, together with the affiliates Oxfam Intermon and Novib, which they fell under, was that they wanted to keep going 'many of the same activities as before with the same partners'.¹³ An advantage of this consultation, however, is that it led to different areas of focus in each country depending on context, for instance Yemen focused on community level work, whilst Tunisia had a more national level focus.¹⁴ Second, an extensive piece of research on women's organisations in the MENA region that was intended to contribute to some readjustment of the AMAL strategy in the annual planning for the second year, was in fact only completed several months into the second year, and so did not play this role. Third, the early allocation of equal budgets to each country, meant that it was not possible to shift budgets easily between countries, although their respective absorptive capacities were not equal. This allowed for adaptive strategies within each country, but not across the project as a whole.

This does raise questions about the best way to design a multi-affiliate project such as AMAL. More ideally, it would fit within a broader regional gender justice programme framework. Work on such a framework that brings together team members from Oxfam and partners from different MENA countries and different affiliates has been started in May 2015, followed by work on an Oxfam Gender Justice strategy that is currently in the finalisation stage. And notwithstanding these debates, AMAL was a relevant initiative. AMAL certainly raises several questions about what regional means in the MENA context. We will examine subsequently what kind of legacy AMAL is likely to leave.

i) *Was the programme strategy aligned with Oxfam gender justice priorities? To what extent did the programme respond to the contextual needs at the time it was developed?*

Gender justice is one of Oxfam's overarching change goals. In the AMAL proposal, Oxfam's gender justice change goal was presented thus: Oxfam is committed to promote gender justice through ensuring that *many more women will gain power over their lives and live free from violence through changes in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations, and through increased levels of women's active engagement and critical leadership in institutions, decision-making and change processes*, through:

¹³ Interviews with former Oxfam regional staff, January 2016.

¹⁴ Comment on draft report.

- Supporting women's leadership at all levels;
- Working with men and women to end gender based violence; and
- Strengthening Oxfam's own learning and capacities on gender.¹⁵

With respect to AMAL, its more specific theory of change is encapsulated in the following diagram:¹⁶

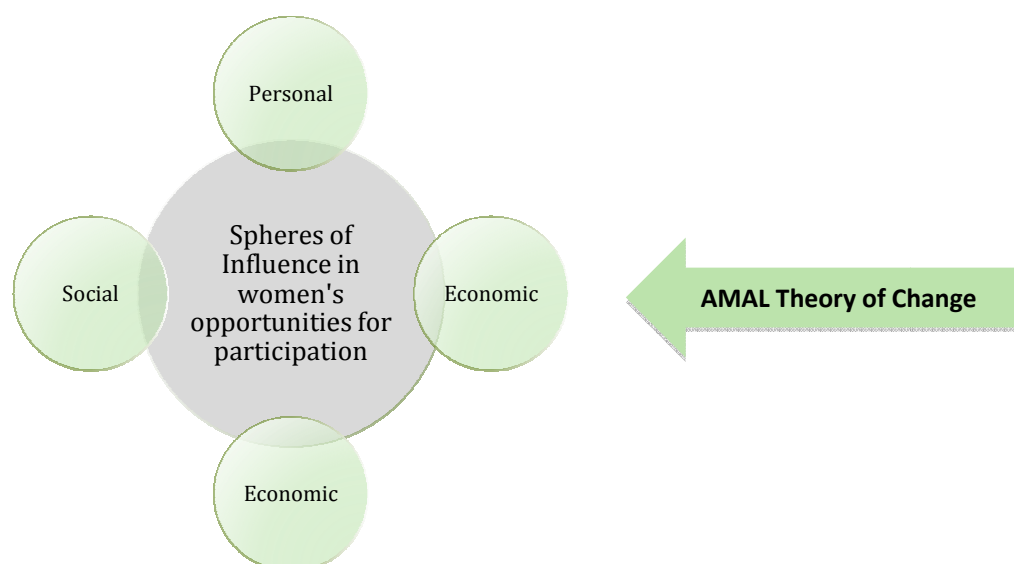


Fig. 4.1

Oxfam recognises four broad spheres that influence women's opportunities to participate in governance including:

- The **personal** (a woman's personal capacity, confidence and context have a strong influence on her capacity to act and be heard);
- The **political** (includes participation public and traditional decision-making structures and processes and access to leaders who can influence change);
- The **social** (includes norms and attitudes as upheld by the media or cultural institutions as well as civil society organisations, particularly women's organisations, which provide women with a platform or strengthen their capacity to have their voices heard)
- The **economic** (gendered norms and responsibilities for housework and care work drastically reduce women's access to paid work and makes them more dependent on men and reduces their capacity to get organised and participate in decision-making structures and processes).

Within this framework, given Oxfam's particular experience of and focus on connecting and **supporting poor and marginalised women to participate in and influence decision-making**, it was proposed that AMAL focus on:

- Support to grassroots leadership and formation of community/women's groups;
- Linking from their experience on the ground to advocacy at national level; and
- Seeking *pro-poor* policy change for women.¹⁷

Core debates regarding the ToC:

¹⁵ AMAL Full Grant Application Final, September 2012.

¹⁶ Rania Tarazi, 2013, 'AMAL Programme TOC – En ppt', AMAL Inception Workshop, 22-24 January 2013.

¹⁷ AMAL Full Grant Application Final, September 2012.

- a) What types of women's organisations should the project work with? An initial, predesign intent of AMAL was that it work with 'new', post-Arab uprising women's organisations¹⁸, but since the COs already had established partnerships with women's organisations, mostly predating early 2011, this was not easy to achieve. There was also the question that most of these new organisations were still relatively unformed, and thus would not easily pass formal contracting conditions. The nexus for substantial debate on the question of types of organisations ended up being the regional research conducted in the first year on types of women's organisations.¹⁹ In the research, issue was taken with the binary it created between 'liberal, secular, feminist' organisations, and 'Islamic' women's organisations that did not necessarily buy fully into more universal notions of human rights. Some of this discussion belongs later, but of relevance here is the fact that key terms – liberal, feminist, Islamic – were not defined, and existing women's organisations, for instance, saw the term 'liberal' as an economic term that they opposed (its association being with the Washington consensus and the politics of neo-liberalism). Also, the difference between being 'Islamic' and Islamic connected to an Islamic political party, was also not noted.²⁰ In Yemen for instance, it is not really possible to be a 'non-Islamic' women's organisation, and (some of) the organisations there know they are being instrumentalised by political parties, but they have to play the game in order to exist and be able to pursue any women's rights agenda.²¹ By the time this organisational research was eventually completed, after the start of year 2, partners had also all been selected, and budgeted activities agreed. Practically, it was really with the AMAL Innovation Fund, set up in the second year, where a way around this divide was found more satisfactorily, and where the project was successful in working with newer women's organisations. In Tunisia too, where Oxfam did map women's rights organisations after the start of AMAL, one of the initial partners selected, LET, was a new organisation formed only in 2011.²²
- b) A second contextual issue was that of the differences between the Maghreb and Mashriq sub-regions. The Maghreb countries of Morocco and Tunisia at least initially felt they had less to learn from the other two countries (and especially Yemen). These distinctions though translate more into different emphases and priorities between the sub-regions (and countries), with the regional events involving all partners still being effective and yielding especially by the end productive cross-sharing.
- c) Perhaps the most contentious ToC issue is the question of how important is the economic dimension of the ToC, given that it was not a priority for the project. Nevertheless, there was a heavy emphasis on encouraging the civil and political participation of poor, rural women. In the country level evaluations, as is illustrated below, both evaluators felt, based on the feedback they received from participants, that working in particular with these women to encourage their participation in leadership activities was hard without attending to their economic situations, since their economic empowerment was important to their having both the financial and decision making means to leave the house to participate in events and activities. This question can be debated at length; from the project itself we note that the response has been not to dismiss the issue but to talk about different ways in which the economic empowerment aim can be achieved. We are presenting the reaction of project participants spoken with during the evaluation. One lengthy response to this issue (and on

¹⁸ Interviews with former regional Oxfam staff, January 2016

¹⁹ 'Women political participation across the Arab region: Mapping of existing and new emerging forces in the region', Cross-National, Final Report, December 2013.

²⁰ Discussions with AMAL programme manager, January 2016.

²¹ AMAL programme manager; also the main author has met previously with the Yemeni Women's Union.

²² Information provided by AMAL programme manager, March 2016.

the ToC as a whole) is summarised below since it was an issue that did reoccur during the evaluation:

‘Our conclusion was that the ToC was valid, we did mention the need to focus more on moving from individual to collective leadership in year 1, and the need to have some economic focus which could be addressed in our local or national advocacy work not in income generating projects... In Amal around 50% of our reach was to poor and marginalised women, which means the other 50% was not. When, however, working with women in poor and marginalised areas, including those that see politics as very far from their lives and interests, addressing that in a way they can relate to in the sense of enabling them to see how political participation would impact their lives and livelihoods, is a much more successful approach. This coupled with giving them practical advocacy tools to be able to demand a change in their situation, as well giving them access...through spaces where they can interact with decision makers locally as we did in Yemen and Tunisia, or through formal participation in municipal councils as we did in Morocco. Supporting women implement initiatives in the community whether by funding or just support would help establish their leadership within themselves as well as in the views of others.’²³

- d) One further issue regarding the AMAL ToC, is that it did not overly focus on strategies to increase men’s engagement as an important factor in changing and influencing mindsets and positions regarding women’s political participation, even though this is emphasised in Oxfam’s gender justice priorities. Nevertheless, there are a variety of different ways in which women participants in the project have sought to engage men, and some of these vignettes will be illustrated in the following discussions. There were also a few collective instances, such as the success in involving male as well as female youth in Palestine, as shown later.
- e) A final issue concerns the broad scope of the ToC, and the practical requirement to define terms more closely. This was perhaps a healthy process that occurred especially in the first year of the project, when strategy was being developed and participants defined. Apart from the obvious need to define ‘transformational’ women’s leadership, other questions arose, e.g. on the definition of ‘marginalisation’.

‘Targeting “poor marginalised” women is a broad term itself that partners in OPT and Morocco have debated a lot and offered various understanding. The AMAL project targeted poor women suffering from geographical marginalisation but “marginalisation” term is very broad in a sense that it can include all women as well as in a specific sense when you look at the areas where partners targeted that moved from the Ramallah ‘bubble’ to look at other areas where check points, walls and conservative communities are further marginalising a women’s experience of leading her life and making her own decisions. Marginalisation need to be specifically defined and unpacked as per each country context; for example, in the case of the OPT it can be targeting women suffering from GBV, as Oxfam did, irrespective of their social economic status. In Morocco, as expressed by country office, “marginalised women’s definition will definitely make us refer to the regions they belong to, which are marginalised regions and remote villages that suffer from marginalisation in terms of public policies, lack of infrastructure and basic services, lack of fundamental rights, absence of institutions that would ensure their rights, and regions that hardly benefit from the public policies. This would make us wonder about the share of these regions in the public policies and the share of women belonging to these regions in the policies directed to such regions.”’²⁴

²³ AMAL programme manager, email response, January 2016.

²⁴ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

Overall, what is clear is that ‘a ToC for a complex regional programme with broad four outcomes across four countries with volatile contexts through a number of partners and grantees needs more than 3 years to realize its complete coherence and validity.’²⁵

ii) To what extent has the programme responded to the priority needs of the population, who were mainly women and especially in poor and marginalized areas, in general and in specific in relation to their leadership and political participation?

It is with regard to this question that the debate on the relative importance of incorporating some focus on economic empowerment resurfaces. A finding from especially all the country visits and interviews is that there is no doubt that with respect to those women living in poorer and more marginalised areas, attending to basic livelihood rights – access to income, food, and health services, especially is their primary focus. For them to be encouraged further into leadership roles is thus influenced by the extent to which they can see this also as a vehicle to improving their livelihood conditions.²⁶

This issue was perceived by the key actors in the project, as was noted in the report on the first full meeting held with all partners in Amman, Jordan in September 2013, where two key issues were highlighted by participants. ‘One is that women’s economic empowerment (practical needs) should go hand in hand with their political empowerment (strategic needs). Two is that the specific context plays a significant part in women’s leadership’.²⁷

What our analysis notes however with respect to the various country strategies, as both the visiting evaluators remarked, an important feature of the project therefore was the way in which as the partners undertook capacity building activities with women, so their resulting leadership actions widened the scope of activities initiated through the project. In this way, there was an eventual encompassing of activities that yielded also an economic and social, as well as civil and political benefit, for women. In the OPT, which was not an ‘Arab Spring’ context, and in Yemen, affected by increasing conflict, the trajectories were different from Tunisia and Morocco.

Overall, this evolutionary nature of project activities has been critical to their relative success, and to the widening tackling of women’s priority needs. However, if there is to be an indirect focus on the issue of economic empowerment, then it would have helped women’s leadership development and their political empowerment, if there had been a greater and more consistent focus on helping them become aware of service provision rights, including social protection measures for the poor and marginalized, and supporting them in accessing these. The health card example from Tunisia mentioned below is one illustration, but this kind of focus could have been more consistent across partners and countries.

Tunisia

For instance, with respect to Tunisia, the trajectory is noted by the evaluator as follows.

Though the project aimed at building women’s capacities and boosting the role of women in public life, which are highly needed by women in all areas, it lacked an important component, especially for women in poor and marginalized areas, which is any focus on economic empowerment. The adverse livelihood situations of women in poor, marginalized and low income areas are one of the biggest challenges that hinder women’s participation in public life.

²⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

²⁶ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, and Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

²⁷ TWL and resources workshop in Amman, Jordan, 30 August – 1 September, 2013

Women who are not economically empowered in the underserved communities won't be able to play any role in public life... because of the male dominance over them due to their financial dependence on their husbands, fathers or families, their lack of communication and negotiation skills, and the cultural requirement for them to wholly submissive to their husbands and families, which consequently deprives them of a range of civil, political, social and economic rights.²⁸

Yet, during the 2nd and 3rd year of the project implementation the partners adapted their strategy to mainstream the transformative women leadership interventions that promote their women economic leadership and combating the violence against women and girls' activities in their implementation strategies. One of the good examples found in the current evaluation process was the training and awareness campaigns conducted by AFTURD in Kef and Kasserine that included training a cadre of peer educators on peer education work applied to women's human rights, violence against women and social and economic rights; a series of interactive theatre performances targeting mainly urban youth (60% women and girls) on women's economic rights (labor exploitation, access to social security, economic exploitation in the family setting); and the organization of number of awareness raising events on poor and marginalized women's access to free/affordable health care services. This led onto subsequent advocacy efforts to promote women's rights to have health insurance cards.

Another good example of how the project responded to the priority needs of especially poor and marginalised women was the capacity building activities around the labour law organized by ATFD to address the discrimination against women in the labour sector, as well as other workshops conducted to address violence against women and its impacts on their economic and social rights.²⁹

Morocco

In Morocco activities focused on raising the awareness of participants in the role municipal/ local councils should be planning in local development, and making council members more accountable to communities. This enabled participants to present petitions to local councils of their priorities, to be included in meeting agendas.³⁰

The OPT

In Palestine, the feminist movement is longstanding but more recently, in the struggle against Israeli annexation is bound up with counteracting the promotion of 'militarised masculinity', which reinforces 'the marginalisation and domination of women in both the private and public spheres'.³¹ In this sense, OPT has as much a requirement for WTL as the other countries more tied up with the Arab Uprisings, AMAL did clearly respond to a range of current needs that women have, including to refocus attention back on their ability to participate more fully in political life.

It's worth noting that AMAL has stirred discussion in Palestinian political and civil society arenas regards women's political participation in decision making positions. AMAL has re-opened the debate within political parties on women's political representation. The Palestinian political context differs from the other Arab countries that passed through the Arab Spring. The Palestinian Feminist movement advocates for a democratic transition and end of Israeli occupation, and have actively done so for the past five to six decades... Men have led and women followed hand in hand for common causes without assuming to be in high level decision making positions. [In AMAL] Palestinian women's priorities were dedicated to addressing social and economic causes related to the Palestinian Penal code and Personal status law (related inheritances causes). The project has

²⁸ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

²⁹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

³⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

³¹ AMAL Full Grant Application, 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa' Oxfam GB, September 2012.

promoted women political participation in order to address the social, economic, and political causes of women.³²

There are also other examples of individual initiatives that are also benefiting and addressing the needs of a widening group of women.

Ms. Khloud, a 42 year old sewing teacher for Hebron joined PCCDS and IRADA interventions, she has experienced changes related to economic empowerment and her role and relationship with community where she lives. She said, 'as a sewing teacher, I've been teaching sewing in Yatta and Al-Aroub (Hebron area) for 20 years now. I understood that a number of employers didn't give women workers their employment rights (minimum wage), which led them to continuously seek employment elsewhere. I managed to attract more women workers to attend the training workshops of PCCD to raise their awareness. I started and registered a rehabilitation and employment company to hire women workers. A woman can possibly work in sectors other than the one she has studied. I work as a part timer in a kindergarten to have enough money to support my new project. The employer used to say 'if you didn't accept my terms of employment, other women accept them'. Now, I know that we need to search for alternatives, understand the market demand. Now, I'm reaping the fruits of my work.'³³

Yemen

In Yemen, the primary approach used in AMAL was to employ the REFLECT methodology with women so that they could participate more effectively in mixed community development committees (CDCs), and through these to be able to raise their own priorities with local and district councils. Unfortunately, just as the process was showing signs of yielding potentially interesting outcomes, the resumption of conflict within the country interceded.

iii) Are the intervention strategies and approaches used in the different countries (in awareness, training, capacity building and advocacy) and overall vision the most adequate for promoting the intended changes that the programme set out to achieve?

Like question v) below, this is a difficult question to answer as to do so requires the presentation of a counter-factual alternative. In a project – and preferably programme – of this nature, what is most important is to have a regular opportunities within the project for reflective learning, and for adjusting the strategy based on the lessons and implications from this learning. Although it was not easy to hold regional gatherings – the venue for the first annual review meeting had to be changed three times because of safety and security issues³⁴ – the project leadership did commit to holding these meetings, of which altogether six were held, including the final one in January 2016, and this aided a commitment to learning and adaptation that was highly credible.

One factor that is both a strength and weakness of AMAL is that the strategies for each country were individually and separately designed. The strength lies in the adaptation to context this enabled, but the weakness is that the relative country autonomy within AMAL meant that there was a comparative lack of attention to developing and spreading more consistent good practice approaches, particularly around capacity building and leadership development.

³² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

³³ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

³⁴ Inception discussion with AMAL programme manager, October 2015.

iv) Was the programme able to respond to new and emerging issues within the current contexts of political uncertainty and insecurity? How well did it cope with that?

The project did prove increasingly effective in its ability to respond to emerging issues in each of the contexts, with the capacity building that took place of partners and participants aiding this. At the local level, participants themselves, as they learned how and developed the capacity to exert leadership, began more initiatives of their own. More strategically though, particularly with respect to advocacy activities, there was a shift in advocacy agendas in different countries, where opportunities to boost women's participation in local elections arose.

This was particularly the case in **Morocco**, where the project strategy was flexible and responded to changes in the country context, particularly with respect to advocacy work focused on the elections that took place in the third year.

The regular PTC meetings have helped to discuss the project progress, consult about activities, and adjust action plan to shortcomings in implementation and the current political context. For example in Morocco, partners faced challenges of elections postponement that was supposed to happen in year 2 but happened late in year 3 in September 2015. Also, ATMDAS faced another challenge during the first year of implementation. ATMDAS conducted a survey during the awareness raising campaign, the results were shocking and showed the prevailing gender role male and female youth in Ouarzazate (a very conservative rural area with prevalent GBV cases) who did not believe that women should participate in political process. ATMDAS thought it would be useless promoting women's political participation, therefore, it shifted its awareness raising campaigns to focus more on gender approaches and developed youth capacities in gender roles and importance of women social, economic, and political participation from a development lens. The third year capacity building was [then] totally dedicated for supporting women candidates for elections and elected women to make their second runs in elections. In the no cost extension period, all capacity building interventions were dedicated for the elected women to assume their positions and enhance their readiness to full fill their tasks. These two major challenges faced by Morocco partners has shifted and shaped the type and timing of different interventions to mitigate shortcomings and capitalize on opportunities. Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.³⁵

A further example related to advocacy adaptation is also illustrated for the OPT below.

OPT

During programme implementation, Gaza faced two Palestinian-Israeli conflicts; one in November 2012 and another in July 2014; they were two major contextual difficulties. There was a national grief and partners could not involve beneficiaries in activities. Activities were postponed and rescheduled. Due to the Gaza 2014 war and the accompanying situational changes, Gaza priorities shifted to humanitarian response and reconstruction. The overall country advocacy objective stayed but the campaign plan (youth designing murals, theatre performances, etc) was merged with the media plan as there was no time for doing both. Gaza was in a state of mourning and advocacy campaign kick-off was delayed. The advocacy messages were designed to serve Gaza reconstruction to communicate the importance of women's political participation in Gaza reconstruction as only women know the needs of children and other women as well.³⁶

This statement, which could also be referenced in the question below, relates to the campaign run in Gaza to persuade political leaders to sign a code of conduct to enhance women's representation at decision making level within political parties. In the West Bank there was also a media component

³⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

³⁶ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

aiming to persuade political leaders to commit to increasing women's representation at decision making positions with the different political parties and movements to 30% as a minimum, in respect to the national decision of the Palestinian National Council announced in 2015.³⁷

v) Was the programme advocacy work at regional and country levels relevant to the context at the time of programme implementation? Were these missed opportunities?

The advocacy work undertaken through AMAL was eventually multi-faceted. As noted by the regional advocacy coordinator for the project, a challenge they faced was that 'the partners weren't documenting what they were doing and their achievements in a systematic way, in terms of what they were doing at a local level, and how they were changing (local) policy issues'.³⁸ From the country reports and the accounts of participants, there are many stories of local level advocacy that women began to undertake, in addition to the more documented and more formally planned advocacy work of the partners, such as the support to women who stood as candidates in local municipal elections in Morocco, and the strengthening of women's leadership in political parties in Tunisia. This growing spread of advocacy work at different levels can be seen as one of the successes of the project.

This is the second question that requires counter-factual knowledge: what advocacy issues other than what was focused on, could AMAL have addressed? Whilst we cannot answer this question definitively, what we can say positively is that because the advocacy agendas pursued at country level evolved as new issues and priorities arose both for national level partners and local level participants, there was proactive intent to maintain and improve the relevance of the advocacy work undertaken. The early constraint with the advocacy work, already mentioned, is that to begin with different countries, as well as the partners within each, had different advocacy priorities and strategies, and it took a while before the partners were prepared to look at collaborating more systematically. This was a legacy of their own history and relations, especially as in contexts like Morocco and the OPT, some partners are seen as having links to different political entities. A value of AMAL is that it helped overcome some of these old rivalries, at least in terms of building a better spirit of collaboration, but it did not necessarily mean that advocacy initiatives were designed and implemented in the best coordinated way.

Tunisia

One good example shown during the evaluation process was that carried out and led by ATFD as one of the key partners in Tunisia, when four workshops were held in Tunis, Sousse, Sfax and Kairouan, with local media actors, journalists and civil society organisations, around the role of local media in promoting women's rights and banning the stereotypes regarding women's image.

Another successful initiative organised by AFTURD involved two awareness raising events in Mashrek Shams in Kasserine and Sra Ouertane in Kef villages on poor and marginalized women's access to free/affordable healthcare services, targeting 160 women and men. Some of the participants in the FGDs indicated that this activity, which was followed by targeting the local community leaders and a few of the governance centres was useful in putting women rights on the agenda of local councils.³⁹

Morocco

In Morocco there was a common country advocacy across all partners for the enactment of Article 19 in the new constitution, with the advocacy work focused on increasing percentages of women's political participation and representation in elections. This was highly relevant to the country context

³⁷ Comment on draft report, and Morocco ad OPT Country Report, February 2016.

³⁸ Interview with advocacy coordinator, 27 January 2016, Beirut.

³⁹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

as it resonated with the whole Moroccan civil society effort. Partners reviewed the electoral laws at different local, regional, and parliamentary levels and advocated for the increase in percentages for women's political representation. They also contributed to the whole civil society work in reviewing legislative imbalances in the draft Law No. 79.14 on establishing the 'body of parity and the fight against all forms of discrimination'. These legal reviews have been under discussion in Parliament.⁴⁰

Regional

At the regional level, the largely online 'Time to Lead' campaign was both quite distinct from the country advocacy initiatives, and effective in terms of 'numbers, visibility and debate'.⁴¹ The regional team did well to gain the support of Marcel Khalife, a well known Lebanese musician and composer, as the lead ambassador, and to have him support the 2.5 months public campaign, including undertaking a high profile visit to Morocco, which helped improve Oxfam's visibility in the region regarding gender and human rights work. The online campaign attracted 922,000 hits during this period.⁴²

Overall, the advocacy work was fundamentally a learning experience for Oxfam at the regional level, with lessons learned about both what it takes to run an effective high profile campaign, as well as deal with some of the challenges of trying to develop and run a campaign that has relevance to all countries involved, even though they may have differing priorities. A further lesson is the need for Oxfam to build an Arabic platform to support ongoing advocacy efforts at regional level, though presumably such a platform could be drawn upon by individual countries too.

At the local level, it is the expansion of many small initiatives that provides an indicator of the effect that the capacity building activities have had on the development of women's leadership, and therefore of their overall relevance.

Relevance of the AMAL Innovation Fund

One additional component of the project that also added substantially to the overall relevance of the project and thus requires to be introduced here was the AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF). The value of this Fund was that it facilitated the participation of new, emerging women's organisations in AMAL, and closely responded to their contextual needs. The fund consisted only of nine small grants of \$35,000 or less, plus some support for institutional capacity building and communication materials, but it did have a catalysing effect on the small organisations involved.

The second major area where the project was successfully able to adapt to the changing times, and work with new women's organisations, as was originally intended, was in respect of the AMAL Innovation Fund. The AIF in some sense was a paradox, since it was centrally funded and managed by the AMAL regional staff based in Beirut, instead of through the country offices, as all other country level activities were planned and funded. Partner organisations were responsible for surfacing and encouraging the submission of proposals by potential grantees, but although the regional management team asked the COs if they were willing to manage the grant resources in their countries, owing to the limited sums involved, they declined an additional management responsibility. The upside of this, is that by managing the grantees directly, this was the only component of the country level activities that had a very direct and simple management and accountability line, and it enabled the AMAL regional office to be responsive to the grantees: 'they

⁴⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁴¹ Interview with advocacy coordinator, 27 January 2016, Beirut.

⁴² Interview with advocacy coordinator, 27 January 2016, Beirut

only had to deal with one person, and the fact that we were working with grass roots organisations, allowed more flexibility'.⁴³ The fact that each grant was not more than \$35,000 helped this.

4.2 Effectiveness

Summary: In spite of some of the initial constraints encountered, and the concerns expressed by SIDA at the end of the first year of AMAL's implementation, the project was more effective in achieving its stated aims in the second and third years of implementation. This was effected owing to changes in the steering committee (as the overall guidance and sign off structure), improved communications between the regional team and the country offices, the growing familiarity of the programme manager with the demands of the project, the improvement of HQ support, the eventual recruitment of an advocacy coordinator, and a successful end of year one joint planning meeting that resulted in country offices, partners, the regional team and affiliate members being much more on the same page by the start of the second year of activities. The project experience demonstrates that for such a complex regional initiative more time and programme management support is required during the critical inception period. Beyond this first year, the project team and partners gradually grew in confidence in terms of understanding the concept of women's transformational leadership, and what it required to achieve, aided by the learning and sharing meetings and events that took place. In the final year of the project, the leadership development and advocacy initiatives began to show more results. This included the AIF and the regional 'Time to Lead' campaign.

The main constraint that AMAL has faced as a project is that it has been too short for such a complex set of interventions. In the initial design for AMAL, the inception phase requirements of a project with its degree of programmatic and managerial complexity were underestimated, and this slowed implementation in the first year, leading to a budgetary under spend. This focused everyone's attention from the donor to Oxfam GB regional management and the project team, and as a result, the second year of AMAL – 2014 – was intensive and stressful, but ultimately a successful year. Activities were implemented across all outcome areas, and the AIF established, with the initial set of grants being awarded. The third and final year was comparatively trouble free and successful. As noted at the outset, by the end of AMAL's three years of implementation, the project had reached the point where it could truly become effective. It has however now closed, and its regional team is in the process of being disbanded.

Internalisation of the TWL Concept

A key focus of many discussions throughout the project was the attempt to grapple with and define the concept of transformational leadership. There were many efforts. One of the earliest reproduced in the box below was from the TWL and Resources workshop in Amman, Jordan in early September 2013. As can be seen from the box, there are many things agreed as 'elements', many of them more of a process nature. This exploration of the concept continued during the implementation period, with partners and participants rather left to work out and discover the concept, in a way that perhaps assisted them in internalising the concept more. At this early stage there was not necessarily yet a clear sense of what was distinct about 'transformational' leadership.

⁴³ Interview with AIF Manager, 26 January 2016, Beirut.

The agreed elements of the TWL concept

Women arriving at decision making positions, and participating in making such decisions as well.

Strengthening women capacities for empowerment.

Social justice and gender.

The importance of the specific context where TWL is applied.

TWL is a non-linear process.

TWL is a strategy and not an aim in itself, aiming at making change happen in power relations.

Leadership components: power; principles; values; practice.

“Practicing what we preach” through self-reflection.

Working in both public and private spaces.

Collective leadership.

Indeed it was agreed that many things remained ambiguous about the concept, even after this initial discussion, including an appropriate term in Arabic; how to apply the term at grassroots levels; how to create transformational leaders; a standardised definition for transformational, feminist leadership; empowering men; the term transformative, and whether it means transformation, change, or other; and how to apply TWL in AMAL.⁴⁴ This was not the first discussion within AMAL of the concept. In the initial inception meeting held in Rabat, Morocco in January 2013, 3 young women (in their 20s) came to the workshop ‘to tell their stories of transformation from strawberry pickers to women leaders and supporters of labour rights for other women in similar situations.’⁴⁵ It was noteworthy that at this preliminary stage the descriptive points participants developed all referred to a model of individual transformation. And even though the concept, ‘collective leadership’ appeared in the September 2013 discussion, most of the practical efforts to develop leadership amongst women still focused at the individual level, as are the examples presented. One of the more notable exceptions was the forming of the women’s small enterprise trade union in Palestine.

In 2014, Oxfam International produced their own guidance on the subject drawing from the work of Srilatha Batliwala. Batliwala talks of a feminist leadership ‘diamond’ (see below), which Oxfam views as encapsulating the key elements of women’s transformative leadership. The diamond refers to the self and has four components or quadrants to it: principles and values, practices, power, politics and purpose. Batliwala’s description is below.

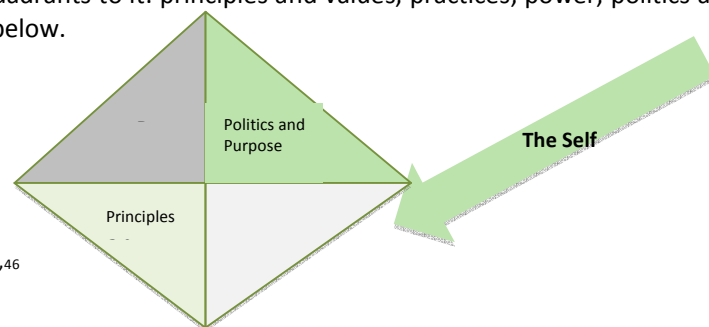


Fig. 4.2 The Feminist Leadership “Diamond”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ TWL and Resources Workshop, Amman, Jordan, 30 August – 1 September 2013.

⁴⁵ Valli Yanni, 2013, ‘AMAL Supporting Women’s Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa: INCEPTION WORKSHOP’, Rabat, Morocco, 22-24 January 2013.

⁴⁶ Srilatha Batliwala, 2010, ‘Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud’, CREA, in Oxfam International, 2014, ‘Transformative Leadership for Women’s Rights: An Oxfam Guide’, Oxfam.

‘Transformative leadership for women’s rights is an approach and strategy for social justice which challenges and transforms power relations and structures (in all their different manifestations) into an enabling environment for the leadership potential of individuals (purpose). It embodies the principles and values of human rights, gender equality, participation, consultation and respect for the dignity of all people. TWLR directs others to bring about fundamental change, and facilitates collective efforts to transform inequitable institutions whether it is the home, the community, or more broadly (practice).’⁴⁷

The diamond aims to complement the ToC, with its four dimensions of personal, social, political and economic change, which encompasses both the individual and social change levels. Both reinforce the idea that transformative leadership starts from the personal (the self), but involves social, political and economic dimensions, and in this it is a concept that inherently requires also seeking change in power relations and structures, and thus inevitably requires a collective dimension too. It is a journey involving self-discovery and empowerment, but you need friends and allies too, something that mirrors the projects shift from an early focus on the individual to one more on the collective, as the earlier statement from the programme manager noted, but which is perhaps something the project could have emphasised a little more.

In Morocco, during the evaluation, partners expressed their understanding of TWL as ‘the capability of women to speak for women, children, men, and the whole community at large’ since women ‘represent half the society and bring up the other half’.⁴⁸ This does not really capture the transformative dimension, suggesting that even at the end, there was a struggle with the concept. Nevertheless from the accounts, it is clear that several women have gone through transformative journeys in AMAL, as is detailed below. A question is whether if stressing the need to build greater levels of solidarity, more could have done so.

One final dimension with respect to the appropriation of a conceptual understanding and practical furtherance of WTL is that it also carries a generational dimension. In Morocco it was acknowledged that there is still a generation gap between old and new women leadership, owing to the ways in which the context is shifting. This is discussed more later but stresses the point that women also need to understand the concept in their own context, in order to be able to work with it.

(i) Have the intended changes as described in the proposal in policies, practices, ideas and beliefs been achieved? Any unintended changes (both positive and negative)? To what extent did that happen for the four main outcomes of the programme? Namely: women’s leadership building, capacity building of women’s organizations, advocacy work?

In an analysis of the effectiveness of the project, not just the ToC should be taken into account, but also the diagram, below, illustrating the envisaged linkage between the different levels at which AMAL operated. It can be seen that it was intended that capacity building of leadership skills, and subsequent leadership activities of women at community and local level, would then feed into policy and advocacy activities reaching to national level (and in which partners would play a fundamental role), and then in turn inform regional level activities through networking activities inspired by the project. Each outcome is referred to in turn below; Outcome 4 is dealt with under section vi).

⁴⁷ Oxfam International, 2014, ‘Transformative Leadership for Women’s Rights: An Oxfam Guide’, Oxfam.

⁴⁸ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016

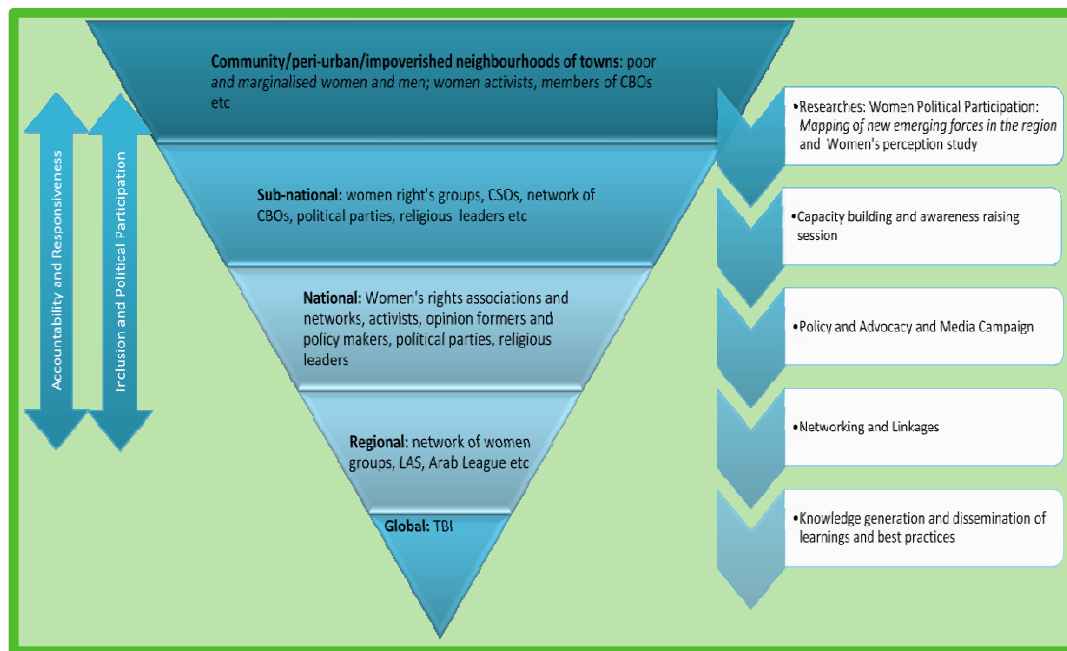


Fig. 4.3 Programme beneficiary/partners equilibrium

Outcome 1: Women's Rights and Leadership - *Women and girls will have increased awareness of their political and socio-economic rights are more confident to voice their rights in order to play leadership roles at all levels (household, community, national, regional).*

This is the component where there were some differences in views expressed, going back to the debate on whether political empowerment can be fostered without first having a focus on economic empowerment discussed with respect to the theory of change. Nevertheless, as the project progressed, and the capacities of women leaders were built at the local level, so also was the agenda which they could take on widened.

Tunisia

In Tunisia there has been a focus on preparing women for local and national elections, with for instance, one partner, LET training 163 women, including 93 in the final year. Of these, five women were elected in November 2014 to the national Parliament. This training has enabled 153 women to take up formal or informal leadership positions individually or part of a group that leads advocacy efforts. Women from the local areas of Tunisia programme were empowered to be able to advocate their own issues by offering training on women's human rights advocacy and community mobilization and coaching them on public speaking and articulating their specific message. There was a strong focus on youth too, with young men and women in Kef and Kasserine being trained as peer educators, and who subsequently mobilised other youth and conducted various awareness sessions with peers. The core group grew from 18 to 48 and reached 276 youth. Furthermore 15 young women were trained and acted as observers of the parliamentary and presidential elections.⁴⁹

During the evaluation country visit to Tunisia there was still considerable debate as to whether marginalised women in poor and rural areas can participate in public life or play leadership roles in

⁴⁹ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

their local societies, in the absence of an economic empowerment component. Thus one woman commented:

“My life hasn’t been changed. I’ve benefited from working with you but no tangible result was reached. I’ve met the Minister and I became aware of my right to have health insurance, yet where is the Health Card?”⁵⁰

Yet this comment can be read in two ways. First, is the direct statement of the woman, but second is the fact that changes have happened in her life, and those of other participants: they have better communication and interpersonal skills, which has helped them communicate better in their personal lives, and in some cases do so at a local level too. But thus far, on the women’s health cards, though the campaign has raised awareness on women’s rights to have health cards and become medically insured and has succeeded in conveying women’s voice to decision makers, only a few women have succeed in actually obtaining the cards. From our perspective, it is the obtaining of the cards that signifies real practical (and potentially transformational change). It will thus require a longer term effort on the part of the partners if women are to become more effective in fulfilling their rights in this respect, and be able to play a more significant role in public life. The number of women who have taken up leadership positions suggests this can happen - though it is likely they will still need support, which raises the question as to whether Oxfam Tunisia and the partners will still be able to provide this after the end of the project life cycle.

Morocco

In Morocco, outcome 1 was achieved though awareness raising campaigns that expanded its reach to marginalized rural areas. Interventions carried out raised beneficiaries’ awareness to the role of municipal and local councils in local development and the council members are accountable before their communities to respond to their needs and wants. The beneficiaries are able to present petitions to local councils in order to be included in the meeting agenda, discussed, and executed.

Women and Elections: Morocco

‘In Morocco, elected women at municipal/ local council level did not initially have the desire to run for a second term after their earlier lack of success, but after participating in different project interventions the change happened; AMAL has opened their appetite to run for the second time. The previously and newly elected women as well as other women benefices’ attitudes have changed and realized the effective role they can play in supporting women’s causes as well as community’s needs.’⁵¹

The awareness raising campaigns and capacity building interventions has reached out to women in marginalized places never targeted before and prepared a very conducive environment to initiate change. Targeted women attained decision making positions and some were elected at regional and local councils, and parliament, some of the women, who won in the local and regional elections, won also the parliamentary elections (e.g. reaching parliament level wasn’t initially planned), which are considered the most important levels of managing public policies in Morocco. Ms Aissa ET Alaa, for Azilal region and 25 years old, was one of the elected members of the professions chambers to reach the Parliament House of Councillors (Parliamentary second chamber), representing the agricultural chamber. She used to work in the Zrabi cooperative and is now the youngest women MP.⁵²

⁵⁰ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

⁵¹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁵² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

The vignettes illustrated below all provide examples of the development of women's leadership capacities, and some of the outcomes of this.⁵³

- Increased capacities of elected women to express and voice their opinions on many levels; personal/family, community, professional, and cognitive levels. Elected women's capacities were developed in assessing budgeting lines, gender budgeting, reviewing laws governing elections and submitting petitions, writing proposals, how to apply gender approaches in developmental projects, and others. This has changed women's positions and enhanced women's perception in terms of the roles entrusted with them. In addition, this has contributed to challenging the general social perception that elected women's positions are only 'nominal'.
- Elected women knew how to manage elections campaigns, effectively promote/brand themselves as candidates for election, and to form coalitions to enhance their chances to win. Women were enticed women to run again for the coming elections, despite being frustrated with their first experience. One elected women said, 'Many of the women who participated in the capacity development training courses have won the elections. This is mainly attributed to the programme, as they have benefited from the training courses on managing election campaigns.' Ms. Shafiq, a 29 years old elected women from Errachidia, formed a coalition during her second run for elections; she was able to form an alliance with someone (an elected male member of local council) in the elections list. Ms. Shafiq reported, 'He ran before for elections five times and he didn't win until I was a candidate with him on the same list.'
- Ms. Fatima, a 42 year old previously elected woman and active member in Réseau de Développement de L'Innovation (RDI), Goulmima-Errachidia, was able to form a group from among the youth. She has learnt how to address masculine mentalities, how to manage an election campaign and how to form alliances. She has formed her own work team according to a strategy that her team members collectively approved. She was able to communicate with the communities in regions that she did not belong to and convince people of her experiences and qualifications. She said, 'I was able to succeed, I was able to challenge the reality and I refused to accept the prevailing situation, i.e. success in elections by being a candidate in the region I belong to. I was able to succeed and communicate with female and male citizens in a region I don't belong to. AMAL... has provided us with the weapon we need to face all the challenges with.'
- Ms. Hanan, a 30 year old elected woman for Marrakech-safi, Ait Ourir participated in Ennakil interventions. During her elections campaign, she was shocked by the difficult reality especially for women in politics. She tried to apply what we have learnt during the training courses. Some people, especially men, were always insinuating that our efforts would be wasted away because they will win by 'virtue of money', in addition to the fact that people do not believe in her qualifications and experiences. However, she developed and adopted a strategy of targeting youth of her age who were convinced to vote for her. She said, 'A women is worthy of reaching decision making positions not by virtue of money, money isn't everything. The most important thing is to have self-confidence, make the right alliances, communicate with community members and identify their needs. The men council members don't connect with people to know their needs.'
- Ms. Omnia, a 49 elected woman at the regional council and head of a feminine association, highlighted the challenges and resistance she faced from men. She said, 'We are developing while men are staying at the same level. They felt they have shortage of knowledge, the thing that has caused us problems and hindered our work'. However, she has learnt not to be aggressive in her reactions nor confrontational, and how to be flexible with others. So, she has started to peacefully form alliances and make friendships. Therefore, hostilities have become friendships, and men have even started to ask for her intervention to advocate their demands in the regions where they belong. Ms. Omnia added, 'Our voice has become heard, maybe men looked upon us (women) as 'weak', but I know better the legal framework and council charter and I can talk.'

⁵³ All from the Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

The OPT

In the OPT, outcome 1 was the most achieved especially in terms of raising awareness of young women members and in political parties to their social, economic, and political rights.

Partners' interventions have raised their awareness to UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁵⁴ (Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security), and the Palestinian penal code and personal status laws, and others. Partners also targeted youth groups with different awareness raising and capacity building. Partners raised awareness of women community leaders to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) international treaty, and combating violence against women issues to bridge the gap between the formal and informal legal status. It was a total success shared at country level and regional level. Oxfam produced short video films to interview and document women community leaders' experiences, and change stories were shared locally and regionally in pulse emails during a country advocacy campaign.

Raising awareness has revived debates about women's political participation after years of focus on democratic transition and the ending of the Israeli occupation. The AMAL project has renewed the role of civil society organisations in influencing change.⁵⁵

The Practice of Shadowing

An innovative initiative established by MIFTAH, one of the Palestinian partners was to have young women leaders shadow female and male leaders, in order to expose them to leadership skills, practices, and mechanisms of influencing change and decision making.

Shadowing practices were adopted and internalized by MIFTAH as an on-going service provided to its youth networks members and in its organizational programming. The practice was scaled up to shadowing local council/ municipal members in different locations. MIFTAH's experience with applying the shadowing experience was unique and proved to be very effective. Young women shadowed male leaders/ opinion formers like Dr Azmi Shuaibi (BoD – Anti corruption Consultant at AMAN coalition for transparency and accountability⁵⁶) who imparted his expertise to the shadowee in respect of social accountability and related mechanisms as well as how can this be used in advocacy work to influence change/ affect transparency and accountability in government institutions. The shadowee (Ms Lana Baker) belonged to a political party and was ambitious to occupy a leadership position with the party. She acknowledged the learning she gained in how a leader communicates and interacts with various stakeholders, and the dynamics

⁵⁴ The Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.

⁵⁵ Morocco and the OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁵⁶ The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) was established in the year 2000 upon an initiative by a number of Palestinian civil society organizations working in the fields of democracy, human rights, and good governance as a movement aims to combat corruption and enhance the values of integrity and principles of transparency and systems of accountability in the Palestinian society. Transparency International (TI) endorsed AMAN Coalition in 2006, where AMAN abides by the guiding principles of TI movement and with promoting its objectives and activities that adhere with the Palestinian context.

of decision making in the public sphere and how to influence it. The experience enabled her to identify the factors in the mind set of decision makers that prevents women's participation in the public sphere, in addition to the nature of the challenges facing a leader. Another example of shadowing was that of Ms Hanin Ramadan to Dr Sabry Saidam (ex-Presidential Advisor in ICT sector and present Minister of Education & Higher Education, member of Fateh party, and a board member of a number of NGOs. Eventually the shadowee succeeded in attaining a leadership position in her political party. Ms. Hanin said that leaders have complex personalities, they are capable of doing everything and influence anything; shadowing created a change in the knowledge and attitudes of young women leaders.

It's worth noting from the above that the shadowing exercise was more successful with male leaders rather than female leaders due to the elitist attitude of female leaders/ opinion formers and their lack of commitment to the shadowing exercise. In the case of WCLAC, another partner, it targeted women community leaders and women members in political parties. WCLAC however could not set specific time slots for the shadowee to follow women party members since they did not reply to WCLAC's request to engage in the exercise. Rather they communicated their opinion that they have earned their positions through great suffering and effort and young women (the shadowee) need to follow the same pathway. It seems that the shadowing exercise was successful in transferring, internalizing leadership skills to young women leaders as well as in highlighting personality traits needed to exercise leadership to influence change, but in the pilot the shadowing was yet to assist in decreasing the 'generational gap' between old and new women leaders within partners' organizations.

Yemen

In Yemen, the REFLECT circle activities were the most successful activity implemented. In a group interview conducted over Skype women participants from marginalised areas noted the lack of focus on economic issues.

'The program asked me to participate in some of the advocacy activities that addressed women's political rights whilst we cannot feed our children because of the difficult economic situation in Yemen, as a consequence of the war and the lack of income gained by men, how come?'⁵⁷

Nevertheless, as is noted in the project's own reporting, women members in REFLECT circles in the four districts in Hajjah and Taiz did become more aware, took an interest in and undertook initiatives for solving local community issues through a total of 944 REFLECT sessions that were conducted. Eight men were also trained as part of the men's forum to be aware about gender and women's political participation and rights and to conduct awareness sessions in the community. Steps were taken towards developing a mandate for the CDCs, which included local leaders (municipal councillors, Akils) for them to become sustainable spaces for women leadership. Unfortunately the war precluded these activities from continuing. Women members of REFLECT circles and CDCs who identified and defended causes in the community opened up spaces for their advocacy work through workshops and events with local leaders.⁵⁸

Outcome 2: Capacity building of women's organisations - *A diversity of women's organisations and their allies will have increased skills, resources and capacity to advocate a women's rights agenda with a collective voice and influence decision-making.*

⁵⁷ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

⁵⁸ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

There was a strong emphasis in AMAL of capacity building of local women's organisations, groups and individuals through AMAL by the local partners. This capacity building evolved during the project, to meet emergent needs and issues, and thus was adaptive in nature. Approaches to capacity building varied, depending on the experience and earlier training and support partners had received, including through Oxfam affiliates. What might have been helpful in the project was a closer documentation of good practices and provision of guidance and support to the partners around this work, particularly in the full involvement of participants in activity design from the onset. A more thorough training needs assessment process might have allowed this to happen, and thus for some customisation of capacity development activities, drawing upon the more experienced partners, and Oxfam's own practices.⁵⁹

Morocco

Outcome 2 results were achieved through a number of capacity building interventions targeting beneficiaries in CBOs and elected/candidate women. For the most part, partners' work was very progressive and responsive to the dynamic political context. Partners' capacity building interventions were changed or modified during the project's life time to support the candidate women for elections, women going for the second run, and at the end of the programme the elected women. Partners are still supporting the elected women in assuming their official positions.⁶⁰

Tunisia

With regard to the component on building the capacity of women's organisations, the partner organisations have benefited from the AMAL project and the project has succeeded in building their capacities. One effect of this has been to enable partner organisations to communicate better with the government and to shift a tendency to collide with the government when dealing with them, to a more cooperative approach. The project also managed to enhance relations amongst the projects partners and created space for them to cooperate and unite for one cause.

One specific example of capacity building is that led by LET, where LET conducted 23 workshops and training sessions in Tunis and Kelibia targeting 346 women, on political leadership, communication, door-to-door grassroots mobilisation techniques (265 women) and strategic planning and fundraising for the elections campaign of 81 women leaders/ members of political parties. The approach used in this regard also contributed indirectly to promoting the advocacy efforts of women, as LET coaches mentored 117 women leaders by having one-on-one coaching and follow-up sessions, and upgrading both their individual and collective/ group skills (13 women for each mentor).⁶¹

The OPT

In the OPT, the capacity building of local CBOs was less successful, owing perhaps to its greater complexity and the cascade nature of the work, and the varying experience with such work of the partners. WAC, as a long standing partner of Oxfam Novib, was the most effective. It has received core funding to map CBOs and other grassroots organisations and develop them under their 'Capacity Building and Empowerment Programme', and capitalised on its knowledge under previous grants. It created synergies in CBO selection and institutional capacity development in advocacy work. WAC selected CBOs and targeted different interventions for board members, secretaries, coordinators, and conducted a quarterly forum for knowledge exchange. In contrast, PWWSD would have benefited from receiving more guidance in CBO selection criteria; whether the focus should be

⁵⁹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁶⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁶¹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

established or newly formed CBOs, what should be the specific objectives in developing CBO's capacities, what specific capacity building plan/ activities are required, and who to target within CBOs. MIFTAH organised exchange visits of CBOs in the Jordan valley to CBOs in Hebron to empower them and give them a sense of how to work and expand coalitions and build networks. But an issue, also with WCLAC is that activities often targeted individuals, rather than the whole organisation, and not necessarily the CEOs, and thus there was often limited transfer of knowledge by those who were involved. WCLAC specifically understood output 2.2 as targeting individuals and not CBOs or alliances. Where needs assessment exercises were carried out more thoroughly and in a participatory manner, the capacity building activities were broadly more effective.⁶²

Yemen

In Yemen capacity building work was limited to that possible through the REFLECT circles.

Outcome 3: Changing Attitudes and Policy - *Decision-makers and opinion formers at all levels are more aware of and their positions are more reflective of the needs and priorities of women.*

The advocacy work was only begun in the second year of AMAL, and it took time to generate some consensus in countries amongst partners as to what priorities they should focus on. There were two types of focus, one being on elections and women's representation in them in the two Maghreb countries of Morocco and Tunisia, and two being on priorities identified by women locally. This included a focus in OPT on labour and union rights and in Tunisia on women's free access to health services. The fact that the Minister of Social Affairs in Tunisia provided support to the campaigns on health access and local infrastructure was a significant success. In the final year the advocacy work gathered more momentum with the regional advocacy Time for Women to Lead campaign and the role of Marcel Khalife as a celebratory ambassador, which attained a large online presence, and included a visit by Khalife to Morocco.

There was a steep learning curve involved in how to conduct and focus the advocacy activities, and move them beyond the individual interests of different national partners. That they became more strategic showed the success of some of this learning, even if really only the foundations were laid for what could be much more high profile advocacy work in the future, should this initiative continue to be supported.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, there were two main advocacy initiatives undertaken, that were identified by women who had undertaken leadership training, one related to women's right to health cards for free health access, and the other related to the implementation of a road project. Both of these initiatives evolved from locally agreed advocacy priorities. At the policy level two demands were made, women to be on a local health committees managing health cards, and on a municipal committee on infrastructure. The Minister of Women's Affairs and the Director of Welfare department in the Ministry of Social affairs announced their support for these campaigns and for taking them more widely at the national level.⁶³ The success of the health cards campaign was in the fact that it put women's health rights on the agenda of decision makers at the local level, following the national support.⁶⁴

⁶² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁶³ Meeting with former AMAL advocacy officer, Beirut, January 2016.

⁶⁴ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

Furthermore, partner AFTURD was granted 2 hearings in both Kef and Kasserine with the governors and the regional directors for social affairs to present their demands and to discuss the possibilities of having women representation in the targeted commissions responsible for health cards access. AFTURD were also invited to take part in the development commission, headed by the governor of Kasserine. Regarding the infrastructure advocacy in Azmour area, most importantly the works on the road/infrastructure actually started in early March 2015.⁶⁵

Two further successes In Tunisia were that as a result of lobby meetings and advocacy activities the Ministry of Finance included partner ATFD in the Gender Sensitive Budgeting Committee and the Tunisian Minister for Women Affairs pledged to take up the recommendations of the conference on VAW in public/political sphere and to defend them during the elaboration of the elections law.⁶⁶

Morocco

In Morocco, partners' advocacy work was a marked success in increasing women representation at municipal/local, regional, as well as at the national parliament levels. As noted in the final project annual report, as part of implementation of the country advocacy strategy, public mobilization for pushing parity in elections was conducted by the partners, reaching 30,000 people through radio programmes, and with 1000 women and 500 women participating in the December 2014 Orange March calling for parity. Joint statements and memorandums to push for article 19 and gender parity in elections were presented and several meetings for common approaches were held with decision makers at national and local level, especially parliamentary groups and political parties. As a result of advocacy work of AMAL supported by other feminist organizations, the parliament rejected the proposed bill on article 19 of the constitution.

Furthermore, as the elections timetable was presented by the government, the work related to elections laws was intensified, and with the contribution of the advocacy work under AMAL and their allies, the elections bills were revised to improve the electoral rights for women. The most prominent successes the project contributed to were: the quota for women in municipal positions which became 27% instead of 12%; the quota in the electoral lists to be by parity (50% men 50% women) and at least 30% of regional positions would be occupied by women. Local sections of political parties committed to transmit claims to include women to decision-making bodies at central level in their parties. They also expressed commitment to presenting women candidates in the forthcoming elections and asked for the support of NGOs in terms of capacity building and advocacy.⁶⁷

Achievements are summarised in the table as follows:⁶⁸

Level	Previous Women's Representation	Actual Women's Representation
Local	12%	27% ⁶⁹
Regional		33%
Parliament first chamber	17%	17%

⁶⁵ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁶⁶ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁶⁷ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁶⁸ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁶⁹ The 27% women representation is the success attained as stipulated by the amended electoral law. In the 4th of September 2015 elections, The actual percentage increase reached at the local level as stated by the Moroccan Ministry of Interior is 21-22%, the ministry stated that women secured 6673 seats which is equivalent to almost double the number recorded during the 2009 elections.

(House of Representatives)		(election not yet held)
Parliament (House of Councillors)	4%	10%

During the life of AMAL there was no renewal of the first chamber. The process of advanced regionalization is new to Morocco (the advanced regionalization project was launched in January 2010 to prepare the country for decentralization), and the first regional elections were conducted in 2015.

Oxfam has directed additional activities targeting Moroccan professions chambers and succeeded in shedding light for the first time on the professions chambers elections in Morocco, something that has not been previously addressed by any organization, and was not initially planned in the AMAL activities. The professions chambers are considered strongholds for male patriarchy. Partners programmed activities to influence women's representation in those chambers. This is deemed a point of strength within the project and among the unexpected results. AMAL succeeded in promoting women elections in the agricultural and industrial chambers.⁷⁰

The OPT

In the OPT, the key result and marked change was getting partners to work together jointly in country advocacy work. Partners reached out to CBOs and beneficiaries developing their capacities to advocate for change within their communities and to join partners in their country advocacy campaign. This was marked most in the advocacy work where all partners cooperated together to persuade all political parties to sign the petition to ensure their commitment to increasing women's representation to 30% (even if the subsequent practice did not wholly bear this out).⁷¹

Owing to the Palestinian context that does not allow Palestinians to move freely between the West Bank and Gaza, WAC led the campaign in Gaza and WCLAC in the West Bank. WAC believed in inclusiveness and was prepared to take risks, and it paid in the end by Hamas signing the petition to increase women's political representation in political parties, though they did not give their full commitment to enact the petition terms... WCLAC conducted one TV episode with decision-makers, which included a member of the central committee of Fatah, the General Secretary of the Popular Front, an activist from Jalazone refugee camp, and a member of the Complaints Unit in the Ministry of Women's Affairs, who belongs also to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestinians (PFLP) and others (i.e. the guests were not affiliated to Islamic parties). The TV episode discussed women's political participation, the role of women within parties, and hurdles to their ability to access decision making positions. The guests talked about their personal experiences.

WAC was very innovative in its approaches using murals and theatrical performances. The other two partners, MIFTAH and PWWSO, shared in the planning phase by providing comments and to a lesser extent in the implementation of the advocacy campaign. More focus on media (whether social media and visual media like billboards) and the role it can play to advance advocacy work would have helped. TV can reach rural marginalized women and most importantly social media can enhance the outreach to critical masses of youth like those in Jordan Valley and in camps. No

⁷⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁷¹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

clear set of roles and responsibilities were assigned to each partner to define individual contributions and deliverables, and this would have helped too.⁷²

In the OPT additionally, 25 community leaders, 19 journalists, 76 political leaders, members of the PLC and political factions in Gaza were trained and sensitized on gender, women's rights and participation. Self reported evidence of change of behaviour was noted among journalists and statements recorded at the Gaza town hall meeting. By creating a platform for policy dialogue that links marginalized youth groups within the targeted areas of the Jordan Valley and West Ramallah, were linked with high-level political leaders and decision makers, and eight parliamentarians (from different districts) expressed positions of support and commitment to raise the youth's and marginalised women's priorities.⁷³

Yemen

Even in Yemen it was noted that the Yemen Women's Union Taiz and Hajaj had succeeded in forming eight Community Development Committees (CDCs) at the community/ sub-district level (four in Taiz and four in Hajjah). Each CDC has 18 members, six of whom are women (REFLECT circle representatives), six men from local community level who support women's rights, and six influential figures. In order to turn this achievement towards women's empowerment, the YWU held 16 weekly community discussion spaces as part of the REFLECT circles. Discussion topics included the rise of school fees and the spread of Hepatitis A, which is linked to the unsanitary sanitation facilities in schools.⁷⁴

AMAL Innovation Fund

A further initiative listed under Outcome 3 is that of the AMAL Innovation Fund, and so that is summarised here too.

The AIF fund has proved to be effective in reaching out to new women's and youth grassroots organisations, supporting them in developing innovative initiatives to increase the political participation of women and youth (the latter including young men as well as women). Reaching out to these new organisations has reinforced the inclusiveness to the approach to women's transformative leadership and contributed to AMAL's overall objective.

OPT

In the OPT, the AIF fund had succeeded on many fronts. Good examples are the building of sustainable structures within Hebron communities that support women's causes, including the first union that protects women in small enterprises, at the level of the Hebron governorate, and a further is the addressing of women's economic needs and empowerment.

There are two good illustrations of the latter, the first involving holding employers accountable to provide women workers the minimum wage as per the Palestinian labour law. PCCDS, a lead AIF grantee, and IRADA, a co-grantee, conducted intensive training workshops targeting women workers in order to raise their awareness of their employment rights. The Palestinian labour law was elaborated and violations experienced were discussed with employers. Although the labour law safeguards the rights of women workers, the women themselves were unaware of these rights. The knowledge gained helped them to pursue redress; some women placed complaints at the Labour office and others went to the law court to pursue their cases further. During the project, almost 20

⁷² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁷³ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁷⁴ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

cases were registered at the Labour Office, 70% of which were addressed and workers were sent back to their work. PCCDS is a close partner of the Labour Office, since the office has a limited number of inspectors compared to the total number of workers. PCCD has co-shared this task and contributed to resolving some of the workers' issues.⁷⁵

The second related example was where PCCDS trained some 200 women workers in small enterprises, and then through advocacy the women have managed to create the first union of women workers under the general trade union, in itself a remarkable achievement.

In a final example in Gaza 120 male and female youth were trained on advocacy and the use of media, including photography, film and radio production. These youth led the campaign referred to earlier on advancing women's right of participation and representation in local councils.

Tunisia

A series of Innovation Fund activities have focused on young men and women, as a group that is often marginalised. A further example to the one above in Gaza, is one in Tunisia, which has focused on enhancing youth skills in 'creative endeavours such as art, theatre and dance'. Here the targeted adolescents included those suffering from disabilities, such as blindness. Space was provided for the adolescents and their mothers in a dense, poor neighbourhood for 'self expression and advocacy through arts', in an initiative that embodied WTL principles.⁷⁶

Morocco

In Morocco, a video was produced by Tafouyte, which is an independent network despite being developed and managed by ATMDAS. Tafouyte developed a documentary film about female leaders who gained decision making positions, shedding light on those women and their experiences in attaining leadership positions. This documentary film was later on shared with all Morocco partners to ensure exchange of experiences and learning during the holding of a single workshop conducted to link AIF with partners.

Yemen

As a result of the Innovation fund project in Yemen in Ebb Governorate, 20 rural women led an advocacy campaign on the situation of displaced women and got reactions from media, CSOs and the administration of Displaced People's Camps (Khadija Foundation Innovation fund grant).⁷⁷

(ii) Are there any clear signs that show progress in the transformation of power relations? For example, are there any clear signs that the women and men who participated in the programme are more aware of their rights or of gender roles and relations? Are there any signs that these have changed in the targeted communities?

It is undoubted that AMAL has helped to transform gender power relations. In most cases this would seem to be at relatively localised scales, though in both Morocco and Tunisia, with the changes in women's political proportional representation at different levels and the wider support for the election of women candidates, this impact has been greater. The example from Palestine of the women engaged in small enterprises forming a union, is another.

The concept of 'nagging citizenship' was used by one of AMAL's regional team members, describing 'people complaining about their situations without taking actions to address problems or influence change' AMAL worked on giving men and women participants tools so they could move from a

⁷⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016

⁷⁶ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

⁷⁷ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

'nagging' citizenship to an active one that would influence more effectively government officials and policy makers.'⁷⁸ As such, for women to learn more on their rights and how to be more demanding for them, preferably by working together, is one of the positive gains achieved through AMAL.

Tunisia

Examples from Tunisia were provided too with respect to the transformation of power relations on an individual level. It was noted there that it is clear 'that raising women's awareness on their rights have resulted in changing their perception of themselves, boosting their self-confidence and enhancing their negotiation and communication skills with their husbands, families and community'.⁷⁹ Several illustrations were provided:

'On the personal level, I've gained the nerve to talk. I used to be muddled in dealing with people and my thoughts used to be disorganized. And I always used to see myself unable to make decisions, and people used to misunderstand me because I couldn't express myself or speak out. Now, after 3 years of trainings, a drastic change has occurred to me, and through the "interpersonal communication and leadership" training I've become another person and my husband touched this change as I became more able to talk to him, to listen and to negotiate, and this has brought happiness to my home.' *Participant A.*

'Within the framework of AMAL, I've run for elections and a great impact has occurred in my life. I also benefited from the trainings delivered to us, especially the "porte-à-porte" and the "elections strategic planning and methodology" trainings. Although Tunisian women are liberal in their clothing and outfit, they were not liberal on the political level, especially women in rural areas who lack any guidance and awareness on their rights.' *Participant B.*

'I've got 2 sons and 1 daughter. After my participation in AMAL programme, my relation with my sons and daughter has improved and we started to have dialogue and discuss our opinions together which was lacked before AMAL.' *Participant C.*

'AMAL has helped me become a better teacher. It taught me patience, organization and effective communication with children. Now I manage to control and deal with 100 children in my section without resorting to any kind of violence.' *Participant D.*⁸⁰

(iii) Are the women targeted by the programme exhibiting change that is aligned with aspects of transformational women's leadership?

The concept of women's transformational leadership, and the way in which understanding of this has evolved during the project has already been discussed at length. It was also apparent from the evaluation that many women who have participated in AMAL are going through change processes of varying degrees, with some undoubtedly more profoundly so. Does this, however, add up to a change that involves personal self-transformation, and being able to work (with others) towards realising goals of gender justice, transforming power relations and addressing patriarchal and institutional structural issues? This is more difficult to answer. It would appear that processes of this nature have been initiated, but it is harder to say at what scale, and with what likelihood that ongoing transformation will continue to take place. In this respect, AMAL is ending too prematurely.

One aspect introduced earlier that requires a little more discussion is the generational dimension of change. In Morocco, for instance, it was acknowledged that there is still a generation gap between

⁷⁸ Discussions with regional team member, Beirut, January 2016.

⁷⁹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

⁸⁰ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

old and new women leadership.

The Moroccan context has changed over the years, and there are now institutions that are working towards creating a new generation of associations to resist the anti-feminist Islamic currents; the context where the first generation of female strugglers/leaders emerged is completely different from the current context. ADFM stated that the women's transformative leadership concept has a number of criteria including, inter alia, the fact there that there should be a second line of women capable of attaining decision-making positions at the organizational level. ADFM Youth Committee was formed in parallel with AMAL. The project has helped increase the youth's presence in ADFM. They have called themselves "Jeunes pour la Démocratie" and actively participated in the awareness raising campaigns and represented ADFM in different communities.⁸¹

A similar situation has already been described for OPT, for instance with respect to the 'shadowing' initiative, where it was organised for young women leaders to shadow male and female leaders. As was noted, it was the male leaders who were more supportive of and helpful to their shadowees, whilst women leaders tended to react that younger women aspiring to be political or social leaders needed to learn it the hard way, as they had.

Across the communities and the women with whom local partners and Oxfam have worked, it is clear that there are changes taking place in women's lives and their capacities to lead change processes for the empowerment of women and in particular for the raising of their voices. To achieve the broader dimensions of change required will take more time, but as the above examples show, there is also a generational element to this, with perhaps a greater desire and willingness of a younger generation of women (and men) leaders to create a larger voice and space for women's social and political participation.

(iv) Is women's leadership (and youth leadership where applicable) promoted transformational enough? Does it foster gender equity values as a core component of leadership building? Is it owned by the women who practice it? To what extent did their leadership have influence on their lives and their communities?

Much of this question has been answered already. AMAL has certainly fostered gender equity values as a core concept of leadership building, and this has been inherent in all the discussions held within the project's regional meetings on WTL. Examples of women practicing these values in their daily lives have also been provided, including in the illustrations from Tunisia under *ii)* above. The involvement of youth leadership was also important, especially in Tunisia and the OPT, where examples have been provided, and could perhaps have been used more pre-eminently as an intervention.

In the OPT, the engagement of male and female youth groups and networks in different programme activities proved to be beneficial and contributed to their empowerment, ownership, and developed agents of change ready to advocate for women causes. MIFTAH engaged young women in the shadowing activities but soon the word of mouth spread in its networks and male youth lined up for future shadowing opportunities within its coalitions. MIFTAH adopted shadowing in its mainstream programming, as a stand alone intervention within the organisation, and recommended implementing it in AMAL phase II. PWWSD engaged newly formed youth groups from universities and developed their capacities to be 'social workers', the youth groups joined PWWSD youth camps interventions and ended up providing well-being

⁸¹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016

sessions and services within camps; which proved to be a total success. 'AMAL Youth camp' was implemented by PWWSD, and engaged 30 university youth for five days, with many topics being discussed to raise awareness of youth to women's rights causes, gender issues, citizenship, and volunteerism.⁸²

(v) *To what extent did the programme achieve internal coherence and linkages among countries and between the different components, as feasible taking into account the different country contexts*

This question can be answered by assessing the effectiveness of the work on Outcome 4.

Outcome 4: Linking and Learning - Oxfam, its partners and others generate and share knowledge, to strengthen women's participation and leadership approaches in the region and globally.

The intent of the regional component was to assist the building of this internal coherence and cross-linkage of countries, as well as to facilitate country exchanges, and undertake a limited set of regional research and advocacy activities, which could be supported by the countries. To begin with it was difficult to achieve collaboration and coordination with regard to advocacy priorities and campaigns amongst the different country partners. For instance, in Morocco owing to competition between the partners, it was not possible initially to reach consensus on campaign priorities. Across countries there was the different issue that COs are managed by different Oxfam affiliates, which initially made it more difficult for the regional project management team to facilitate a cross-country process to reach agreement on priorities. At the regional level, this really meant the regional management structure of the project (in the absence of other regional institutions), and thus was the means by which the management team sought to bring the different country actors together.

A second factor was the participatory elements of design – each country was responsible for its own planning, within the project outcomes framework, and the process itself was an accretion model from the basic capacity building upwards.

Morocco

In Morocco, there were challenges relating to linking and networking, but as the project proceeded ways of overcoming there were gradually found. At first Oxfam experienced difficulty in coordinating partners attending regional workshops or meetings as partners were less available and were engaged in the ongoing changes happening within Morocco. In addition, persuading partners to come together at country level to develop and implement a common advocacy agenda to enact Article 19 of the new constitution (outcome 3) has been challenging, since partners are leading feminist organizations with competing political affiliations. Both LDDF and ADFM preferred to lead separate implementation of the country advocacy strategy through two different two coalitions. LDDF joined the coalition of civil forces, whilst ADFM joined the coalition of spring dignity together with ATMDAS and Ennakhil. Yet, greater cooperation was achieved when the focus was on the advocacy for growing the level of women's electoral representation, and in the later regional meetings.⁸³

OPT

⁸² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

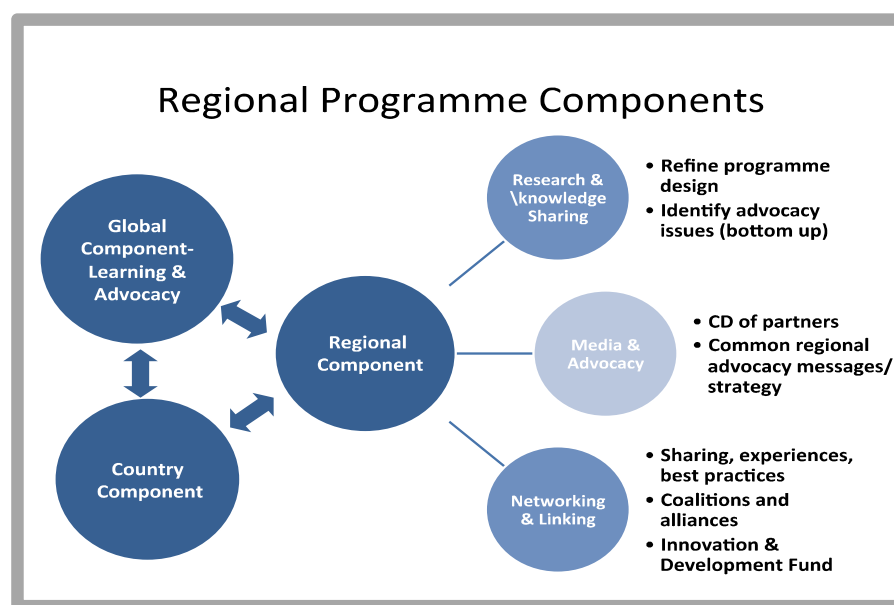
⁸³ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

Partners in the OPT benefited from the regional networking when able to attend regional meetings, the World Social Forum, and ‘study tours’ where experiences and knowledge sharing took place. The latter produced ripples of actions. For instance, in the OPT: PCCDS joined forces with Association Défi Challenge in Tunisia to develop project proposals; WAC networked with Ligue des Electricies Tunisiennes (LET) in Tunisia and Ennakhil in Morocco; and MIFTAH with partner organisations in Morocco and Tunisia. A limitation was that the regional budget allocation was modest in allowing the sponsorship of only one representative from partner organizations. These meetings were invaluable in the networking and joint discussions they allowed, in terms also of exploring further the WTL concept and to develop related ToCs within organizations. With the AIF grantees coming on board really only in the final year and a bit of the project, their opportunities for linking and networking to exchange experiences, knowledge, and learning was also limited to a few meetings at country level, and the final regional closing meeting in Tunisia.⁸⁴

Another area of linkage noted in the OPT is more of a programmatic nature. Partners were effective in creating internal synergies between AMAL project activities and other programmes that they have implemented or already implementing. For example, AMAL came as a follow on to the OGB funded ‘Fostering Community Change in WB project’, and MIFTAH capitalised on its experience in building the capacities of marginalized communities living under the Israeli occupation to work together and to advocate around the issues that affect them. During this earlier project, MIFTAH gained experience working to develop the capacities of CBOs to address community needs, and WAC, as a long standing partner, received core funds to build capacities of community NGOs and CBOs. This helped WAC capitalise on its network of CBOs, connecting with them to implement the AMAL project activities.⁸⁵

Regional Components

The regional elements of AMAL are illustrated in the figure below.



⁸⁴ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁸⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

It took time for the Oxfam regional team to establish the regional component of the project. For a start it proved a severe test for the initial team of two people just to arrange the first regional meeting for all the partners to attend. Initially organised for Beirut, it was shifted twice for security reasons, eventually being held in Tunisia. This was a key meeting to create some sense of their being coherency behind the overall strategy, and of their being different organisations across the five countries (including Lebanon), who could support each other.

One of the key components of the regionally led work was the two *research studies* that have been conducted. The first, independent study on women's organisations within the region has already been referred to. The second study, initiated in the final year of the project, has been developed in a more consultative manner, and run by CAWTAR, based in Tunisia, as a regional partner. This second study, the report for which is still only in Arabic, is about 'a wider definition of leaders and leadership for women in poor, marginalised rural areas. We wanted to have models for women to show how they could exercise agencies in such areas. The main idea behind it, since we know the barriers, is that we wanted to see from women's own perspective what they see as the barriers, and for those that have taken action, what made them become a leader and take such action.'⁸⁶

This second report has focused more on case studies, 'incorporating biographic interviews with women talking about their lives, their background, education, from the perspective of women themselves, and that's what's new. It explains the role and impact of the family, and the influence of the main male member. There are cases when the woman has got divorced, and she finds her voice more easily... It also looked at what political participation means, and it asked women to identify/describe themselves and how they see themselves. Some started laughing, and sometimes citizenship is not there at all. She links self-expression with the ability eventually to have political participation... We shared the TOR in a regional meeting and got feedback, including on the methodology. We wanted this research to be jointly owned, since we want them to use it too.'⁸⁷

The *AMAL Innovation Fund*, one of the key regional lead activities, and which has been successful in accessing local communities and supporting emerging organisations, has already been referred to in the Outcome 3 section, with the nine grants of \$35,000 or less being made to mostly new organisations for a range of interesting and innovative activities, often of an exploratory nature.

A final major regional component was the *regional advocacy, 'Time for Women to Lead' campaign* that was conducted. This 'was a success in terms of numbers, visibility and debate'. It was a public campaign lasting 2.5 months, 'we wanted to show the new forms of leadership taking part in the region. We chose the best 10 stories, and sent these to our target audiences for 10 weeks, got 922,000 impressions (with 1 million target). It was really great, as we want to build an audience for the regional gender justice hub. We have just finished the campaign in December. So it was a great way to build an audience.'⁸⁸ A notable feature of this campaign was its involvement of Marcel Khalife, a Lebanese composer and musician, very well known in the region for his music and philanthropic roles, and so his acceptance to volunteer as a celebrity ambassador was a significant coup for the project.

All of these activities were designed to support the building of some form of coherence and weave between and amongst countries, partners, levels and components. This was always going to take time, and really three years is too little to expect this to be done fully, especially given the slow start up and hiatus of year one. Consequently it was a significant achievement, as noted in OPT that Oxfam did add value through 'creating local and regional platforms to advocate, network, share

⁸⁶ AMAL Programme Manager, Beirut, January 2016.

⁸⁷ AMAL Programme Manager, Beirut, January 2016.

⁸⁸ Meeting with former AMAL regional advocacy coordinator, Beirut, January 2016.

experiences and challenges, lessons learned between partners and regionally across partners in the four countries of implementation specifically on the third year of implementation where relationships building was thriving'.⁸⁹

4.3 Efficiency

Summary: There is no doubt that the AMAL project could have been implemented more efficiently, but it must be stressed immediately that many of the factors involved here lie in the new Oxfam federated structure, and were beyond the control of the direct project management. The new structure shows a tension between the desire of the confederation to be democratic and the requirements of management efficiency and the demands of the project highlighted this tension. In the circumstances the regional management team did the best that could have been done in difficult circumstances. However, it must be emphasised that it is extremely inefficient to manage a single project such as AMAL with such wholly indirect lines of management while donor accountability remains the responsibility of the contract holder. A further inefficiency relates to project staffing in country offices, where although budget allocations allowed for one full time person plus MEAL support, it was only Tunisia that had a dedicated person throughout the three years of the project, with in Morocco especially the splitting of this function, coupled with staff turnover, proving ineffective in providing adequate project oversight. Given these constraints it is remarkable what the project did achieve.

Since there was extensive discussion of issues related to project management during the evaluation, because of the experimental nature of AMAL within the OI federation, these issues are consolidated and discussed in an initial section here, with the rest of the efficiency questions following.

Project Management and Oversight

It is recognised that AMAL was an experiment for Oxfam, the first inter-affiliate, regional project to be carried out in the MENA region. As a result all of those interviewed, especially within Oxfam GB, acknowledged the challenges involved in establishing both the design and subsequent management process for AMAL, with the dilemma being, as one of those initially involved remarked, how to establish an appropriate balance between the democratic aspirations of the confederation and management efficiency.⁹⁰ This tension was ever present in AMAL, and therefore the lessons learned from the experience are useful to Oxfam.

In the design phase, the initial priority was to secure the buy in of the different affiliates involved, Intermón and Novib, plus the country offices, who played a major role in the final phase of the design process. Start up was slow initially, with the project manager hired after three months, and the steering committee, which had HQ representatives from the affiliates, of limited support when more specific guidance was required to assist the country level start up processes. Following the planning meeting for year 2, changes in the composition of the steering committee were agreed, which brought the Country Directors into the committee, rather than HQ based Affiliate representatives, who were more remote from decision making. This improved decision making, and with the project being categorised as 'high risk' owing to the lower budget spend and SIDA's

⁸⁹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016

⁹⁰ Interview with former OGB regional staff person.

concerns at the end of the first year, a number of other measures were taken too. Oxfam GB provided more technical support early in the second year, as well as sent 'a very strong message to country teams through the Oxfam Programme Governance Group (a regional management level unit comprising of all affiliate Regional Directors) indicating the urgency of bringing the project back on track'.⁹¹ One problem for OGB throughout the project was the management 'gap' between Oxford and Beirut. It would have helped to have a more senior member of the Regional Management Team in Beirut, especially with the several changes that took place in the structure and nature of the regional gender justice programme.

By the end of the second year, with most of the Beirut regional team in place – except for the MEAL officer, for which position several recruitments were undertaken, but none of them ultimately successfully – the project was in a much better position. With SIDA now being less concerned, and with a new portfolio manager, the final year of the project was both productive and conducted with an easier set of relationships between Oxfam and the donor, as the donor noted.⁹²

Many lessons have been learned from this experience of managing the tension between seeking to create ownership of all the stakeholders within Oxfam, and be adequately accountable to the donor. Whilst some adjustments were made along the way, more reflection needs to go into balancing lines of accountability to donor and lines of management across various countries and affiliates. As noted by the manager, she required diplomatic skills as good as her managerial ones.⁹³ The main inefficiency of AMAL is that despite its complexity it has remained a one off, a project not linked clearly to other regional programme activities and ending after a short three years. Changes in the management and structure of the regional gender hub office in Beirut during the course of AMAL did not help this either. Over the course of three years, the programme manager had five different line managers, each with different ideas about the structure and direction of the hub, which created some management inefficiencies that could have been better handled.

A further area of management difficulty was related to project staffing in country offices, as per the approved budget. Budget allocations allowed for one full time person plus MEAL support. In Tunisia and the OPT, coordinators were appointed, and in the case of Tunisia the same person was in position throughout the implementation period, which made a significant difference compared with the experience in other countries, particularly Morocco. In Morocco, not only was there a significant turnover in staff, but there was also no single person dedicated to AMAL, with the 'position' latterly being split between the Country Director and the MEAL Coordinator, who also had other responsibilities. In Yemen too, in the final year, once conflict returned to the country, the project coordinator in the country was taken off AMAL and given humanitarian responsibilities without the AMAL programme manager being notified in advance. Whilst possibly inevitable given the circumstances, this type of decision making reflected the fact that Country Offices were taking care of their own interests before necessarily those of the project, understandable perhaps, but difficult if the programme manager is not part of the negotiation.

At the regional level, it should also be noted that it was not possible to recruit and retain staff in the MEAL Coordinator's position, with the salary conditions Oxfam were offering not being sufficient to attract someone with adequate skills, given the rising demand for such expertise, given the Syrian crisis.⁹⁴ As a result, guidance was provided by the MEAL Advisor for Oxfam Intermón, who supported training and design of systems but was not able to follow through at the implementation stage; a

⁹¹ Comment on Draft Report, April 2016.

⁹² Interview with SIDA portfolio manager, 28 January 2016.

⁹³ Programme manager discussions, Beirut, January 2016.

⁹⁴ This point was noted by several people interviewed.

role described as ‘having accompanied AMAL but [from] three or four steps away’.⁹⁵ This delayed M&E activities, in part reducing the internal information available for this evaluation,

i) Has the plan that was established for the execution of the programme been carried out in the most efficient timeframe? To what extent did it align with the initial timeframe?

On this issue, SIDA itself felt that Oxfam could have been better prepared at the start of the project, with key staff in place. There was an initial inception phase of six months, but the programme manager herself only took up her position, two months after the project started. Given that AMAL has only had a three year life span, it meant that effectively much of the first year was spent in start up mode, until it was possible to hold the first regional coordination and planning meetings towards the end of the year.⁹⁶ This is clearly one of the challenges in implementing an initiative like AMAL in project mode, with senior staff not being on board in advance, and in AMAL’s case, also departing immediately at the end of the project, with no retention of the huge learning curve undertaken during the course of the three years of implementation.

Beyond year 1, the project has been impressive in what has been achieved in terms of the range of activities undertaken and the effects of some of these – the women being elected, and the larger and smaller results of women exercising greater levels of leadership in their lives, with the growing confidence of awareness, training and support.. It should be noted that within countries, the scope of the project still remains limited, though a foundation based on 30 partnerships has been laid which can be taken advantage of, if there is any continuity in some of AMAL’s activities.

ii) Have synergies with other actors and interventions been taken advantage of sufficiently where it could ensure better programme performance?

As suggested above, many of the potential synergies with respect to AMAL have been generated during the course of implementation, rather than existed at the project’s outset, leaving the question of whether they can be taken advantage of now. Within countries, the partners with whom the country offices chose to involve in AMAL were mostly organisations who were already regarded as Oxfam partners. In most cases, the country offices sought to ensure the partners would be complementary to each other, even if, as in Morocco, there might be existing competitive relationships between partners, perhaps because of different political affiliations, but which were known to and managed by the CO, by ensuring their clear geographic allocations to each partner.⁹⁷ One area where there was potential to build synergies was between newer women’s organisations, such as those involved in the AIF initiative, but most of these grantee organisations only ‘met’ the main partners in the final AMAL workshop in Tunisia in January 2016.

Within the MENA region(s), actual regional level institutions are in short supply. In most cases, regional structures belong to global organisations – as in Oxfam’s own regional gender justice programme – rather than being of the region themselves. With the range of conflicts that exist within MENA, there are no regional structures, for example the League of Arab States, that carry any real weight with respect to gender issues. This led the project having to consider what influencing regionally meant, and what synergies could be developed at this level. ‘The most common thing we thought of **influencing was public opinion**, changing perceptions, eg. of rural women, in addition to a policy issue of global interest: funding for women’s rights.’⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Interview with Oxfam Intermon MEAL Advisor, 5 January 2016.

⁹⁶ TWL and Resources Meeting, Amman, September 2013, and First Annual Review Meeting, November 2013.

⁹⁷ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

⁹⁸ Programme Manager discussions, January 2016.

In this case, the notion of building synergies applies perhaps more to the building of relationships across countries, as well as seeking to improve them within countries. In both these respect, AMAL has left a better legacy now, rather than having a significant one to start with. One of the strengths of AMAL is that it initiated conversations where these did not exist before, most notably with respect to the regional gatherings of partners, relevant country office staff, and at the end, AIF grantees. It can still be argued whether AMAL should have covered both the Maghreb and Mashriq regions, but there was cross learning between countries. Without the resumption of conflict, the Yemeni women's organisations, in their struggle to secure a voice in a country where they have very little but exhibit much bravery, would have benefited hugely from a wider exposure

iii) Have the funds available been used in the most adequate way to achieve the changes proposed? Were the funds adequate and clearly and sufficiently distributed in the design of the programme?

This question has both a yes and no answer. Overall, to achieve the aims of AMAL, it will take more resources and longer than the three years of the project. In terms of the \$6,8 million funds AMAL had, the early decision to allocate equal funds to each of the four countries on equity grounds, was however flawed on the basis that it was unlikely that each country would have equal propensity to use the resources effectively. This proved to be the case, as noted for Yemen below.

During the design phase, to allocate funds fairly between the Oxfam affiliate members, it was decided to allocate the same size budget to each of the four countries - approximately USD 950k - across the three years. Unfortunately this decision was adhered to until the final year, since even though there were implementation constraints in Yemen for the last year of the project, owing to the return of conflict to the country, the Oxfam country office there was reluctant to accede until late in 2015 that the return to conflict would not allow them to spend their full budget allocation. This meant that in the final year of the project, \$539,448 of unspent funds allocated to Yemen, about 54% of their overall country budget, was eventually returned to SIDA.⁹⁹ Since by the end of Year 2, Yemen was significantly underspent compared to the other countries – it had only spent cumulatively \$278,000 of its overall allocation, leaving \$717,364 left for the final year, a figure it was never likely to utilise. This was especially unfortunate given that the AIF fund, for instance, was restricted to just \$309,000 of the total budget of \$6.8 million, since it was a successful component implemented over only one year of the project. With the grantees only receiving \$35,000 maximum, it could have absorbed further funds, had these been reallocated by the end of the second year of the project, and if there had been a longer no cost extension of the project within the final year, which would have allowed the Year 3 unspent Yemeni funds to be expended.

It is noted however that an extension beyond January 2016 was not favoured by Oxfam senior management and the Steering Committee. The latter had agreed on requesting an extension of four months, considered to be a compromise between teams that would have preferred that the project is not extended beyond three months, and teams that wanted a six-month extension; however a further extension was finally not considered to be realistic nor strategic. This is unfortunate given that the project would have benefited from further consolidation, given the most significant gains were experienced in the final fifteen months of the project, and given that no follow on funding has yet been secured.

There was also a broader problem in the first year of the project with the slow start up and decision processes, including with the delay in the recruitment of the programme manager, and the time it took to bring everyone together for the first fuller discussion in September 2013. There was also a mismatch between the initial year one budget and the project timeline. For example, budget line

⁹⁹ Email communication and discussions with Programme Manager, January 2016.

activities like advocacy were allocated by finance on a proportionate basis across each year, even though this particular activity was not envisaged as starting until the second year.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, from year two on, the project management team paid a lot of attention to cash flow, and with the Country Directors now in the steering committee, the country offices were also more effective in managing their resources; this was all considering that SIDA's representative responsible for AMAL management during Year one of the project was unusually restrictive in this period in not granting the project the scope to reallocate resources between budget lines within the 10% range that the donor 'normally' allows. With better budget management in the second year of the project and the change in portfolio manager, this condition eased, as did donor relations overall, in the final year of the project.¹⁰¹

Overall, apart from the Yemen funds, only \$98,000 of other resources remained estimated to be unspent by the end of the project, according to the January 2016 financial estimate, as noted in the table below. This figure represents only 0.014% of the total budget of \$6.8 million, which means that apart from the \$539,448 of Yemeni funds returned (8% of the overall budget), the project budgetary management by the regional project team was in the end exemplary.

Programme Component	Expected Budget Savings	Comments
Regional	\$48,000	An amount of \$35,000 in savings from one of the Innovation Fund grants in Yemen in Adan that could not be implemented due to the war. An amount of \$13,000 in savings from the research from CAWTAR.
OPT	\$40,000	An amount of \$ 5,000 savings in Capacity Building on Advocacy because of replacing a consultant with an Oxfam trainer. An Amount of US\$ 18,000 savings on the TWL workshop. An amount US\$ 7,000 in savings of End Line survey. An amount of US\$ 10,000 in savings on Salaries due to temporary absence of Programme, MEAL and Advocacy Officers.
Morocco	\$10,000	
Total Savings	\$98,000	

iv) Where were resources not used effectively and reasons behind that?

In the end, despite the early concerns around low spending in year 1, for the reasons already outlined, it was only in Yemen that AMAL resources were not effectively used, with the \$539,448 being returned to SIDA as noted above. It would have been advantageous for at least some of these funds to be reallocated, and thus for it to have been a subject of discussion in the Steering Committee.

¹⁰⁰ Project budget and Programme Manager discussions.

¹⁰¹ SIDA Interview, 28 January 2016.

4.4 Participation and Empowerment

Summary: Issues around the participation and empowerment of various women's groups included within AMAL was one of the subjects of ongoing debate in the project, particularly in terms of what it takes to encourage poor and marginalised women to become more effective leaders within their homes and communities. Within the project different ways were identified in which such women can benefit economically through an activity that is more focused on civil and political rights. For instance if they are able to access free or subsidised services to which they are entitled but currently have denied rights, such as the women's health card issue in Tunisia, or organise to advance their labour rights (minimum wages, and the right to unionise), as in the OPT. In this way, the measures taken by women leaders benefiting from the capacity building of AMAL partner organisations, have often had an economic focus to them, and this has helped the inclusion of poorer groups of women. Many of the labour rights issues, also serve to redress some of the marginalisation of women, or specific groups of women workers. What many of the case examples below show is also the ripple effects of the leadership development work. Several women, from small beginnings, have started initiatives that have begun to include larger numbers of women. This role of emerging women champions is one of the interesting features of AMAL, and it would have been good to consolidate approaches around this so that this approach can be pursued more in the future.

i) To what extent was the programme inclusive of various groups and to what extent did it include poor and marginalized groups?

There was an extensive debate during the first year of AMAL especially, as to which women's organisations should be included within the project. This debate was focused on both the initial selection of partners by the country offices, and also on the categorisation of women's organisations and recommendations of the research report. Selected partners included established women's rights organisations and previous Oxfam partners as well as emerging organisations, such as LET in Tunisia and the AIF grantees. In the end, the project was relatively inclusive. About 50% of participants in the partner activities and the 9 AIF grants that were made, were women from poor, rural areas.

The debate on how best to include poor and marginalised groups of women in a project focused on women's leadership will continue. Ideally, if a project is focusing on civil and political empowerment, as was the case with AMAL, there will also be complementary activities focused more on the economic aspects of empowerment, being implemented alongside with respect to poorer groups of women, or indeed the advancement of political rights will serve economic and social interests. Thus, whilst during the country evaluation visits there were women participants who spoke up about the limitations of not having benefited in respect of their livelihoods from AMAL, it is nevertheless clear that many women have used their enhanced leadership skills to enable this to happen. Most of the case stories presented here that illustrate this; however, tend to be of women who are less poor to begin with, even if as an outcome of their actions, poorer women have benefited too.

ii) To what extent are the beneficiary groups or their representatives participating in decision-making processes and the different phases of the programme?

In all countries, even if with most constraints in Yemen, partners were consulted during and after the submission of annual plans and budgets, as well as during the development of related strategies. Some COs also involved existing partners in the original design of the project.

For example, during the development of the common gender justice strategy for the Maghreb region, partners attended several workshops to define all the actors and factors affecting their work. Partners inputs were valuable in the initial design phase of the AMAL programme but partners and beneficiaries were not consulted and didn't participate in the activities design phase except in the year two no cost extension phase, where partners proposed and implemented activities to scale up programme interventions. For example, MIFTAH developed a ToT to institutionalize the WTL concepts. They developed a training manual with a chapter about WTL in relation to women's political participation, in order to integrate WTL in its organisational literature. The manual was developed and used during the no cost extension in scaling up MIFTAH activities, with the ToT targeting 25 university youth from its youth network membership to enhance their capacities in active citizenship and advocacy. PWWSO enjoyed designing activities targeting and engaging youth in universities and implemented a successful 'summer camp'. In Morocco, all partners invested the no cost extension in further developing capacities of elected women in various disciplines, such as gender budgeting, that would support them in assuming their new positions.¹⁰²

iii) To what extent are the programme actions contributing to the beneficiaries being protagonists of their own individual and community development, understanding, demanding and proposing changes in policies and practices that generate their exclusion and/or discrimination against them?

Even though we did not address the economic constraints, testimonies I heard from women who participated in the project showed clearly that we have impacted the power relations surrounding them whether in their immediate family environment or the wider environment (such as within the municipal council for example) as they were able to break norms that reduce their opportunities and take action, Their sense of self and awareness of their agency as women was I believe one of the most important successes of the programme.¹⁰³

Three examples are provided below, two drawn from the Morocco and the OPT country visit evaluation, and one from the Tunisia evaluation.

Morocco

- Ms. Naeima, a 45 years old elected woman at the local level (Daraa, Tafilalet –Errachidia) and a member in the provincial council for civil society has participated in ATMDAS interventions. Before AMAL programme she used to handle 'les terres collectives' case for women. As a result of the capacity development interventions, she was able to develop a 'strategy' on how to approach women, identify, and address their needs. She focused on women's economic empowerment, as she was convinced that in order for women to have an effective role in the society, they have to be economically independent. She developed a series of traditional products like Moroccan couscous, desserts, and traditional bread. Thus, she has invested the skills that women already know to generate economic income. Ms. Naeima teamed up with some women and together they have established a cooperative so that women can realize their economic independence. In the beginning, there 40 women making desserts, 25 women making traditional bread, and almost 100 women producing couscous.

¹⁰² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹⁰³ AMAL programme manager, email response, January 2016.

In so doing, women have started to work and the councillor was effective in being able to get women out of the house into the outside world.

Then she had the chance of getting men involved. Women were not allowed to sit at coffee shops. So, Ms Naeima established a coffee shop for ladies only. The idea started with having a coffee shop for diabetic women because it was near to the hospital. For the hospital female visitors the coffee shop was a place where they can have some rest and eat some snacks after visiting the doctor. After a while, men have started to sit at this coffee shop too and they even preferred it to other coffee shops. She said, 'Hence, we have been able to change the idea banning women from sitting at coffee shops, and we were able to change a stereotype and overcome some of the customs and traditions prevailing in the region (south-east region).'¹⁰⁴

OPT

- In the OPT, an example of formation of new groups (Shadow Council), Ms Sabira, a 23-year old from Rantis village in Ramallah has engaged with different MIFTAH interventions, volunteered at the Local Council in her village, and declared her desire to become a member in the Council. This idea was approved by the Council members, but was disapproved by her mother. She convinced her mother that the council membership is not confined to men, as there are two female members in the Council. Also, the Council Chairman concurred with Sabria and said that the Council doesn't need only older members, but also needs the youth's contribution. Sabria participated in the council meetings and seminars and in the projects being implemented in the village. Later on, Sabira established a 'Shadow Council' to support the Rural Council work, with the main objective being to enhance women's participation in the local council work to influence change inside the council and in the community. The Shadow Council included 5-6 women in the beginning and was able to integrate other young women in the shadow council as well as the Rural Council.

Sabria joined the Palestinian Agricultural Engineers Syndicate and conducted an awareness raising session for the factory workers and owners in Shuqba Village for a week to raise their awareness of the Palestinian Labour Law and Occupational Safety and Health. She said, 'We should not stand still, and should not remain marginalised. As girls and women, we have to make the change because this is something in our hands. We should do something new other than what is previously determined for us by the society.' She added, 'I'm interested in influencing change at the community level. Women have a role in changing the society. After that change was realized at the individuals' level, I have now the incentive to work more and more. My ambition is to become the Head of Rantis Rural Council in the future.'

Tunisia

- Latifa, a women's group leader from Kelebeia, says that AMAL has changed her personality and helped her become more courageous to speak out and express herself. 'In the past, I used to lack self-confidence and I was unable to deal with people and this used to make people misunderstand me. My ideas were unstable and I always used to feel that I'm incapable of making any decision. At the end of the 3 years of AMAL, I can tell that the training that benefited me the most was the "communication and leadership skills" training. I consider this training as a turning point in my life. After receiving this training, I started to apply what I have learnt in my personal life. I began to have discussions with my husband who has noticed the change that happened to me through AMAL. I also started to pass what

¹⁰⁴ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

I've learnt to my children and teach them the importance of thinking before taking any action. Moreover, I run my own business "Woman's Club" for trainings and women's activities, in an empty room at my house. Now, my dreams have become bigger and I look forward to running for parliament elections.'

iv) To what extent are the programme actions contributing to creating a ripple effect and collective actions by the beneficiaries to change the community?

The vignettes below all provide examples of a ripple effect being created; they are all in themselves quite remarkable.¹⁰⁵

Morocco

- A woman participated with ADFM interventions established "Association pour la Promotion de la Scolarisation et le Développement Social" (APPSDS), Khouribga, and organized an event on the importance of women's political participation. The event was attended by all opposition political parties, in addition to right-wing and centrist parties. She reported that 'There were some sensitivity between political parties, but we were able to overcome that through positive discussion about women's participation. As a group of women, we have been able to mobilize different community proceedings to attend a seminar, which was finally attended by 650 people and resulted in key recommendation. It was of an enormous effect that we were even invited by the Head of the Urban Local Council to be members in the Equity and Reconciliation Commission. We have also become members in the regional committee under L'initiative nationale pour le développement humain (INDH). At the committee, I have started to advocate more women-related issues and the projects that will encourage women on participation.'
- Ms. Amina participated in Ennakhil interventions. She supervised a multipurpose centre project for women in Safi, Souihla. The centre was closed for 18 years due to the lack of an operational framework. She challenged the conditions and the people and was able to re-open it. She established and headed the "Association pour le développement des zones rurales" that supervised the centre's operations. She was able to convince women to get out into the external world and come to the centre and benefit from the activities. At the beginning, men opposed the idea, but she was able to convince them to let women come to the centre to learn a craft or a profession to help with the house expenses. Assuming her position as the head of the newly established association, she has allocated a space for children so that, women can leave their children somewhere while learning. She was also able to attract a number of youth, as she organized tournaments and contests for the region youth. Ms. Amina added, 'Hence, the centre was able to gain the confidence of the people in the region. AMAL programme has helped me develop due to the support provided to me by Association Ennakhil.'

OPT

- In the OPT, Ms Tamara Aref Abd AlQader Abd Rabo a 30 years old young woman from Qusin Village in Nablus has benefited from the shadowing exercise organized by PWWSD. She shadowed Ms Magda AlMasri, a senior and experienced member of a political party and attended the campaign meetings calling for boycotting the occupation's products. Tamara has become an active member in the National Boycott committee, 'Although I used to represent Fatah in the Boycott Committee, I did not use to attend the party meetings regularly except after shadowing Ms AlMasri.' She has submitted two proposals during the

¹⁰⁵ All examples are drawn from the Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

National Boycott Committee meetings to integrate the boycotting topic in the educational curricula and another to organise an exhibition to market national products. Both proposals were welcomed and approved by all committee members. Later on, the National Boycott Committee offered her the Campaign Coordinator position in Nablus. For six months, Tamara has been working hard to organize an exhibition to promote marketing national products, capitalizing on the mechanisms and the skills she has acquired during the shadowing exercise regarding time management, respect of the intellectual and political differences, and the ability of communicating with others and networking. She said, 'I have worked hard. I felt the challenge because I'm a woman. Some male figures in my community have expected that I would fail. However, I have remarkably succeeded. Exhibition attendees were expected not to exceed 15,000 people, but 25,000 people attended the exhibition. On that day, Ms Magda told me that she came to see my achievement because she has strongly believed in my success.'

- This example illustrates collective action related to AIF - CFTA (lead AIF grantee) and Radio Klaket (co-grantee). They conducted a number of innovative interventions to raise youth capacities in advocating for women's causes and women's political participation. These included training and coaching in creative advocacy and leadership, photography, radio production, and film making and production as well as capitalising on using social media as a means of reaching out critical masses. University youth raised awareness of a wide array of marginalized women on their political rights and participation in the local councils through films, a photography exhibition, production of banners, sending SMS messages and social media. Radio Klaket image was enhanced as a 'Media platform for young people'; four youth secured an internship opportunity in broadcasting media stations, another four youth engaged with the Red Cross for future partnership through sending proposals about the role of media in advocating for disabled persons causes, and another female youth developed a proposal to develop capacities of women prisoners in handicrafts.

v) Are lessons learnt being well reported and documented?

There have been many lessons to learn during the implementation of AMAL, and the project has tried hard to stay abreast of these. Reports of the projects regional meetings all convey lessons learned components, and there is evidence of lessons being put into practice, as far as is possible, and notwithstanding that AMAL was still very much on an upward learning trajectory at the end of the three year implementation period.

The documentation of the ongoing debates around the concept of women's transformative leadership, the revised Steering Committee structure, the effective management of the AIF, the regional 'Time for Women to Lead' advocacy campaign, the increasing cohesiveness of country advocacy efforts, and the growing confidence of partners in their ability to conduct the capacity building work, are all examples of applied learning within the project. All of these are well documented.

4.5 Impact

Summary: It takes time to piece together what AMAL is as a project, because of its very indirect nature, with activities being implemented by local partners across four countries, with only very dotted lines of authority and reporting running between the partners and the country offices, to the regional programme team. The key activities undertaken by the partners involve forms of capacity building, advocacy work, and some, mostly belated, MEAL activities. Yet despite this, AMAL has resulted in achievements that have quietly begun to add up, particularly in the last year of implementation. There are three major impacts that have been achieved. One is the progress made with the actual achievement of promoting women's transformational leadership, for which a range of small cases have been presented. Of these, the most significant in terms of scale is the number of women that have been elected to roles of political leadership for the first time, particularly in Morocco and Tunisia. Second, is the strengthening of partner organisations as WTL capacity builders, with several innovative methods having been explored. And third, is the growing, significant role that collective advocacy efforts have played at country and regional levels, in securing policy changes and arguing the justice of promoting women's leadership within the Arab world.

This table provides an estimate of the scope of the AMAL activities over the course of the project.

Estimate of beneficiaries reached	Morocco	OPT	Tunisia	Yemen	Regional	Total
How many beneficiaries has your project reached (with overlaps)	41,530	7,911	30,136	915	N/A	80,492
How many beneficiaries has your project reached (without overlaps)	37,000	7,049	24,109	580	N/A	68,738
Percentage of women and girls (without overlaps)	85 %	69 %	76.6 %	75 %	N/A	76.4 %
Percentage of men and boys (without overlaps)	15 %	31 %	23.4 %	25 %	N/A	23.6 %
Percentage of poor and marginalised women (without overlaps)	47 %	59 %	26.5 %	66 %	N/A	49.6 %
Percentage of rural women (without overlaps)	40 %	49 %	46.5 %	66 %	N/A	50.3 %
Number of community based organisations supported (without overlaps)	500	45	14	3	14	576

i) To what extent did the programme achieve impact in the interventions in relation to all Outcomes?

The table below summarises the four outcomes for AMAL, together with the related project outputs. In order to avoid this section being repetitive particularly of the Effectiveness section, the impacts that AMAL has had are summarised by country. It's important to note too, that after little more than two full years of implementation, these effects of the project remain incipient. Despite this, it is credible what has been achieved in such a short time, given the complexities and multi-country nature of the project.

AMAL Outcome Statement
<p>1. RIGHTS AND LEADERSHIP - Women and girls will have increased awareness of their political and socio-economic rights and are more confident to voice their rights in order to play leadership roles at all levels (household, community, national, regional).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 1.1: Women demonstrate increased awareness and confidence to express their political and socio-economic rights ▪ Output 1.2: Women play a more active role, including as transformative leaders, in the political and socio-economic life of their communities and country
<p>2. CAPACITY-BUILDING - A diversity of women's organisations and their allies will have increased skills, resources and capacity to advocate a women's rights agenda with a collective voice and influence decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 2.1: Stronger links between women's organisations and their allies in the MENA region enabling them to speak with collective voice. ▪ Output 2.2: Women's organisations, networks and coalitions have improved skills and capacity to affect change
<p>3. CHANGING ATTITUDES AND POLICY - Decision-makers and opinion formers at all levels are more aware of and their positions are more reflective of the needs and priorities of women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 3.1: Influential leaders and opinion formers have more supportive attitudes towards women's rights ▪ Output 3.2: Decision-makers and opinion-formers address the different needs and priorities of women, particularly the most marginalized
<p>4. LINKING AND LEARNING - Oxfam, its partners and others generate and share knowledge, to strengthen women's participation and leadership approaches in the region and globally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Output 4.1: Oxfam and women's organizations have increased knowledge and tools and use them to strengthen their approaches to women's participation and leadership. ▪ Output 4.2: Oxfam and its partners employ the values and practice of transformative leadership and women's participation in their own organizations

4.5.1 Tunisia

If the Arab Uprisings have left any sense of optimism for the future, four years on, it is in the Maghreb region rather than the Mashriq. Tunisia remains the country that has managed most to begin the process of consolidating a more democratic state, whilst Morocco has also shown some democratic opening, even if on a more limited basis. Tunisia has the most secular set of laws in the Arab world, especially for women, with Morocco second.

It is not surprising then, that the most substantial impact AMAL has had is in Tunisia. This was aided by the fact that Tunisia also had a dedicated staff person for AMAL, who remained throughout the period of the project's implementation, the only one of the four countries in which this occurred.

Outcome 1: Rights and Leadership.

AMAL has made a significant contribution to the empowerment of women politicians in Tunisia.

Quite remarkably, five of the women who benefited from AMAL capacity building activities and were supported as political leaders won election to the national parliament in Tunis in November 2014.¹⁰⁶

Further, as noted in the final AMAL annual report, a total of 153 women have taken up formal or informal leadership positions individually or part of a group that leads advocacy efforts. Women from the local areas of Tunisia programme were empowered to be able to advocate their own issues by offering training on women's human rights advocacy and community mobilization and coaching them on public speaking and articulating their specific message. At least 48 women are addressing the needs/demands of poor and marginalized women of their communities related to the country advocacy strategy. The project worked as well with youth and young men and women in Kef and Kasserine who were trained as peer educators, mobilized other youth and conducted various awareness sessions with peers. The core group grew from 18 to 48 and reached 276 youth. Furthermore 15 young women were trained and acted as observers of the parliamentary and presidential elections.¹⁰⁷

Outcome 2: Capacity Building.

Of the three partner organisations that Oxfam Tunisia selected to work with in AMAL, two, AFTURD and ATFD were existing partners, but the third, LET, was a new organisation and a new partner for Oxfam. LET played a large role in the training and mentoring of women to participate in political elections, resulting in five women being elected to Parliament in November 2014. A strength of LET's approach was that it worked with women in groups, which led also to a cascade approach for capacity building, with some of the women trained at the local level, themselves going on to train others, as noted in the final annual report for AMAL, for instance, on women's human rights advocacy and community mobilization and coaching them on public speaking and articulating their specific message.¹⁰⁸

Other good example shows how the program responded to the priority to the targeted groups the evaluation found was the capacity building and workshop activities organized by ATFD to address the discrimination against women in the labour sector referring to the labour law in addition to other workshops conducted to address the violence against women and its impacts on their economic and social rights.¹⁰⁹

Outcome 3: Changing Attitudes and Policy.

There were significant advocacy successes achieved in Tunisia. As a response to the yearlong AMAL country advocacy strategy that focused on basic services (health care and infrastructure): the Director of the Social Aid Department, a highly-ranked official at the Ministry of Social Affairs pledged to address women's needs and demands for a better and more transparent access to health care services and the representation of women in the local aid commissions through the membership of women's rights organizations. This was done in conjunction with the Minister of Women Affairs and the General Director of Social Affairs; the Minister of Women Affairs pledged that she will inform her regional delegates to follow-up with the local governance structures on the advocacy demands. Regarding the infrastructure advocacy in in Azmour area (Beni Malek village), the General Union for Farmers in Kelibia (a highly influential institution at the national level) formally endorsed the

¹⁰⁶ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹⁰⁷ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹⁰⁸ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

advocacy demands and most importantly the works on the road/infrastructure actually started in early March 2015.¹¹⁰

Two further advocacy outcomes achieved were that as a result of lobbying meetings, the Ministry of Finance included partner ATFD in the Gender Sensitive Budgeting Committee, and second, the Tunisian Minister for Women Affairs pledged to take up the recommendations of the conference on VAW in public/ political sphere and to defend them during the elaboration of the elections law.

4.5.2 Morocco

After Tunisia, Morocco has the second most secular set of laws in the Arab world, and for this reason, space existed for AMAL's focus on women's leadership to have an effect in Morocco, even if the project's management within the CO suffered greater levels of disruption than in Tunisia.

Outcome 1: Rights and Leadership.

Nearly 4,000 women were provided with leadership training to provide them with the understanding, confidence and acumen to run for local council and other political leadership positions in Morocco. Of these women, approximately two-thirds, some 2,941 women who participated in awareness, training activities of AMAL in Morocco, won seats in local councils in the latest elections in September 2015.¹¹¹

Outcome 2: Capacity Building.

Outcome 2 results were achieved through a number of capacity building interventions targeting participants in CBOs and elected or candidate women. Partners' work in Morocco was very progressive and responsive to the dynamic political context. Their capacity building interventions were modified during the project's lifetime to support the women election candidates and those women running for the second time. By the end of the project, the partners were now supporting the women who had been elected into various positions, and expressed their intention to continue to do so.¹¹²

In Morocco, by year 3, the project had reached 13,730 women, men and young people, raising their awareness on the importance of responsible political participation and the right to parity at all levels. Targeted women in marginalized areas were motivated to enroll in the electoral roll to vote in the next election as a result of the caravan. In total in the three years of AMAL 3,955 women received capacity building workshops by AMAL partners, of whom 3,332 ran for elections and 2,941 were elected as local councillors, representing about two thirds of the women trained, an incredibly high percentage. They represent one third of women councillors across the country.¹¹³

Outcome 3: Changing Attitudes and Policy.

In Morocco, AMAL partners through their networks especially the Movement of Parity and Democracy and Collective democracy and parity arrived at common positions promoting parity in election-related legislations. As result of meetings, conferences and seminars organized by our partners with their allies and including members of political parties, media, members of parliament, local leaders and others, five joint statements/ MOUs were issued especially regarding the elections bills and the draft law on article 19 of the constitution. This took place by all the partners across the

¹¹⁰ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹¹¹ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹¹² Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹¹³ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

different regions of Morocco, having all agreed to work together to advocate equity in elections laws and a joint proposition agreed by women's organizations for the draft law on article 19.¹¹⁴

Altogether, in this advocacy mobilisation, 30,000 people were reached through radio programmes, and 1,000 women and 500 women participated in the December Orange March calling for parity. Joint statements and memorandums to push for article 19 and gender parity in elections were presented and several meetings for common approaches were held with decision makers at national and local level, especially parliamentary groups and political parties. As a result of this advocacy work of AMAL supported by other feminist organizations, the parliament rejected the proposed bill on article 19 of the constitution.

Furthermore, as the elections timetable was presented by the government, the work related to elections laws was intensified. Four Organic laws¹¹⁵ about regionalisation and territorial collectivities were presented during year 3, but the draft laws did not meet the expectations of civil society in terms of promoting the rights of women. With the contribution of the advocacy work undertaken by the AMAL partners and other allies, the elections bills were revised. The most prominent successes that the programme contributed to were: the quota for women in municipal positions which became 27% instead of 12%; the quota in the electoral lists to be by parity (50% men 50% women) and at least 30% of regional positions would be occupied by women. Local sections of political parties committed to transmit claims to include women to decision-making bodies at central level in their parties. They have also expressed their commitment to present women candidates in the forthcoming elections and asked for the support of NGOs in terms of capacity building and advocacy.¹¹⁶

4.5.3 OPT

The participation of OPT in the AMAL project is a little different to the other countries, since it was only marginally affected by the Arab uprisings, but nevertheless lessons from these experiences are relevant to Palestinian women. One lesson is that women's participation in a struggle or resistance is no guarantee that afterwards patriarchal culture will be more accommodating of women. There is still a need to include men and male youth within women's struggles, and to address the cultural factors that lead to the downplay or even down-treading of women's active civil and political participation.¹¹⁷ In this regard, through AMAL there were a range of activities implemented in the OPT that did yield interesting results.

In the OPT perhaps some of the bigger issues relating to women's leadership remain the prevailing gender roles and relations that continue to locate women within the private, household sphere rather than the public, political sphere. The activities initiated through AMAL did not particularly deal with these laws, but what they did do is awaken women's voice again, making them more cognisant of the inequality in the public sphere that persists and to advocate for more equal participation and representation.

Outcome 1: Rights and Leadership.

¹¹⁴ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹¹⁵ The four bills which are: the Organic law on regionalization, the Organic law on municipalities (communes), the Organic law on prefectures and regions, and the Organic law on the election of members of municipalities. Refer to context section.

¹¹⁶ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹¹⁷ AMAL Full Grant Application, 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa' Oxfam GB, September 2012.

The practice of arranging for young, potential women leaders to shadow influential men and women leaders in the OPT proved popular with those undertaking the shadowing, and yielded some interesting outcomes. This work also helped lead to a widening range of youth organisations and groups becoming involved in the various capacity building, awareness raising, training and advocacy activities of AMAL partners in Palestine.

Another interesting example of an impact achieved in the OPT belongs to one of the AIF grantee, who trained approximately 200 women workers in small enterprises, who subsequently, through collective advocacy managed to create the first union of women workers under the general trade union. This is the type of single activity, which one would like to see Oxfam be able to build upon.

There are also other examples of individual initiatives that are also benefiting a widening group of women. One such example here also comes from the OPT, recounted by a woman who has led an initiative to achieve better and fairer wages for women:

Ms. Khloud, 42 years old sewing teacher for Hebron joined PCCDS and IRADA interventions. She has experienced changes related to economic empowerment and her role and relationship with the community where she lives. She said, 'as a sewing teacher, I've been teaching sewing in Yatta and Al-Aroub (Hebron area) for 20 years now. I understood that a number of employers didn't give women workers their employment rights (minimum wage), which led them to continuously seek employment elsewhere. I managed to attract more women workers to attend the training workshops of PCCD to raise their awareness. I started and registered a rehabilitation and employment company to hire women workers. A woman can possibly work in sectors other than the one she has studied. I work as a part timer in a kindergarten to have enough money to support my new project. The employer used to say 'if you didn't accept my terms of employment, other women accept them'. Now, I know that we need to search for alternatives, understand the market demand. Now, I'm reaping the fruits of my work.'¹¹⁸

Outcome 2: Capacity Building.

The capacity building activities conducted in OPT were many and varied. They were characterised by a range of approaches, with each partner having their own style and methodologies. WCLAC for instance invited participants to a reflection/ retreat workshop to discuss the AMAL project achievements and to gather recommendations; the partner attributed this to AMAL in providing a systematic approach to evaluate their work and to ensure beneficiaries satisfaction and involvement. PWWSO used a multi-layered approach to assess beneficiaries' needs and to meet accountability measures. PWWSO had representatives (civic educators) in all governorates who provide their opinions on the different capacity development interventions needed, youth group engage in FGDs to consolidate those needs. The capacity building measures themselves gave rise to a range of activities described elsewhere in the document. One future benefit would be for Oxfam to do more in assessing the comparative quality of different capacity building approaches, to help provide more systematic guidance, rather than leaving each partner to their own.¹¹⁹

Outcome 3: Changing Attitudes and Policy.

The AIF fund has proved to be effective in reaching out to grassroots organization and support them in developing their innovative initiatives in increasing women's political participation. This has reinforced the inclusiveness of WTL measures and contributed to AMAL's overall objective.

¹¹⁸ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹¹⁹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

In the OPT, AIF fund has succeeded on many fronts; first in building sustainable structures within Hebron communities that supports women causes and second in addressing women's economic needs/ empowerment by holding employers accountable to giving women workers the minimum wage as per the Palestinian labour law.¹²⁰

4.5.4 Yemen

Implementation of AMAL in Yemen was extremely difficult owing to the resumption of conflict there in late 2014. The Oxfam point person in Yemen for AMAL was also relocated to more humanitarian responsibilities, at short notice, and effectively 2015 was lost as an implementation year. Early promise had occurred mainly around the REFLECT activities conducted with a number of community development forums.

Outcome 1: Rights and Leadership.

The REFLECT activities conducted helped achieve a shift in gendered power relations at local institutional level, as a result of the efforts of YWU Taiz and Hajaj and their support to the forming of eight Community Development Committees (CDCs) at the community/sub-district level (four in Taiz and four in Hajjah). Each CDC is formed of 18 members, six of whom are women (REFLECT circle representatives), six men from grassroots level who support women rights and six influential figures. Through the 16 weekly community discussion sessions held on a range of topics, such as school fees and health issues, these women became more aware of their rights, and started to speak out on the issues affecting them. Whilst the road for them is long, that these women have started to become more courageous and more eager to speak out, even if they still lack much opportunity to participate in public life, does provide the start to the journey.¹²¹

Outcome 2: Capacity Building.

In Yemen, Joint initiatives were undertaken by REFLECT women and CDC members that address jointly defined local community needs (see below). CDCs were able to raise issues at district level in Taiz governorate. Unfortunately due to the war these activities could not continue.

Women in villages were taking these literacy classes plus Reflect and the women I met were wanting to have more of this. They were saying incredible things, wanted their rights, were just tired of men undermining them. We had plans for these CBOs to start designing even their own initiatives that we could fund through AMAL. This is how women's leadership should be encouraged, and how you can change culture/ society. It was really very promising, there was a potential to have real women's leadership there. It was part of the re-arrangement of the program that we did together. And then the war happened, after we were happy with these first small steps.¹²²

Outcome 3: Changing Attitudes and Policy.

In Yemen, issues for national advocacy were identified and a meeting with the Supreme Committee of Elections took place whereby they confirmed their support to women's participation in elections. The situation of war prevented any achievements in positions of decision makers or policies. The achievements were thus limited to local advocacy issues impacting local communities where the programme operated.

¹²⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹²¹ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

¹²² Discussions with AMAL Programme Manager, Beirut, January 2016.

As a result of the Innovation fund project in Yemen in Ebb Governorate, 20 rural women led an advocacy campaign on the situation of displaced women and got reactions from media, CSOs and the administration of Displaced People's Camps. (Khadija Foundation Innovation fund grant)¹²³

4.5.5 Regional Component

Outcome 4: Linking and Learning.

The major role and impact that the regional team for AMAL had was in the connecting and sharing function they played, as well as in the facilitation of reflective learning. The six regional meetings the team organised provided the fabric and structure for the project in many ways, being the occasions when all the partners and staff from across all the countries met, and had a chance to discuss and exchange experiences and lessons. Key concepts, such as that of WTL, were deliberated and evolved in these meetings, and served as the platform for the development of subsequent partner training and capacity building methodologies in countries. What was less involved in this role, which would have helped, is facilitation of the actual documentation of good approaches and methodologies, since partners tended to be exclusive of these.

A second role of the regional team was the development and conduct of a regional advocacy initiative. The initial intent was to surface a common theme from the countries, but two factors intervened here. First there was a range of priorities and different advocacy interests within the countries, so producing a common advocacy agenda was really not feasible. Second, the assumption behind a more inductive approach is that there might be regional structures and institutions who could be lobbied, but in the MENA region there is a dearth of these. Thus the eventual decision with the Time to Lead campaign was to launch an initiative that was focused more on a virtual regional community and target social media and media across the region. Having a celebrity ambassador like Marcel Khalife assisted this, with his trip to Morocco attracting a lot of exposure. With over 900,000 hits, this campaign showed the potential of this type of activity, if linked more systematically into a broader regional influencing and advocacy strategy, as part of a regional ToC. This social media campaign also showed the need for Oxfam to develop a more permanent Arabic platform.

The third key function of the regional program team was the running and management of the AMAL Innovation Fund. After the COs declined the original intention of the fund being managed as part of their budgets, the central management of the fund by the regional project team, proved very effective, as it provided a one stop shop for the nine, relatively inexperienced grantees, meaning that trouble shooting on management issues could be resolved quickly and appropriately. If the same issues had been rooted through the country programme teams, they could have taken months to resolve. As young, post Arab Uprising organisations, the AIF grantees brought a new spirit and energy into AMAL, with a range of innovative ideas and initiatives. In many ways the AIF was the experimental force of the project. Other partners did innovate, but they needed to be more systematic in their approaches, and thus relied more on experience.

Overall, the regional project team, with the role they played, created a coherence and a presence or personality for the project, which would otherwise have been missing, and was much valued by the country partners and teams involved, as can be noted from the documentation of all the regional meetings.

¹²³ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

i) What can be done in the future to ensure the impact is further sustained?

The issue of sustainability, is perhaps more appropriately, related to the continuity of some of the key capacity building and advocacy initiatives facilitated through AMAL. This is discussed in more detail in the following section, but relates both to the ability of the Regional Gender Justice Programme to continue to support cross-cutting components of the work, such as the advocacy and networking elements, and the ability of the country offices to continue some of the capacity building, leadership development and advocacy activities of the local partners. .

4.6 Sustainability

Summary: Although AMAL has been described as a programme, the lack of real programmatic thinking within Oxfam towards the project does raise concerns about the sustainability of AMAL's promising initiatives and relationships, achieved during the latter half of the project. When it was proposed at the final AMAL regional meeting in Tunisia that the 30 country partner organisations, including the AIF grantees, form a regional network, they liked the idea, but there was no clear idea on how to initiate it. To establish such a network would require initially an INGO. Similarly, whilst country partner organisations were keen to continue the capacity building and advocacy activities they had been conducting, and would not necessarily require large ongoing resourcing levels, the Oxfam COs themselves, saw the acquisition of further programmatic resources as being essential for them to continue to support the initiatives. Those women leaders who have indeed experienced the benefits of transformation will likely continue what they are doing, but there is promise in what AMAL has achieved so far, and it would be unfortunate if Oxfam was not able to follow up on this. Some activities that are likely to be continued are at the level of establishing a regional advocacy platform, though a first commitment would need to be to the building of a platform that supports Arabic.

To a certain degree some of the women leaders benefiting from AMAL – those elected to councils (or even Parliament) in Morocco and Tunisia, or running small businesses with multiplier effects – may continue to exhibit transformational leadership, even if many will inevitably still need further forms of support, especially amongst the newly elected women councillors. However, this will require the ability of Oxfam at least initially to support a network that can continue to ensure there is a widening group of leaders in the Maghreb, and any group at all in the Mashriq, remains uncertain. Once the modality for the network exists it may be able to self-perpetuate, but there would not appear yet to be the initiating capacity within the existing partners, including CAWTAR, the regional partner. CAWTAR did however discuss collaboration with AWID, for example,¹²⁴ and so if the network were established, could potentially support its wider linkage.

The below are some of the potential measures that exist to support continuity.

i) Which measures are being used to guarantee that the positive effects of the intervention are sustainable over time?

Since there are no guaranteed measures of continuing to support the AMAL interventions at the moment, the following are some of the possibilities that exist.

¹²⁴ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

- *Securing the ongoing commitment of country partner organisations to the WTL initiatives.*

Whilst the 30 organisations involved have expressed their interest in continuing the AMAL activities, at the moment it will depend on their own abilities to secure further resources as to whether this will be feasible. For the larger NGOs, who have also the more secure relationships with the Oxfam affiliate led COs, this is more likely to happen. Some instances have been reported, such as of WAC in the OPT, who have already incorporated the concept of WTL in their own training guidelines. However, for other organisations, especially the AIF grantees, most of whom remain fledgling organisations, it may prove difficult for them to continue their promising beginnings.

Perhaps the most promising factor here, even if there is limited further Oxfam support, is that most of these organisations should leave AMAL with experience that should enhance their own capacities to secure further resources, although this is still often difficult for local NGOs unless they have had specific capacity building around proposal development and how to secure further donor resources.

- *Establishing a regional advocacy platform*

With the 2.5 months regional advocacy campaign generating 2.5 million hits, the potential for Oxfam to develop a wider platform that can be used to share knowledge and discussion, and provide the essential support to further regional and country advocacy initiatives is there. However, such a platform would need to be in Arabic, and this would require an investment from Oxfam.¹²⁵

- *Use of Media*

There is also further potential to use conventional and social media more widely. In Morocco, a documentary film was produced by Tafouyte, one of the AIF grantees, about female leaders who gained decision making positions, shedding light on those women and their experiences in attaining leadership positions, and in the OPT one TV debate was produced.¹²⁶

Further in the OPT, young men and women advocated women's rights through radio and arts based advocacy campaigns in Gaza (CFTA Innovation Fund Grant), another form of media activity that could be continued.¹²⁷

ii) Do sufficient institutional capacities exist to maintain the changes produced?

Individually, as noted earlier for OPT, the national partners have different capacity levels and abilities to continue to support the types of activities initiated by AMAL. In Tunisia and Morocco, capacities are stronger and more consistent amongst the partners, some of whom have already been conducting their own training activities. During the final workshop in Tunisia in January 2016, as noted there was a difference in attitude between partners and the country offices. The COs were looking for further project resources to keep specific activities going, whilst the partners felt that they now had greater capacity, and that they could keep some of the activities going. But this would still depend on their own ability to secure ongoing resources, and thus how much they would or could do, without some further funding is not clear. For instance, it was telling that when the programme manager suggested in this meeting that the 30 women's organisations that had been involved in AMAL, including the AIF grantees, form a network, that though participants liked the idea, organisations were reluctant to initiate the network themselves without Oxfam GB's support.¹²⁸ It is likely that one issue here is that whereas all the women's organisations accept Oxfam's leadership, without that, there would be a much greater sense of competitiveness between them, and if one organisation put itself further, others would likely see this as a grab for power (seeing that

¹²⁵ Interview with former AMAL advocacy officer, Beirut, January 2016.

¹²⁶ Tunisia and Yemen Country Report, February 2016.

¹²⁷ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹²⁸ Discussions with AMAL programme manager, Beirut, January 2016.

completion is rife between many of the partners, examples of this having been provided earlier for Morocco and the OPT).

This means that any activities that do continue are likely to be at the level of individual participants and individual organisations. If this is all that transpires, then the institutional capacity to continue some of the activities and training may be limited.

In Morocco and Tunisia, it is imperative that partner organizations do continue to support the newly elected women; even if these women have displayed a capacity to lead, they remain inexperienced in roles of political leadership and many will still need support. It may be possible for these elected women to establish networks that will constitute a platform for them to share experiences and good practices to address the problems and needs of their communities. Whilst there may be sufficient institutional capacities to sustain continued support to elected women some additional funds will be required in this regard by the partner organisations.

MIFTAH in the OPT and Ennakhil in Morocco reported that they are frequently contacted by youth groups who wish to join further programme interventions and training sessions. Owing to MIFTAH's success in the shadowing exercise, the word-of-mouth buzz spread over its youth networks has prompted youth members to approach it to gain similar experience. MIFTAH has responded by actively incorporating shadowing in its organizational programming and promoting it to opinion formers within AMAN coalition, of which MIFTAH itself is an active member.¹²⁹

In Tunisia too, the partner organizations enjoy strong institutional capacities which have been expanded through the different capacity building activities in the project, and through some of the collaboration between the three partners in Tunis and the partners in Yemen as well. However again they will have a requirement to be able to access further financial support.

iii) Is appropriation by both women and men being promoted?

Given the constraints there, and especially the return of conflict, it is ironic that one of the best examples of this comes from Yemen, with the REFLECT work undertaken with mixed gender CDCs, and with a focus on empowerment and rights challenges facing women, and with the male members of the groups also being supportive.

There are also other examples across the project where there was also support and ownership by men of initiatives launched through AMAL, including even at Ministerial level in Tunisia, with the support of the Minister of Women's Affairs. Groups where the most consistent appropriation by both men and women took place were usually youth groups, which have a greater willingness to challenge gendered cultural norms, with examples in both Tunisia and OPT.

In general though, the greatest focus with respect to appropriation has been on the national women's organisation partners themselves, and if this is a first step, there is clearly more work to be done to promote a wider acceptance by men too of the need to promote women's transformational leadership. This is really something one would expect to take longer than the two fully active years of implementation that have occurred so far.

¹²⁹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

4.7 Oxfam Added Value

Summary: Although it took time to generate some form of overall coherency to AMAL, with the complexity of the management and oversight arrangements, the delays in start up, including the two month delay in recruiting the programme manager, and then the time it took the manager to understand more fully how to operate within the complex structure, Oxfam nevertheless did deliver value. This became clearer in the last two years of the project, once greater clarity around resource management was established, the AIF became operational, and the regional advocacy component was planned. Overall, Oxfam added value through the creation of local and regional platforms to advocate, network, share experiences and challenges, and the lessons learned between and regionally across partners in the four countries. This was particularly the case by the final year of implementation, when relationship building was most thriving, and the Time for Women to Lead advocacy campaign had added something of substance to the regional dimension. Again though, it should be reiterated that this 'added value' can be diminished quickly, if there are not clear plans to consolidate and sustain key gains that have been made, since there is not yet evidence that the activities initiated by AMAL can be sustained of themselves. This is particularly with respect to the regional role of connecting, supporting additional capacity building, and platform building.

i) To what extent is Oxfam contributing/adding value to the implementation of the programme and in which manner?

This is a complicated question to answer, since the ways in which Oxfam has been adding value to AMAL are not consistent across countries; similarly the way in which the region has been able to add value took time to emerge, and is not perhaps quite what was originally envisaged. Yet, whilst there have been difficulties in this regard, the value Oxfam has added has also been cumulative, a layering process, as the regional management team has understood the task at hand more fully, and gradually built a network of relationships within the project. In terms of the regional added value, the holding of regular regional meetings, the regional advocacy campaign, and the successful AMAL Innovation Fund, constitute the main pluses. These, as well as the ability of the programme manager eventually to glue the whole project together and work with her colleagues to build a common purpose and unity, even if relatively short term.

At the regional level, Oxfam has enhanced the networking/linking, learning and sharing of best practices across country partners through regional workshops, 'Study Tours', World Social Forum in Tunisia, New York meeting Peace Committee Conference 13-25 and The Commission on the Status of Women CSW59/ Beijing (2015), and Millennium Development Goals (SDGs) Summit, and country/regional advocacy work thus creating "regional Solidarity". This greater exposure was a valuable experience especially to the OPT partners, whose activities are more constrained, as they had the opportunity to participate in regional and global activities in spite of the restrictions to movement in the country context.

The best expressions said by one of the partners in the OPT is that Oxfam was like the 'PAPER CLIP' of the programme, played as a mediator to keep partners together. Another partner said, 'Our project created a HUB for women's rights and women causes to be discussed and for sharing and understanding, too'. In Morocco, one partner expressed that 'Oxfam added value in how we can work jointly with partners, Oxfam provided techniques/approaches of

joint monitoring of project. AMAL Project represented a good opportunity to apply these approaches. The Project was able to revive coordination and cooperative relationships among partner organizations, despite being weak in general.¹³⁰

Overall, Oxfam added value through creating local and regional platforms to advocate, network, share experiences and challenges, lessons learned between partners and regionally across partners in the four countries of implementation specifically on the third year of implementation where relationships building were thriving.¹³¹

At the country level there were pluses too, as shown in the comments below.¹³²

OPT

- In the OPT, the key result and marked change has been in getting partners to work together jointly in country advocacy work. Partners reached out to CBOs and beneficiaries developing their capacities to advocate for change within their communities and to join together in their country advocacy campaign.
- Piloting and operationalising the concept of Women's Transformative Leadership and related innovative practices like 'shadowing' to promote new women leaders among female youth. Oxfam piloted WTL and deliberately encouraged a dialogical approach to defining theory and translating it into practice. Oxfam has initiated reflective practices on the concept of WTL within feminist organisations and challenged their ability to include both poor women and youth in their work.
- Some of Oxfam's specific capacity building interventions with partner organizations were well appreciated, eg MEAL training, Respectful Confrontation, and media, communication, and advocacy training, all of which helped inform their work with participants and CBOs. There was an ongoing issue with MEL practices, as partners own former monitoring and evaluation practices were often unstructured lacking a sound framework. Oxfam's MEAL system and related tools assisted in the understanding of MEL concepts and approaches, even if the learning on this was rather late and still unfolding as the project was wrapping up.
- In the OPT, AMAL programme reached out to diverse geographic locations and made sure to reach out to male and female youth beneficiaries from these locations in different programme interventions.

Morocco

- By providing additional funds for all women's rights organizations working under AMAL programme, Oxfam has helped partners realize their organizational strategic objectives. LDDF mentioned that AMAL has advanced its work at the political level and supported the organization to be able to realize all its objectives in relation to women's rights. For example, based on a lawsuit case of two girls that happened in Inezgane, LDDF was able to mobilise women at community level and organise an advocacy campaign. The programme helped LDDF better understand women's needs to advocate more women's related causes, especially gender-based violence (i.e. LDDF has bridged GBV with women's political participation).

¹³⁰ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹³¹ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹³² Adapted from the Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

- In Morocco, Oxfam reached geographically remote areas in respect of areas like the Rachidia, Atlas, and Ouarzazate which were not commonly targeted by developmental organisations (eg. “Maroc Inutile”). Through AMAL support was provided to Oxfam from “Le Maroc Inutile” in being able to access decision makers to advocate their causes.

ADFM stated that reaching out to geographically marginalised areas through awareness raising campaigns has assisted them in gathering valuable information about the marginalisation and vulnerability levels of different communities. They noted that whilst working in these districts, they had found that housing is a key issue, highlighted in feedback forms as a priority for community members, particularly women. ADFM supported women to defend their right to decent housing.

- Oxfam played a pivotal role in linking and networking partners at country level to give them a space to learn and coordinate between well-established women’s rights organisations, who have ‘conflicts of leadership’ and competed on visibility especially during country advocacy work. It’s well known that these competing organizations would not come together on their own initiative but Oxfam did a great job in getting them together. One member of a Morocco partner organization mentioned that ‘Oxfam provided the technical framework and aspects of collective work between partners at the country level, though more focus needs to be given to the content of the joint work, such as clarifying roles and responsibilities as well as communication between partners. One of Oxfam’s staff said, ‘Oxfam showed them (the partners) not to be rivals but a lot of effort is consumed in the coordination.’
- As reported by one of the partners in Morocco, ‘AMAL programme was a pivotal tool amongst others in the Moroccan Feminist Movement, in fact, the programme was the major supporter to the movement after 2011 constitution.’ AMAL programme has availed an opportunity for organizations to realize their objectives and aspired results despite the global economic crisis. Few organizations were able to secure financial resources to fulfil their activities and objects. As stated by one partner in Morocco, ‘It represented a glimmer of hope for associations in the light of the scarcity of international cooperation programmes.’
- Oxfam launched the regional ‘Time for Women to Lead’ campaign in Morocco in the context of the celebrations of International Women’s Day. The Lebanese celebrity ambassador Marcel Khalife, met with the newly elected women leaders, which provided an enormous boost to their profile and confidence, and brought attention to the critical role of women as leaders. Oxfam added value by attracting musicians and celebrities to support women’s causes. As a new and innovative technique to display these causes this provided a huge fillip to the cause of women’s human rights in Morocco.

ii) Is Oxfam providing needed direction, support or expertise during implementation?

Whilst some support was provided from within Country Offices for specific capacity building tools, other support for MEAL activities and to coordinate advocacy work was provided externally through the Oxfam affiliate members of the regional programme team. Due to the constraints outlined previously, particularly with regard to MEAL activities, for which there was no full time coordinator throughout the project, there were delays and inadequate overall support. Overall there was a patchwork approach in this regard, with different technical gaps being plugged as well as possible, including through the MEAL support from Oxfam Intermón, rather than a well coordinated approach to the overall provision of required technical support.

iii) Is Oxfam providing sufficient resources and staffing for adequate support of the programme?

It took a while for Oxfam to gear up its support for AMAL – into the second year in fact – and although this improved, it remained a struggle.

Some of the management, guidance and country coordination issues have already been discussed. At country level the most consistent support was provided in Tunisia where a single coordinator for AMAL was appointed, who remained with the project for all three years. In the other three countries there were institutional memory issues, especially in Morocco, where the lack of having a full time coordinator created even more of a memory lapse when the country programme person who had participated in the design and helped with the start up activities, left. This person had been in a joint role, and was replaced by another person with similarly split responsibilities. This created a significant institutional memory gap, an issue exacerbated by turnover also in partner organisation staff. When our evaluation team member visited Morocco, it was hard for her to find people who could talk about the genesis of project activities in the country, despite this being only three years previous.

At the regional level, the AMAL programme manager also struggled more than was necessary. With the lack of a competent, full time MEAL coordinator, prepared to stay, in part because the salary level of the position was unattractive, especially given the rise of humanitarian work in the region. It did not appear that Oxfam had a very good handle on the competitiveness of its salary scales in the region.¹³³ For this component, support was provided out of Oxfam Intermón in Spain, even though the MEAL advisor there had a much wider remit.

Often time within OGB particularly, AMAL seemed to struggle for appropriate support, reflecting perhaps mainly the distance gap between Beirut and Oxford, where ultimate line management, two levels above the programme manager, was located. The programme manager, given her own level of experience and expertise, as well as the responsibilities she had, really should have had a higher level of authority of her own, or perhaps required a more proximate management structure to be able to command more direct support more easily.

iv) Is Oxfam working towards setting sound complaints, feedback and response mechanisms for partners and beneficiaries in line with its accountability principles?

Country program teams have their own mechanisms for consultation and participation with partners. These mechanisms although not formally constituted as feedback mechanisms, provide the space for partners to provide feedback and suggestions.

Feedback mechanisms to ensure partners or participants connectedness with Oxfam were reliant on existing Country Office procedures, since contracts are signed with legal entities which are Oxfam confederation members and not Oxfam International which is not a legal entity and each member currently has their own processes and systems. All contracts signed by Oxfam Novib and partners, for example, carry an annex that explains the grievance mechanisms. Country project management committee meetings also provide spaces where partner senior management can raise matters of concern.¹³⁴

During the project, partner issues were mainly connected to some delays in fund transfers, with their circuitous routing (from OGB through affiliate members to the COs, to the partners), and for the approvals for the year 2 no cost extension, for which it took six months to sign the MoUs and to obtain approvals from different Oxfam affiliate HQs.

¹³³ A point made by several staff persons during the meetings held with regional staff in Beirut in January 2016.

¹³⁴ Comment on draft report.

Management arrangements for the AIF were much more straightforward. Partners participated in soliciting applications from prospective grantees, and made the first selection of proposals in each country. The final selection of grantees was made at the regional level by a selection committee which included members of the RGJP, ABAAD organisation and UN Women, and was shared with the country partners before finalising. Financial resources were then directly allocated and managed by the PMU, which made reporting and accountability lines for the AIF straightforward.

Overall, in terms of broader Oxfam social accountability, participants were not involved in MEAL activities (except as respondents), nor were they involved in activity design or at Country Steering Committee level, to create greater ownership and likelihood of measures being sustainable. Beneficiaries satisfaction was assessed after each capacity building intervention provided, but an intended AMAL Balanced Scorecard was not implemented.¹³⁵

v) Was a sufficient learning component included in the Oxfam MEAL system?

An adequate learning component was included in the regional meetings (of which six were held altogether), and this was well reported on in the minutes of these meetings, and the AMAL annual reports.

5. Overall Lessons Learned

The AMAL project undoubtedly provided a rich learning experience for all those involved, and for OGB in particular, having to manage the first inter-affiliate initiative in the MENA region, there was a steep learning curve. There was considerable focus on building an inter-affiliate commitment across the three affiliates involved, and managing the process in a way that was consistent with the confederations democratic principles. In the first year there were inevitable teething problems with such a complex undertaking, especially given that new staff, particularly the programme manager, had to be hired, and then an effective mechanism needed to be found for working across the affiliate HQs as well as the four country offices. At the same time, an operational understanding needed to be developed as to the meaning of 'transformational women's leadership', and the implications of this for the kinds of approaches that national partners used initially for capacity building and leadership development, and later on for advocacy work.

The collective experience provided opportunity for a range of lessons, many of which were learned during the three years of the project, and acted upon,

- *Building a programme*

By the end of the AMAL project, OGB had gone through a range of approaches towards building a regional gender justice programme. This had started from having a charismatic leader of the regional hub with her own clear ideas as to how the hub should evolve, to having a much wider and participatory meeting in November 2015 that sought buy in from different affiliate members into a regional proposal. From a donor perspective, however, this strategy had not yet developed a clear vision for the future that would incorporate and build on the gains made by AMAL.¹³⁶ The AMAL experience has been rich and by the end, largely positive. Through the research, a greater analytical understanding of context has also been developed.

We have described AMAL earlier as a project that grew by accretion, and in this sense the learning generated around the project was rich and detailed. At its heart, a good programme has a detailed

¹³⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

¹³⁶ Interview with SIDA portfolio manager for AMAL, January 2016.

analysis of the context(s), and an evolving theory of change that gathers understanding from relevant programmatic experiences. AMAL's early TOC is context less, and to develop now a more robust strategy for the future requires more dissection of and construction upon AMAL's experience. This is what the donor was expecting, that the lessons learned and achievements from AMAL would feature centrally as the foundation for any new programmatic submission to them, and as evaluators it is what we would expect too.

This is one reason we have discussed the theory of change for AMAL extensively in the Relevance section of this evaluation, since for any regional programme strategy a lived, experiential ToC should be at its heart, and all significant regional programme activities ideally contribute to the development and testing of this ToC. This has not happened with AMAL,¹³⁷ and indeed it would appear that there is a possibility that its legacy, potential and lessons may be lost. It will be disadvantageous to the future of the regional gender justice programme if this is the case, but if it is not to be, a different approach to the development of a regional gender justice programme is required by Oxfam.

- *Managing a regional project (or programme) and lines of authority*

'If you want to involve country people, there has to be some direct authority established, as otherwise, it is a matter of constant negotiation. This depends very much on the personalities of the people.'¹³⁸ Regional projects are never easy to manage because of the almost inevitable matrix management structures that evolve. With Oxfam International's democratic, inter-affiliate model, the structure for AMAL was not even a matrix but even more indirect. The lead author for this study has participated in an extensive review of CARE International's experience in managing multi-country projects,¹³⁹ and been involved in the past several years in evaluating several such initiatives with organisations as diverse as CARE, Oxfam Canada (shortly before the new confederation model was introduced), Plan International, and Global Witness. AMAL involves the most indirect lines of authority this author has witnessed. And whilst these indirect lines of authority are as a result of good intentions rooted in Oxfam International's confederate model, they are at odds with principles of good management practice, and the kinds of resource management efficiencies that a donor expects.¹⁴⁰ There is a tension here, and OGB struggled to find the right balance for AMAL. The programme manager felt caught between one set of (democratic) rules for a federated organisation, and then a traditional, hierarchal set of donor accountabilities. It is understood that Oxfam confederation is going through a structural change that would entail bringing the programme management/ delivery line under Oxfam International with one management unit at the country and regional levels, the latter would contribute to improving the effectiveness of Oxfam's management structures. Whilst there are naturally different perspectives on the AMAL experience, all that is important here is that the lesson to be learned is that no regional project should be managed this way again.

- *Oversight and Role of the Steering Committee*

'If there is a SC, it should be the decision making body, if it isn't, then it's unnecessary'.¹⁴¹ The first Steering Committee for AMAL consisted largely of representatives from each of the Oxfam affiliates involved, but apart from one country with a representative who was not part of the line management of the Country Offices involved. This model was revised after the first year so that the Country Directors were now included in the committee, rather than the affiliate HQ representatives.

¹³⁷ AMAL Programme Manager Discussions, January 2016.

¹³⁸ AMAL Programme Manager Discussions, Beirut, January 2016.

¹³⁹ Joe Stuckey and Mary Picard, 2009, 'Operational Issues for Managing Multi-Country Projects, Phase 1', CARE USA East and Central Africa Regional Management Unit.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with SIDA portfolio manager for AMAL, January 2016.

¹⁴¹ AMAL Programme Manager Discussions, Beirut, January 2016.

The SC subsequently worked more effectively, since it now included at least the people responsible for the overall accountability of resources allocated to their country offices. Nevertheless, they were not the staff persons most directly involved in AMAL activities in each country, and thus had a view of strategy, performance and challenges still at some remove. Partners also had no representative on the overall steering committee, and at the country level, participants had no representation on the country equivalent. And even though there were country steering committees, these had no connection to the overall project steering committee.

Within AMAL, the experienced programme manager felt disempowered. In the original TOR for the position it was designed to report to Oxfam's Regional Programme Manager – Middle East, but this was changed after her hire at the insistence of the regional gender justice hub manager.¹⁴² The personality issues aside, the underlying problem was the project/ programme discrepancy we have highlighted. AMAL was labelled and felt like a programme in its scope and complexity, but was only a project in its operation and management, and this was the root of the programme manager's sense of disempowerment and feeling of inability to ensure necessary issues beyond her reach were addressed, especially as by the end of the project even access to key staff for AMAL within the hub had to be negotiated.¹⁴³ In other cases the lead author has witnessed, an experienced regional programme manager has more authority and bound very clearly by a structure that respects the position and is supportive. As noted in the recommendations that follow, for AMAL the position was likely miscast and mislabelled, in that the role was labelled a programme management role, with the person in the role of concomitant experience, but was actually that of a project manager, and situated in the regional structure as such. It, as a result, created dissatisfactions for all parties involved, as well as some of the frustrations with the SC.

- *Advocacy planning and campaigning*

There were several key lessons to be learned from the advocacy component. First, at the country level, some of the early struggles and conflicts (owing to competition between and different priorities of partners), suggests that planning for such work should begin early, and requires strong leadership and support. In a regional gender justice theory of change, advocacy necessarily needs to loom large, since as shown in Morocco and Tunisia it provides the pathway to leveraging women's rights and providing the space for women's transformational leadership, at scale.

At the regional level, the final year advocacy initiative, the 'Time for Women to Lead' campaign achieved considerable success in terms of the publicity it garnered, with its plus 900,000 site hits, and conventional media exposure. This was thanks in no small way to the role of Marcel Khalife, the famous (in the region) Lebanese composer and musician, as a celebrity ambassador. As was noted, however, in the regional discussions, his name did not find its way onto Oxfam GB's list of global ambassadors, despite his star quality within the region and his free giving of considerable time and energy (and willingness to provide further support if required). This point can be allied to the fact that Oxfam has not yet established an Arabic social media platform. At the moment the organisation is still yet to embrace what it needs to do to be effective as a regional gender justice player in the Middle East, if indeed that remains an ambition.

- *Defining and empowering women as transformational leaders*

It is intriguing that a single word, 'transformational' had such an indelible impact on AMAL. Inserting the word in the middle of two others, 'women's leadership', turned a term everyone is familiar with (even if not widely practiced in the MENA region), into one that required considerable ongoing debate in order to define and understand. This debate was extremely healthy to AMAL, and played a significant role in terms of the level of innovation that occurred within the project. It caused all

¹⁴² Interviews with the respective persons, January 2016.

¹⁴³ The advocacy coordinator and finance officer were cases in point.

partners, including the AIF grantees, to look at the familiar words, 'women's leadership' through new lenses, and thus to develop some less familiar ways of encouraging and nurturing women to become leaders in ways that would truly challenge patriarchy and lead to some fresh opportunities for fulfilling women's rights through advancing their political leadership.

- *Collective approaches to capacity building*

It is always a challenge for a project like AMAL to deal with anything other than small handfuls of women, because of the challenges involved in implementing complex activities at any form of scale (and particularly in terms of such a short time period). The numbers were still often small, but in Tunisia and Morocco especially, working with women at local community levels in groups, aided the breadth of women reached by awareness raising activities, which in turn facilitated more potentially far reaching achievements than might have been expected in the project's short time frame. The working with groups, plus the focus on forms of leadership that could challenge cultural boundaries, did help with the creation of ripple effects, even if mostly still of a limited nature.

- *Debates on strategies and approaches for poor and marginalised women's empowerment and leadership*

We have commented at length on the debate about the respective roles and sequencing of activities focused respectively on the civil and political, and on the economic empowerment of poor (and marginalised) women. In any theory of change for the empowerment of poor women, their economic empowerment will feature large, and loom large in their own minds. It might be possible to focus only on indirect strategies of economic empowerment, but the issue cannot be ignored, since political empowerment is hard to achieve amongst those with neither voice nor income, and so some form of complementary or indirect initiatives focused on social rights and protection measures, are likely to be required. A further debate was on how best to involve men (and boys) within such a leadership initiative, in order to gain their support, and reduce patriarchal resistance, to the forms of cultural and institutional change that are required.

- *Partner financial reporting*

One operational issue that arose was with respect to partners' financial reporting. This was particularly in the case of the AIF. Despite the fact the Innovation fund was highly successful in reaching out to new organizations due to the simplicity of the application requirements and their availability in Arabic language, the fact that the financial policies and procedures of Oxfam were imposed on them was not very conducive. These organisations are often staffed by volunteers and their size does not allow for all of Oxfam procedures, which can be accommodated by larger organizations. Yet the role these organisations played in AMAL was vital.¹⁴⁴

6. Key Recommendations

The recommendations laid out in this section follow from some of the most important of the lessons learned, set out above, with these lessons also acting as conclusions about the project and its operation.

- *Incorporating AMAL learning in the development of a regional gender justice programme*

This is important for the future of the regional gender justice programme, but will prove more difficult now that many of AMAL's regionally based staff have already left Oxfam, or will do so shortly, since there is much 'know-how' or implicit knowledge they have learned during the implementation of AMAL that cannot be easily documented. AMAL was an important opportunity

¹⁴⁴ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

and it would be helpful for its programmatic and organisational lessons to be more fully absorbed before Oxfam seeks further to develop and resource a regional gender justice programme,

- *Ongoing reflection and learning around regional (and country) gender justice ToCs*

Reflective learning played an important role in the relative success of the AMAL project. It will support Oxfam 'to dedicate time slots in its country level programming to serve as check points to implement, evaluate, reflect, adapt' for ToC discussion, where the ToC and results chain are revisited for coherence, testing and validating sets of assumptions, developing or updating a risk register, and in developing necessary modifications in response to changing country contexts, whether political, social, or economic'.¹⁴⁵

- *Programme versus project management*

OGB has reorganised the structure of the regional gender justice programme twice since the start of AMAL. It would be preferable for the future that the overall regional gender justice strategy is managed by a person with strong programmatic experience, potentially with support on the operations side if necessary. Specific projects, like AMAL, should be managed by a project manager, reporting to the regional programme manager. This will make the lines of accountability and responsibility clearer, and also ensure that the levels of experience of the respective positions are appropriate. It should also resolve some of the confusions that occurred with the management of AMAL.

- *Continuity of activities*

It will require a longer term effort on the part of the partners if women are to become more effective in fulfilling their rights in this respect, and be able to play a more significant role as transformational leaders in public life. The number of women who have taken up or become more confident in their leadership positions since the start of AMAL, suggests this can happen. It is likely though that many of the specific groups and individuals involved will still need support. This raises the question as to whether Oxfam in the respective countries and the partners will still be able to provide this. There is a responsibility here. In Morocco alone, AMAL has played a significant role in helping nearly 3,000 women be elected as councillors or parliamentarians. This has been a huge success for the project, but it also provides a responsibility not to abandon the women at a time when many are still very inexperienced and vulnerable as new political leaders, and hence still requiring support.

- *Documenting good capacity building and leadership development practices and guides*

Training and capacity building activities across partners and countries appeared particularistic, perhaps partly because partners saw the training services they could provide as part of their business model, and were reluctant to share with other partners. However, for a project like AMAL it would be helpful to document good practices and guides for these, where they are identified. For instance, as the project sought largely an indirect approach to the economic empowerment of poor women, one area that did benefit them in this regard, as well as advance their political leadership skills development were the few instances where advocacy work was conducted on women's social service rights. An example was the campaign around women's access to health cards in Tunisia. This type of right and other social service and protection rights of women, are something that the project could have pursued more systematically, with clearly guidance being developed on how to undertake the work methodologically. Another issue that proved effective of this type, particularly in OPT, but also to some extent in Tunisia and Morocco, was a focus on women's labour rights.

- *Incorporating Men and Masculinities into the capacity building work*

More attention is needed with regard to the targeting of men, in order that they support more fully the aspiration of developing women's leadership, and understand the benefits this will provide to

¹⁴⁵ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016.

them and their families, rather than seeing it only as a threat to their masculine control. Such targeting of men in trainings related to gender, leadership skills and women and political participation was one of the needs identified in the final AMAL annual report, and a requirement noted by the evaluators too, during their country visits. This needs investment in building skills and capacities of local facilitators on men and masculinity, but may initially require the training of Arabic speaking trainers.¹⁴⁶

- *Advocacy activities*

A recommendation for future advocacy work is that because of its large potential impact, it is given more attention, time and resources. Campaigning in a project or programme as large and complex as AMAL requires time to plan, to conduct policy and legal reviews, to develop media relations and tools, communication plans, and so on. Advocacy work planning should also begin as early as possible in order to build synergies and complementarity with other project activities, such as capitalising on awareness raising sessions and youth networks to attract attention and visibility to advocacy work. In the OPT for example, MIFTAH used its youth network and public meetings with university youth to attract attention to advocacy work.

- *Partner Financial Reporting and Participation*

It is recommended that Oxfam should reduce and simplify the administrative procedures, such as the financial tools and procedures related to compiling and completing financial reports and related verification of expenditure documents, document translation, for local partner organisations. These consume considerable effort, time and resource of partners, whilst more simplified procedures can better meet the underlying objectives of accountability and reporting timeliness. This can be substituted by more frequent capacity building and spot check visits to mitigate risks. More time and resources should also be invested in ensuring partners and (intended) programme participants are able to play roles in all the different programme phases; specifically early design phase, activities design, and setting performance targets.¹⁴⁷

7. Conclusion

The Arab Uprisings – or more colloquial Arab Spring – were a brief moment in time. It remains perhaps too soon to assess what difference they have really made in the aiding of greater levels of democracy and social justice in the MENA region, especially given the pessimism that (re-)engulfs Egypt, now that it has returned to military rule, and Yemen, now that it has returned to conflict. In the Maghreb region, thus far the effect of the Uprisings has been more far reaching and durable than perhaps in the Mashriq countries. In Tunisia, especially, a shift towards greater democracy and political inclusiveness has occurred, and to some extent this is mirrored in Morocco.

From inception to completion, the AMAL project for ‘Supporting Women’s Transformative Leadership at Changing Times in the MENA Region’ has certainly borne witness to temporal turbulence. There is less hope in the region now than when AMAL was conceived, yet conversely it makes an initiative such as this even more vital. There were seedlings of a more inclusive and equitable future planted during the eponymous spring of 2011 and even if they prove slow growing, they require nurturing. What AMAL has shown are both the opportunities that can be opened up if the seeds of change are nurtured, and the many challenges that remain to be faced in doing so.

¹⁴⁶ AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Morocco and OPT Country Report, February 2016, and AMAL Annual Narrative Report, Year 3, Final, December 2015.

These challenges, and they would be for any organisation, are both contextual and institutional. One problem in working across the MENA region is that the concept of 'region' is geographical rather than institutional. Moreover, from an operational perspective there is a choice of geography – the Middle East plus North Africa, or each by itself? On balance, AMAL has shown the advantages of working across both. Whilst there are clear distinctions and divides, there are also commonalities, so that lessons learned and approaches for a topic like women's transformational leadership, certainly bridge the region.

AMAL was a project that experimented with a word, that of 'transformational', and what it meant to sandwich this work between two others, 'women's' and 'leadership'. As such it turns two familiar words into a question – yes, we understand 'women's leadership' but what does 'women's transformation leadership' mean? The thinking and learning that was generated from this debate helped spark off a capacity building and leadership development process that sought to be innovative and adaptive, rather than formulaic.

Within Oxfam too, with the new creation of Oxfam International, AMAL provided rich learning on the challenges of inter-affiliate cooperation in a project with single donor accountabilities and reporting requirements. This learning should help to inform the OI model as it takes on a more regional form itself. With respect to the main intent of the work, 'to promote active participation and leadership of women in the MENA region, including the poorest and most marginalised women, in local, national and regional governance structures and decision-making processes', this is a journey that remains very far from its destination, especially if women are to ensure that their rights and priorities 'are reflected in socio-economic policies and practice at all levels'.¹⁴⁸ Through AMAL Oxfam have shown that they can play a role of value as a facilitator of this journey, and that this role is more significant if it is performed across countries, rather than just within each country, separately. To continue and add to this work would therefore be of further value to women's transformational leadership in the region. It would be a challenging commitment, however, and would require some rethinking of the best organisational mechanisms to deliver such programming within the new OI confederation.

If AMAL means hope and was born in a time of hope, then what the project has shown is that providing women with opportunities to engage in more transformational leadership can still produce hope, in a world that needs as much of this commodity as can be fostered.

¹⁴⁸ Full Grant Application for 'AMAL: Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa', Oxfam, September 2012