Management Response Template

This template is included as a recommended template in the CAMSA.

August 2014

> **Please consult the <u>Oxfam Evaluation Guidance</u>[1] when planning an evaluation. This template should be filled out when closing an evaluation.**

What's this template?

This template summarizes the reflections of your team and program/project stakeholders in relation to the evaluation's findings and recommendations and offers an opportunity to comment on the utility of the evaluation process and final report. The template is divided into two parts: The first part should be published together with the evaluation report (or its executive summary); the second part is for internal use only as it helps you define and track a detailed action plan in response to the evaluation findings.

> **Oxfam Policy on Program Evaluation**
> All evaluation reports must be accompanied by a management response that communicates careful consideration of the evaluation's findings and recommendations, detailed actions that will be taken to respond to these findings, and offers an opportunity to comment on the utility of the evaluation process and final report.
> (Page 4: Paragraph 11)

Why should this template be filled out?

The overall purpose of a management response (MR) is to ensure that findings, conclusions and recommendations from Oxfam evaluations are given careful consideration and are acted on. Developing a management response in consultation with the relevant stakeholders helps us document our main learnings from evaluations as well as track our actions in response to the recommendations.

Who should fill it out?

The evaluation manager is responsible for ensuring that a management response is prepared within a reasonably brief period of time after the finalization of the evaluation report or other products (see <u>Oxfam Policy on Program Evaluation</u>). The team that is responsible for the program implementation should participate in the development of the response. If the evaluated project or program has been implemented together with partners and/or communities, these stakeholders should, in a way appropriate to the evaluation context, also participate in the discussion of findings and the development of a response (specifically regarding recommendations that are addressed to them).

When should this tool be filled out?

The management response should be filled out when you discuss the findings and recommendation of an evaluation with relevant stakeholders, i.e. at the end of an evaluation. Before responding to the evaluation findings and recommendations, you should assess the quality of the evaluation and the validity of its findings and recommendations (see Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool in <u>CAMSA</u>). Where you choose to not act upon findings and recommendations, because they are not clearly justified by the evidence presented in the evaluation report/products, this should be clearly communicated. However, together with the relevant stakeholders you should discuss also those recommendations on which Oxfam may not be able to act directly (e.g. when partners are addressed in recommendations) and agree on options to address these.

The preparation of the management response, review by senior management and posting on SUMUS (as well as submission for posting on the Oxfam public website) should happen within a reasonably short timeframe from the moment the evaluation is submitted to the evaluation manager.

What to do with the tool once completed?

Internally, the MR should be used to track actions as agreed. After an evaluation is completed the MR should be posted on SUMUS and the Oxfam website together with the evaluation product itself (i.e. the evaluation report) and the evaluation quality assessment tool. Please notify the OI secretariat by email (<u>meal@oxfaminternational.org</u>) where the documents are posted.

CAMSA minimum requirements regarding the management response

1. The commissioning manager must issue a management response to the review or evaluation. The team that is responsible for the program implementation can participate in the development of the response. It should include how Oxfam plans to use the findings and recommendations to review program planning and strategy.

2. To ensure transparency to Oxfam's constituents, Oxfam will routinely place the executive summary and management response for all evaluations of Oxfam programs or projects on www.oxfam.org and/or the affiliate's website. Barring unacceptable risk or repercussions to staff, partners or program efforts, the complete reports from all final program or project evaluations will be posted on the website.

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[1] Also available in the relevant sections in CAMSA.

Oxfam Management response to the evaluation of AMAL

This information is for internal use only and should not be published.

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Date: 05/05/2016	Country/Region/Campaign: MECIS	

Please remember that this part of the management response should be written in an accessible way for external audiences!

A: Context, background and findings

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

The final evaluation was expected to achieve the following objectives:
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;

The scope of the evaluation was meant to cover all aspects of the programme at the different levels and in the different countries, taking into consideration that in March 2015, the Yemen full scale conflict prevented continuation of programme activities.

2.   Summary main findings and recommendations

Relevance:
The design and implemented strategy for AMAL have been considered as relevant to its diverse contexts (Morocco, Tunisia, OPT and Yemen), albeit with some limitations. The evaluation noted inevitable challenges in achieving coherency and connectedness across countries, and between the main project and the smaller AMAL Innovation Fund (AIF) component. These challenges were related to the diverse nature of the inter-affiliate management model, and the inevitable differences between implementing partners. Other issues were linked with AMAL's ToC, mainly its broad scope and the practical requirement to define terms more closely. In addition to this the fact that it did not put particular focus on strategies to increase men's engagement, as an important factor in changing and influencing mindsets and positions regarding women's political participation, was a shortcoming. It also did not focus sufficiently on the economic dimension.
It was however recommended to that AMAL be turned into (or feed into) a longer-term programme so as 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 and the benefit of the regional dimension.

Effectiveness:
In spite of some of the initial constraints encountered, the project was effective in achieving its stated aims, particularly in the second and third years of implementation. The main constraint that AMAL has faced as a project is that it has been too short for such a complex set of interventions, however, despite a slow first year, the project was effective during its 2nd and 3rd implementation years. The evaluation found that for such a complex regional initiative more time and programme management support is required during the critical inception period.

Efficiency:
The project's management structure was found to be inefficient as it caused tension between the desire of Oxfam to follow democratic procedures in managing multi-affiliate projects and the requirements of management efficiency and demands of the project itself. 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.
Concerning cost-effectiveness, the evaluation report did not provide a clear response. It disagreed with the initial decision to allocate equal funds to each of the four countries on equity grounds on the basis that it was unlikely that each country would have equal propensity to use the resources effectively. Overall, the project funds were found to have been used effectively, with the exception of Yemen that registered a significant rate of under-spent due to inability of activity implementation given the conflict and violence outbreak in the country.

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 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. Many of the cases listed as example in the evaluation also reflect 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:
Although AMAL's brief duration makes it hard to assess its impact in full, the evaluation found that AMAL has resulted in achievements, and particularly three major impacts were identified. One is the progress made with the actual achievement of promoting women's transformational leadership, as attested by cases that 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 TWL 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:
The transformative aspect of the project, particularly on the individual level of women acquired skills and leadership. The evaluation report indicated that the women leaders who have experienced the benefits of transformation will likely continue what they are doing. In addition, the report identified that activities that are likely to be continued are at the level of establishing a regional advocacy platform. However, on both points, the evaluation stressed on the need for Oxfam to continue supporting both initiatives so as to sustain achieved results.

Oxfam Added Value:
The evaluation confirmed that 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.

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

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

Quality of the evaluation is poor.
On the evaluation report:
The report lacks analysis and triangulation and contains generalised and inaccurate statements that are not evidenced:
- The report significantly lacks analysis, with several sections copied from annual progress reports without further analysis or summary
- The report included a number of inaccurate statements that were in many cases based on personal views and perception of one individual, without being nuanced nor checked against factual evidence. This required more involvement from the reviewing team (among RGJP, COs, regional staff and Oxford based staff) to correct facts and make sure that statements are evidenced and factual.
- As noted by the evaluator, after receipt of Oxfam consolidated comments, the report gave "more weight" to the interviews with former AMAL PM; as a result, the report as currently stands reflects a one-sided perspective as opposed to an objective view derived from analysis and triangulation of facts, which would have been avoided if adequate level of data was collected from the field/partners/beneficiaries independently by evaluators. It also missed the opportunity of learning that would have resulted from putting greater emphasis would have been placed on the voices of partners and beneficiaries.

The report is descriptive and does not provide satisfactory answers to the evaluation questions:
- The report is focused on activity level reporting rather than higher level analysis, and as such missed the opportunity for real learning of AMAL, such as:
  - the report failed to provide answers on the relevance of WPP programming to target populations, and on whether these interventions meet the needs of marginalised and poor women

- o The effectiveness of the different approaches tested in AMAL and meaningful changes linked to transformational women's leadership were not assessed clearly, rather the section on effectiveness focused on activity level reporting, with little analysis on to the level of change achieved and how.
  - o The efficiency section looked mostly at challenges in management – always from a single point of view as mentioned above – and failed to capture learning on efficiency of the programme interventions and of partners' involvement, on the programme's ability to adapt the management structure to address the needs.
- The report structure did not fulfil all requirements, mainly in the recommendations and conclusions sections: the recommendations were too broad and did not include concrete actionable recommendations, as for the conclusion, the report only included one short section instead of a detailed, findings-based set of conclusions.
- The report contains contradicting findings, such as on the question of management (examples below), and cost-effectiveness, and unclear statements that did not respond to the questions posed.

On the evaluation process:
- The evaluation consultants failed to meet time commitments at different stages of the evaluation process, particularly during the report writing phase. Although the evaluators were granted a one-month extension upon their request to submit first draft of report, Oxfam received the draft report more than a month after the revised deadline, despite continuous communication from Oxfam's team and offers to support in the process. To resolve the delays and quality issues further delays, RGJP manager agreed a revised timeline with the lead evaluator for submission of draft, then final reports. Both deadlines were not respected.
- These delays have impacted the quality of the final product, as it decreased the time and opportunities originally planned for review as the 2nd round of revisions had to be replaced by a round of sign off and red line comments by AMAL's steering committee and management teams involved in the project (within a time frame of 4 days) which meant that partners were no longer involved at this stage, limiting their possibility for review, feedback, and input into the process.
- Despite a substantial amount of time dedicated to revision from Oxfam teams on the draft report, many sections remained unchanged and comments unaddressed in the revised version, and many quality concerns were not addressed. This required more time from Oxfam's teams to review again and ensure statements were factual as much as possible. Due to time limitations and in order to finalise the process as best as possible, it was agreed to include red line comments in the present management response.

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

- The report did not provide substantive recommendations for follow-up, particularly in terms of providing insights on complex issues faced in implementing AMAL, with most recommendations being already noted by project stakeholders and/or too generic. Nevertheless, Oxfam will be taking the following actions in response to the evaluation's findings and recommendations.
- Sustain the positive relationships built with partners, including Innovation Fund grantees, and donor.
- Seek funding for similar GJ and WPP interventions that would allow sustaining successful approaches and activities from AMAL.
- Sustain the lessons learnt internally and ensure adequate documentation (research, partnership, media, regional management, etc.)
- Review modalities of managing multi-country multi-affiliate projects to ensure appropriate governance and accountability structures. It is also pertinent to note that in response to Sida's concerns, Oxfam has already commissioned a process to address Systemic issues (see Annex I).
- With country offices and partners, identify processes to support partners in implementing sound financial management procedures

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

Overall, Oxfam expected the evaluation report to place greater emphasis on the voices of partners and beneficiaries, as they were actually in the frontline of implementation, and to provide more in-depth analysis of the project's successes and shortcomings. These two points represent the main gaps in the evaluation. Taking into consideration conclusions and recommendations listed by the evaluation team, Oxfam disagrees with the following:

- *AMAL's early TOC is insufficiently grounded in the MENA and country-level context.*
  This finding contradicts with earlier findings related to the relevance of AMAL to country contexts and is not accurate, particularly as it has been recognised that AMAL was designed in response to the changing contexts in the MENA and the opportunities it held for women's political participation.

- *In any theory of change for the empowerment of poor women, their economic empowerment will feature large, and loom large in their own minds.*
  Although we do recognise the importance of economic empowerment in assisting women to access better life conditions and advance GJ, the finding here is nor evidenced neither coherent with other report findings. This is evidenced by the fact that the reported cases of women accessing leadership roles and effectively contributing to their communities development prove that the adopted ToC and WPP approach were successful in bringing about change. Additionally, it is important to note that women's economic empowerment was part of the reflection on AMAL TOC and continues to be included in Oxfam's overall strategy for gender justice in the region, even if not directly included in a given project. Oxfam will continue to ensure stronger links are made between gender justice projects and our overall theory of change, encompassing changes at the personal, social, political, and economic levels.

- *The project's actual design was tempered down in part because the country offices wanted to continue existing partnerships*
  Oxfam invested significant amount of resources and time for the development of the project to ensure it was responding to an emerging need and evolving context following the Arab uprisings while at the same time remaining aligned with country contexts and strategies. As the final evaluation states, AMAL being the first regional women's transformative leadership intervention in the region, it brought important opportunities for exploring root gender dynamics hindering women from accessing decision-making spheres at all levels and unpacking the concept of transformative leadership; this required a significant level of engagement, expertise, and outreach from partners. Country offices then opted to continue working with some organisations under existing partnership to build on previous work and ensure continued commitment to supporting women's rights organisations.

- *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.*
  Oxfam has already started working on enhancing its role as a gender justice player in the region by developing its regional gender justice strategy, under which influencing is an important component. Oxfam is indeed currently doing a regional power analysis looking at regional players and influencers, in addition to developing a regional influencing strategy that will support gender justice goals. Oxfam has also started engaging with stakeholders, including in the Gulf with an upcoming trip to Saudi Arabia. Investment has also been made in human resources with recruitment of regional media and communication coordinator and a regional digital advisor. Finally, Oxfam has also built on successes achieved in the online *Time for Women to Lead* campaign and is building up its digital presence, collaborating with important players such as Al-Jazeera Plus and launching an Arabic Facebook page.

- *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.[…] Indirect lines of authority are at odds with principles of good management practice, and the kinds of resource management efficiencies that a donor expects.*
  While we recognise the level of complexity of AMAL, working across various units and levels has presented a bigger challenge than the new confederation structure, particularly seen as the latter has not yet been fully rolled out in the region and looks, to the contrary, at enhancing country ownership and ensuring interventions in the region are aligned with agreed strategies and priorities, and at increasing efficiency by streamlining and simplifying work across different units. This revised operating model has been piloted and rolled out in various regions with consultations with stakeholders with learning and adjustments as needed. Oxfam agrees that there is a need to balance democratic decision-making procedures with strong management structures and review management and accountability lines among country offices and affiliates to increase efficiency and has started working on this. The evaluation did not however present any evidence as to the assertion that indirect management was inefficient and it has failed to analyse the problem beyond individual views. As such, no specific issues were highlighted and no actionable alternatives suggested. It is worth mentioning however that Oxfam has started reflection on managing multi-country programmes as a confederation and further attention will be given to this within the MENA region.

- *AMAL struggled for appropriate support, reflecting mainly the distance gap between Beirut and Oxford, where ultimate line management, two levels above the programme manager, was located.*
  Oxfam provided extensive support to AMAL from various levels within the organisation. The team was supported for MEAL, particularly for setting up the baseline and monitoring and evaluation framework, donor contract management, development of Innovation Fund guidelines and procedures, financial management and oversight, and technical expertise on gender justice and transformative leadership. Oxford-based teams also provided support in terms of linking and networking with Oxfam and other

organisations from different regions. Updates on AMAL were also provided to Oxfam GB regional management as well as to Oxfam's Programme Governance Group for the region and support was made available when requested. It is worth mentioning however that changes within the organisation sometimes resulted in reduced capacity leading to delayed or limited support.

- *The steering committee should be a managerial, decision-making body.*
  The AMAL SC is a governance body that was created to ensure coherence throughout the project and among different affiliates involved as well as to provide strategic overview to the project; it was not intended to provide management oversight. Based on lessons learnt from the first year and a half of the project as well as identified needs, the structure and terms of reference of the steering committee were changed by the AMAL PM to allow for a more constructive and supportive role. This recommendation contradicts with earlier findings, both by AMAL management and the final evaluation itself, stating that the management of the country teams should be held by the AMAL PM. It is also unclear from the evaluation report how this recommended role of the steering committee would provide better management, accountability, and flexibility. In its reflection on managing multi-country programmes, Oxfam will however consider possible role and composition of steering committee taking into account learning from AMAL.

- *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.*
  While Oxfam understands that financial management procedures can be cumbersome, this finding contradicts internal control observations, audit recommendations, and donor requirements in ensuring that funds are well managed, spent, and reported. The final evaluation does not provide actionable recommendations as how to implement this recommendation while managing financial risks. Oxfam will continue to work with partners and grantees to support them in financial management and in developing their own financial systems in adherence with the organisation's and donors' requirements.

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

The poor quality of objective field level data independently collected by the evaluators from the field and failure to understand contextual realities resulted in a report that is project management/governance focused, therefore, failing to celebrate the successes of the project in a fluid socio-political environment in the region over the course of the life of the project. A glimpse of the extent of the impact of the project was evident during the closure of the project, which celebrated the achievements made by women under this initiative.

Detailed Action Plan on Key recommendations – for internal use only

A: Summary actionable evaluation recommendations
Please list all recommendations that require specific actions as per the management response above.

No.	Evaluation Recommendation (copy from above)
ER 1	Focus on men & masculinities in ToC
ER 2	Incorporating AMAL learning in the development of a regional gender justice programme
ER 3	Continue supporting AMAL interventions and successful activities
ER 4	Sustain relations with partners and support building
ER 5	Ongoing reflection and learning around regional (and country) gender justice ToCs

Note: Recommendations made by evaluators are not specific and actionable. Above listed recommendations draw from Evaluation report findings.

B: Detailed action plan
One action may address several recommendations. In this case list all recommendations that are addressed.

Key action(s)	Responding to recommendation no.	Time frame	Responsible person/team	Review	
				Comments	Status
1. Include men & masculinities in ToC	1	During design phase of project& implementation	RGJP Manager, Funding Coordinator		
2. Include AMAL learning in GJ planning and strategising	2	During design phase & implementation	PMEAL Manager, RGJP Manager		
3. Document lessons learnt from AMAL, particularly from the Innovation Fund, and share with senior management.	2	After project end - 2016	RGJP Manager, PMEAL manager		
4. Refine GJ strategy and develop WPP proposals based on AMAL interventions at country and region level	3	During design phase	RGJP Manager, Funding Coordinator		
5. Involve partners, when possible in future programming in the region.	4	During design phase & during implementation	PQ Manager		