
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN HONDURAS

Impact evaluation of the project Promoting women's engagement in governance in Honduras

Effectiveness Review Series 2016/17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam GB's Global Performance Framework is part of the organisation's effort to better understand and communicate its effectiveness, as well as enhance learning across the organisation. Under this Framework, a small number of completed or mature projects are selected at random each year for an evaluation of their impact, known as an Effectiveness Review. The project 'Promoting women's engagement in governance in Honduras' (HONC16) was one of those selected for an Effectiveness Review in the 2016/17 financial year.

Evaluation design

The Effectiveness Review took place in June 2016 in Honduras. It intended to evaluate the success of the 'Promoting women's engagement in government in Honduras' project in achieving its objective of strengthening women's political empowerment. The project was finalized in December 2015, so the evaluation is assessing the impact of the project six months after its conclusion.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, employing a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design combined with a qualitative component.

The quantitative impact evaluation aimed at measuring change that is causally attributable to and representative of the project intervention. The evaluation design involved comparing 200 women that had been supported by the project with 292 women in neighbouring communities that had similar characteristics to them in 2008, but who had not participated in the project. A total of 492 women were interviewed using household surveys. At the analysis stage, the statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were

used to control for demographic and baseline differences between the households surveyed in project and comparison communities to provide additional confidence when making estimates of the project's impact.

The qualitative component consisted of focus group discussions with project participants in three departments. They served to gather additional information about the project at a national level, and to highlight lessons from aspects of the project that the quantitative portion of the evaluation was unable to address.

Project description

The project began in 2013 and lasted two years. During this period the project directly supported a collection of women's networks in three departments in the west of Honduras (Lempira, La Paz, and Intibuca). It provided space for communication between the regional- and national-level networks, while supporting their organisational capacity. It also promoted dialogue between women's networks and municipal government, lobbied key political actors, and supported efforts to direct municipal funds according to women's needs. Finally, the project provided support to institutionalize and implement strategies aimed at preventing violence against women.

Results

The evaluation found positive and significant results on overall women's empowerment. Quantitative data analysis identified that the project had positive and significant results on various indicators of empowerment at the personal level (such as knowledge of rights and unacceptability of violence), relational-level indicators (such as group decision making and share of household income) and environmental-level indicators (awareness of municipal resources for women). Overall, women in project communities scored positively in 55 per cent of Women's Empowerment Index indicators, compared with 45 per cent for women from comparison communities.

The Effectiveness Review provides evidence that the project had a positive and significant impact on indicators referring to knowledge of individual rights, willingness to defend rights, and willingness to report violence. There is also evidence to suggest that the project increased women's likelihood of deeming violence against her unacceptable, though results in both intervention and comparison groups are very positive. The degree of personal autonomy is high in both the intervention group and the comparison group, though the evaluation finds no significant difference between the two. Finally, there is no evidence of significant impact in terms of other indicators measuring personal empowerment (self-confidence and opinion on women's economic roles), and the low values for each suggest room for improvement.

Regarding relational indicators, participants were significantly more likely than the comparison respondents to have reported influence in group decision making, higher shares of household income, and ability to influence local policies. However, there is no evidence of impact in the other two spheres of decision-making (political and household) examined in the evaluation. Additionally, when asked about their perception of social norms in their community (for example, community members' attitudes towards women's economic or leadership potential) project communities and comparison communities exhibited no difference. However, project participants were more likely to be aware of municipal resources for women, suggesting that the project had some limited positive impact at the environmental level of empowerment.

Summary results of the characteristics of women's empowerment

Level	Characteristic	Linked to project logic	Evidence of impact
Personal	Self-confidence	Yes	No
	Individual knowledge of rights	Yes	Yes
	Unacceptability of violence	Yes	Yes
	Personal autonomy (freedom of movements)	Yes	No
	Willingness to influence and defend her own rights	Yes	Yes
	Willingness to report cases of violence	Yes	Yes
	Opinion on women's economic role	No	No
Relational	Group decision making	Yes	Yes
	Household decision making	Yes	No
	Share household income	No	Yes
	Influencing in local policies	Yes	Yes
	Political decision making	No	No
Environmental	Social Norms	No	No
	Awareness of resources for women	Yes	Yes

The evaluation also investigated additional indicators outside of those used for the Women's Empowerment Index. First, evidence suggests that project participants were more willing to report violence to authorities, but there is no difference between intervention and comparison groups on participants' individual exposure to violence. Project participants were more likely to have heard of violence committed against women close to them, though it is unclear whether this is a result of increased incidence or increased awareness of violence. Project teams should exercise careful monitoring of cases of violence in future projects in order to identify any potential unintended consequences. Regarding political indicators, there is no evidence that political group participation differs between women in the project and comparison groups, but project participants were more likely to have attended political events such as marches and protests than women from the comparison group.

Finally, the qualitative component explored the interconnections between national-level influencing and community-level activities. It found some evidence that the national-level activities were instrumental in increasing knowledge of their rights and supported to vocalize their needs and advocate for their rights at local level. Focus group discussions also revealed some up-ward stream of information from local to national, specifically on health, violence, and education. The focus groups also highlighted a need for the national-level activities to be more transparent in their allocation of funds, in order to foster trust and understanding of the use of network resources.

Programme learning considerations

Consider expanding activities promoting women's political influence.

This evaluation finds positive and significant impact on women's ability to influence change, as demonstrated by a range of indicators (for example, knowledge of rights, influence in local policies, and participation in political events) as well as qualitative results. Given the impact of these community-level activities, future projects are encouraged to learn from these successes, so as to encourage women's advocacy in additional community-level

policies. These activities could also be broadened in order to achieve policy objectives on a broader geographical level.

Consider revising programme logic to make causal chain for certain goals more explicit.

The evaluation did not provide evidence of positive impact for a few outcomes explicitly stated in the logic model, specifically *self-confidence* and *household decision-making*. However, for contribution to household income – an outcome not as well defined by the theory of change – the project proved very effective. Consider revisiting the logic model, reconsidering assumptions and identifying gaps in the causal chain that may have impeded impact or created unexpected positive change. For example, what additional steps or activities might be necessary to improve self-confidence? What aspects of the project led to an increase in women's contributions to their household income?

Consider altering the targeting strategy.

From the evaluation it emerged that project participants were more likely than the comparison respondents to be already participating in groups and political activities. Additionally, project participants were more highly educated and from wealthier households, on average. The project team is encouraged to explore alternative targeting strategies in order to examine if project activities have even stronger impacts with women who could be considered more vulnerable.

Promote transparency regarding activities and funds used at the national level.

Responses from focus groups highlighted the positive impact of local women's involvement in activities at the national level. Still, some expressed concerns over the use of national-level funds. While this does not necessarily signal misuse, it does suggest that focusing on transparency of funds at the national level and clearly communicating how these finances are allocated could serve to further strengthen the trust and collaboration between networks.

Further explore how women allocated their share of the municipal budget, as these may have caused unexpected positive impacts.

Results suggest a positive impact on women's contribution to household income. While it is still unclear exactly how the project contributed to this outcome, it is likely that project women effectively used the 5 per cent of the municipal budget to fund new economic activities. An increased understanding of the specifics of these activities may allow future projects to replicate this positive impact.

Explore activities to empower women at the household-level

Programme women displayed higher levels of empowerment in *group decision-making*, an outcome explicitly linked to their involvement in women's networks. However, another indicator focusing on women's sphere of influence in the household, *opinion on women's economic role*, showed no effects. Future projects can build on the successes of this programme by targeting household-level power relations to further empower women in various areas of their lives.