

FOSTERING COMMUNITY CHANGE IN THE WEST BANK



Young boy, West Bank. © Lisei Crespers/ Oxfam

Oxfam Programme Insights

www.oxfam.org.uk/policyandpractice



OXFAM

INTRODUCTION

The Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel (OPTI) is one of four Oxfam country programmes delivering the Within and Without the State (WWS) programme,¹ funded by DFID from 2011 to 2016 under the Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Programme Partnership Arrangement (CHASE PPA). WWS is piloting innovative approaches to working with civil society to promote more accountable governance in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

In OPTI, WWS has been working in Gaza to strengthen civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with power-holders to claim their rights, and has conducted a process of 'action research' in Gaza, West Bank, and Israel (documented in the Programme Insight paper 'Action Research in the OPTI'). Between April 2010 and September 2012, WWS co-funded (with the EU's Non-State Actors funding stream) the 'Fostering Community Change' project in the West Bank.² The aim of this project was to build the capacity of marginalized Palestinian communities living under Israeli occupation to work together and to advocate around the issues which affect them.

BACKGROUND: OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Box 1: Development indicators

Population: 4 million (2012)

Human Development Index ranking: 110 (2012) (Israel's ranking is 16)

Life expectancy: 73 (2012)

Infant mortality (deaths per 1,000 live births): 20 (2010)

Under-five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000): 22 (2010)

Population with at least a secondary education: 52 per cent (2010)

Women with at least a secondary education: 48 per cent (2006 to 10)

Men with at least a secondary education: 56 per cent (2006 to 10)

Female participation in labour force: 15.1 per cent (2011)

Male participation in labour force: 66.3 per cent (2011)

Median age: 18.1 years (2010)

Poverty (percentage of people below the national poverty line): 22 per cent (2002 to 11)

Urban population: 75 per cent (2012)

Note: All figures, UNDP Human Development Index.

Governance and accountability

Voice and accountability: bottom 20 per cent internationally

Government effectiveness: bottom 30 per cent internationally

Control of corruption: bottom 25 per cent internationally

Note: World Bank dataset, 2013. All figures 2012.

The ongoing Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has led to a dramatic decline in Palestinian living standards and social conditions. Internal and external movement restrictions, limited control over natural resources, and reduced rates of employment and economic production are leading to the collapse of an already fragile economy, together with increased poverty, and a breakdown in social cohesion.

In the West Bank, the construction of the Wall around Palestinian land by the Government of Israel to limit the movement of Palestinians, and consolidation of their military checkpoints (which have the same intention) have isolated people from their land; dividing communities and restricting access to essential services. The Government of Israel has encouraged the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank – which are considered illegal under international law – limiting the movement and development of Palestinian communities and depriving them of access to land, water, and other resources. These factors have weakened the will and capacity of many Palestinians to engage in economic, social, and political activities.

Governance in the West Bank

The 1993 Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into three zones as part of a framework to support the partial autonomy of a Palestinian State. These are 'Area A', with full control by the Palestinian Authority (PA); 'Area B', with civil control under the PA and Israeli military control; and 'Area C', under full Israeli military and civil control. In all, 61 per cent of the West Bank is considered to be 'Area C'.

Inhabitants of Area C are among the most marginalized in OPT. Services, such as health and education, should normally be provided by the Israeli authorities who have overall responsibility and control in the area. However, the Israeli government does not normally provide adequate services or support development in the area. The PA must seek permission from the Israeli government for any development activity it wishes to carry out; in particular, economic development and the building of schools, roads and other infrastructure depend on obtaining the necessary Israeli permits – around 94 per cent of which are refused.³

The five project villages

The Fostering Community Change project worked in five West Bank villages: Zbedat, Al-Oujah, Jiftlik, and Fasayel in the Jordan Valley and Al-Walajeh in Bethlehem District. All the communities were located in Area C, and all suffered from poor services, including health and education. There was little community involvement in local decision making or input into policy development, as civil society groups lacked skills, resources, and confidence to take part in the process, and local (Palestinian) authorities did not have mechanisms to engage with communities.

Al-Walajeh village: Al-Walajeh, half an hour's drive from Jerusalem, has a population of around 2,500 people. Its inhabitants rely on neighbouring villages in Bethlehem District to buy and sell agricultural produce and other goods, as well as for health care and services. In recent years, the land area of the village has been reduced due to the construction of the Israeli settlement Har Gilo and the Wall. These have cut off residents from other Palestinian villages, as well as from their own agricultural lands, and from essential education and health care services.

Zbedat, Al-Oujah, Jiftlik, and Fasayel: The Jordan Valley covers 30 per cent of the West Bank and is home to 60,000 Palestinians. Of its land area, 87 per cent is designated as Area C. The Jordan Valley has abundant water sources and fertile land, but the best resources have been appropriated by Israeli settlements to undertake intensive farming of dates and other produce – often employing low-waged Palestinian workers. The PA lacks the mandate to provide services such as adequate schools, health care, infrastructure, and waste management in these villages. Many decades of poverty,

political disempowerment, and conflict have undermined the confidence of local communities and reduced their ability to engage with power-holders.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Civil society: Empowering communities and organizations

In designing the project, analysis of the extreme marginalization of these Palestinian villages, their weakened community organization and mobilization, and a lack of access to basic services, suggested a model of change based around a programme of intensive community empowerment. The aim was to build the capacity of villages to engage with those in authority and to advocate for the provision of services. This model of change not only built on Oxfam's previous community development experience in OPT and a strong tradition of Palestinian CSOs (currently weakened by both the occupation and economic decline), but also built in new opportunities for influencing power-holders by providing opportunities for engagement between citizens and power-holders, such as meetings and 'open days'.

Oxfam worked with four partner organizations to deliver the project. Oxfam chose partners that it considered to have appropriate skills and the capacity to implement project activities. Oxfam had a strong historical relationship with two partner organizations and selected others for their expertise in gender and governance.

In Al-Walajah, **Ansar**, a locally based community-based organization (CBO), was contracted to coordinate project implementation in the village. In the Jordan Valley, a well-established non-governmental organization (NGO), **Palestinian Vision (PV)**, implemented the project in all four target villages. **MIFTAH** (Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy) delivered training on citizens' rights and other governance issues, while the **Women's Study Center (WSC)** provided gender training and produced a gendered analysis of the project. Oxfam's role was to undertake overall management of the project and to act as a 'brokering agent', identifying opportunities and linking people together, while also building on Oxfam's experience of working on governance issues.

Developing community committees

Initially, Oxfam and its partners worked with local people in the five villages to establish community committees (CCs) as a focus for community empowerment and mobilization. This built on relationships that Oxfam, Ansar, and PV had already developed with the communities, which they had been working with since 2008.

An open public meeting was held in each village to explain the aims of the Fostering Community Change project and to invite people to nominate themselves for places on the committees. Prospective committee members needed to be over 18 years old; live in the village; be committed to the project; have the capacity to undertake voluntary development work; and have the capacity to learn new skills. In selecting committee members, consideration was also given to trying to ensure that more than half the members were women (normally excluded from public life), as well as to achieving a range of representation from local CBOs, the elected village councils (part of the local governance structure), and different sectors of the community. The committees ranged in size from ten members in Al-Walajah to 17 members in Jiftlik. Overall, 54 per cent of members were men and 46 per cent were women, although women were in the majority in Al-Oujah, which had nine women and four men.

The newly formed committees were given training in citizens' rights, participatory governance, and community organization, as well as in how to carry out a participatory community needs assessment (see below). They also received gender training from WSC. This covered a basic introduction to concepts of gender and the difference between 'sex' and 'gender', discussion of gender roles, and the impact of social and cultural approaches to gender roles on women and the community. It was followed up with mentoring support for women to ensure that gender was considered throughout the planning and implementation of the project.

The committees proved extremely effective in bringing people together and enabling them to co-operate around community development activities and to express their needs and priorities to relevant duty bearers. Etaf, a committee member from Al-Oujah in the Jordan Valley, commented: *'Before, we were able to talk to our own communities – then dialogue was cut. This communication has started again. This on its own is an achievement.'*

Youth mobilizers

A key strategy within the project was establishing 'youth mobilizers'. Youth mobilizers were required to be between 18 and 28 years old; committed to community activism; of good standing in the community; and able to attend trainings and community meetings. They played a key role in liaising between the committees and the wider communities, organizing meetings, undertaking consultations, and promoting events. The intention was to get young people involved in community development and to build their confidence and voice in public life. In their own words, they became 'the right arm of the community committees'.

Recruitment was conducted via word of mouth, posters in local grocery shops, and mosques. Five mobilizers were selected in Al-Oujah, Zbedat, and Fasayel and seven in Jiftlik and Al-Walajeh. Partners PV and Ansar, with support from Oxfam, provided training in community development techniques and ongoing mentoring and support to the mobilizers.

Seventeen young people – almost half of them women – also took part in an 'exposure trip' to Upper Egypt and Cairo in October 2011. Assessments had revealed a deep sense of despair in the West Bank and a lack of belief in the possibility of change. The exposure trip was designed to expose participants to different perspectives. It had a profound impact on those who took part; they saw what could be achieved in such a context, which motivated them to work for change in their own communities and to share what they had learnt with others.

For example, youth mobilizer Raed Abu Judeh commented: *'Before, the youth used to be lazy, not working for the development of the community. In this project, youth really found space to do something. Egypt exposed us to youth who were working in a context harsher than ours – but they were really able to do something and mobilize their community. We learnt many of their techniques.'*

Community-based organizations

Oxfam also built the capacity of local CBOs in the five villages. CBOs were represented on CCs and took responsibility for managing small development projects. CBO representatives took part in a variety of training courses given to the CCs, including on gender, governance, rights and responsibilities, and community mobilization. They were also offered additional training in project cycle management and proposal writing, and were coached until the end of the project. The CBOs undertook a capacity assessment at the start of the project; this was repeated at its conclusion, and all CBOs demonstrated increased capacity.

Rights and responsibilities

Workshops were facilitated by partner organization MIFTAH in late 2010 to raise awareness about citizens' rights. Nearly 150 people from the five villages took part, including CC members and other members of the communities.

MIFTAH used a participatory approach to identify areas in participants' personal and community lives that they aspired to change. It guided the discussion to link those aspirations with citizens' rights, and with the responsibilities of those in positions of authority. The discussions were then used as the basis for a citizens' rights handbook to support local communities in advocating for their rights. MIFTAH sought feedback on the draft handbook, which was then published in Arabic and English and shared widely (through printed copies and online)⁴ with communities, donors, CSOs, and government stakeholders. Communities described the participatory process as very empowering, and felt that it gave them a good understanding of their rights.

Developing community action plans

From December 2010, the CCs worked with the youth mobilizers and CBOs to help their communities identify their needs and priorities for development and to develop community action plans.

Public meetings were held in each village and efforts made to ensure that different sections of the community were represented. Committee members invited households from their own neighbourhoods as well as community leaders and those representing groups with particular needs. Invitations were also placed in public places such as mosques, shops, and other public institutions. At the meetings, the committees used their new skills to help the communities identify their needs and priorities. These were then agreed by consensus through a number of workshops, discussions, and surveys.

The villages each developed a community action plan, which could be used when approaching service providers and external donors for support. Oxfam also gave each committee two small grants, first £5,000 in 2011 and then £8,000 in 2012, to develop projects identified in the plans.

In **Al-Oujah**, the CC realized that there were a large number of female-headed households who struggled to survive on a low income. The committee decided to use its second grant to give two sheep or goats to those households most in need. This initiative proved successful: the animals now supply milk and cheese for sale, and when they have young they are given to the committee, which decides which households should be next to benefit from having livestock.

In **Jiftlik**, the community decided to use the first grant to create a picnic area and amphitheatre at the town's United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) school, which can be used by everyone in the community. With the second grant, the committee bought agricultural equipment which they were then able to hire out to individual farmers, helping them to increase crop yield and make a living from their land. Jiftlik also managed to use its action plan to secure support from external donors for several projects.

Box 2: Case study – Al-Walajeh

In January 2011, a public meeting was held in Al-Walajeh, which was attended by approximately 60 people. At the meeting, 20 community priorities were presented, and people voted for those they felt to be the most important. CC members, supported by MIFTAH, then undertook a strategic planning session to develop an action plan around these priorities and to select a project to spend the grant money on.

The committee conducted house-by-house visits to consult community members about the proposed projects, giving particular attention to visiting those who were unable to participate in public meetings. Members of the committee saw this as a real ‘eye-opener’, as they were exposed to community needs that they were not aware of (especially those of elderly and disabled residents who could not leave their houses). The community members they spoke with suggested a number of modifications.



Community Committee meeting, Al-Walajeh.

© Louie Fooks/Oxfam



Street lights, Al-Walajeh.

© Louie Fooks/Oxfam

The first grant: The community agreed to use the first grant to create a community space. Being in Area C, they were unable to construct a new building but used the grant to refurbish an existing building as a gym. Now women and young people have somewhere to meet and everyone has the opportunity to keep fit – which benefits both their physical and mental health. The gym also has a programme to meet the needs of elderly people, and this group was very proud to be consulted and included in the project.

The second grant: The village was very dark at night, particularly in winter, and people were afraid to leave their homes. A community survey demonstrated 90 per cent support for a project to install street lighting, and this was agreed. The process of implementing the project built community co-operation, as residents needed to agree on the best lights to use, invite tenders from companies to supply them, and decide which areas to prioritize. It also involved working with service providers and duty bearers, such as the electricity company and the village council, as well as negotiating with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Governance and Ministry of Planning.

In December 2011, the CCs received training in using community scorecard mechanisms to rate satisfaction with services. In Al-Walajah, this mechanism was used to enable residents to engage with the electricity company. A short questionnaire completed by residents assessed four criteria: price per kilowatt, payment method, attitude of the electricity company workers, and responsiveness. Youth mobilizers then collected this data and analysed it. The next step was to share this information with the electricity company and to ask for a response; the information helped the company to be more accountable to customers and it responded positively. One resident commented: *'The electricity company actually improved a lot of services, including replacing the exposed wires and working with the community ... on the new street lights.'*

The new lights made people feel more secure and enabled them to move around at night if they needed to, something that was particularly important for women and girls. A male committee member Majdi Abu Teen commented: *'It felt like Eid when we got the lights. More than that ... the lights mean the sustainability of the community committee, because we did it together.'*

Connecting communities to duty bearers and power-holders at different levels of governance

The aim of the project was not only to help local communities acquire new skills and self-confidence. Oxfam's aim was also to create opportunities for them to meet and engage with those in authority, build mutual trust with them, and ensure that their policies and decisions met community needs.

At the **local level**, representatives of the village councils (the formal local authorities) were involved in the CCs. They received training in rights, governance, and accountability issues, and were involved in developing and implementing action plans. At the **provincial level**, meetings were organized with duty bearers in the Bethlehem and Jordan Valley governorates (unit of local governance) to discuss community issues, such as education and the supply of water and electricity.

In the Jordan Valley, Oxfam brought residents together with governorate officials to discuss water and electricity supply. Residents had not been paying charges for these services because of dissatisfaction with their provision; this meant that the governorate had to 'top up' the missing funding, which in turn left it with less to spend on other services. Oxfam and PV initiated a process of trust-building between citizens and duty bearers, with citizens agreeing to pay the water charges, thereby enabling the governorate to deliver better services. Meetings were also held with particular ministries of the PA (such as Health, Education, and Tourism) to discuss community needs.

A series of open days were held in Al-Walajah and the Jordan Valley in 2011 and 2012 to raise awareness of the problems faced by communities in the West Bank, particularly those living in Area C. The open days were attended by local government officials, representatives of INGOs and donor agencies. These provided a focus for community activity and mobilization around activities such as sending invitations, developing exhibitions and displays, hospitality, and media work. The open days proved an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the realities of life in the West Bank.

Um Ammar a community committee member from Al-Oujah commented: *'It is not just about money [the grants]. Oxfam connected us to different levels of power – governorate, Health and Education Ministries, etc. Now we are able to hold them to account. The governorate said that when they have funds they will consider funding our action plan. And the Health Ministry said that if we have concerns we should write to express them.'*

As the project continued, it became clearer that it would be difficult for the communities to achieve change by only targeting the relevant duty bearers in the West Bank, as they were often unwilling (government of Israel) or unable (PA) to fulfil their normal responsibilities towards their citizens.

Responding to this, programme staff from Oxfam's country team working on the Fostering Community Change project began to build more links with national- and international-level advocacy work.

European diplomats and donors were invited to see the situation in these villages at first hand and to hear their stories. Oxfam brought UK journalists, together with the Minister of State for International Development Alan Duncan MP and Foreign Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Alistair Burt MP, to Al-Walajeh to witness the situation personally. It also published a report on the impact of settlements in the Jordan Valley.⁵ Oxfam's subsequent evaluation suggested that the publication and dissemination of the paper before the EU Foreign Affairs Committee meeting in spring 2012 influenced the notable success achieved in getting issues related to Area C onto the EU's agenda and mentioned specifically in the Foreign Affairs Council recommendations of May 2012.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Developing community committees

The mechanism of the community committees and associated youth mobilizers proved a very effective way to engage communities and overcome divisions and social fragmentation. Through the committees, Oxfam was able to raise people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities, enabling them to work together to identify community needs, and to co-operate on small development projects. Mayson Shadady a female community committee member from Al-Walajeh commented: 'Now I know the needs of people in the village and am connected with decision makers. Now we can advocate around issues that concern us, such as the Wall.'

Building the capacity of CBOs

All the CBOs involved in the Fostering Community Change project undertook a capacity assessment at its beginning and at its end. All recorded an increased mean capacity score. Of the 13 CBOs, nine reported progress in their governance strategy, ten in their financial management, ten in their administration and human resources, eight in their project design and management, and ten in their community-based advocacy. The organizations were better able to represent their constituents as a result of training on topics such as accountability and governance. But the project was also successful in that it encouraged CBOs to look beyond their particular organization and interest group, and work with other organizations, groups, and individuals on community-wide priorities and projects. Some organizations successfully secured funding from other donors for these projects.

Enabling marginalized groups to have a voice

The project was particularly successful in giving a voice to marginalized groups, including women and youth, who were involved at every stage. Women and youth were encouraged to attend public meetings and were given space to express their views. They were active members of the CCs and came forward as youth mobilizers in all villages. They played a strong role in identifying and delivering community development projects. Their high profile in project activities helped to enhance their status within the household and the community, and gave them confidence to take on roles that were not normally the preserve of their gender or age group.

Empowering women

Many female participants have said that, after being involved in the project, they now have a stronger voice and men accept their active involvement in the community. Halema Um Mustafa from Jiftlek said: *'My husband is very supportive. He encourages me to participate in community life. He wanted me to stand for election to the village council but I felt too busy to do it.'*

As a divorced woman, Um Ammar from Al-Oujah would normally have been excluded from public life, as divorce is considered shameful for women. She commented: *'It was hard to convince our relatives and families at first, because they wouldn't understand that a woman could be part of public meetings and part of a voice of her society without her husband present at a mixed meeting.'* However, through training and awareness-raising provided by the project, her family and community have come to accept her involvement, and have also seen the positive impact of women being involved in community activities.

At first, Shadia, a young female mobilizer from Jiftlik, had been against the idea of going on the 'exposure trip' to Cairo, because of 'what people would say'; however, her father convinced her to go. Shadia said: *'When I came back from Egypt I came back more independent, with more motivation and strength to improve the situation in Jiftlik. I proved our community wrong and made them realize that travelling was a great idea.'* Shadia now runs a kindergarten in her community, while another young mobilizer from Al-Walajeh, Samia Alaraj, has won a seat on the local council.

Men also report that the project has helped them to accept women being active in the community. Raed Abu Judeh from Jiftlik said: *'At the start we had a different view. But the barrier between men and women was broken down by working together. It is acceptable to offer the same opportunities to women as men.'* He added: *'Women have proven to us that they are capable of achieving change, and now I don't mind if the community committee is headed by a woman.'*

Empowering youth

Salam, a young mobilizer from Al-Oujah commented that youth had never before been involved in public life, but that being mobilizers had enabled them to get involved, and they have continued to take part in community activities. At least 15 community mobilizers acted as observers in local elections in 2013; five were recruited to take part in Oxfam's OPTI action research project; four found jobs in the NGO sector, where they continue to advocate around community issues; and five nominated themselves for village council elections. The youth mobilizers are now well known and are considered to be representatives of their communities.

A new way of working

One of the key achievements of the project has been to promote a new and empowering approach to working with communities.

Feedback from communities showed that they felt strongly that most donors approached them with a pre-formed view of what they needed. Oxfam's approach in the Fostering Community Change project was different, in that it supported the community to mobilize and build its own organizational capacity. This enabled communities to identify their own needs, develop action plans around how these needs might be met, and decide themselves on how to allocate the two grants provided by Oxfam.

The grants themselves produced positive benefits for the communities, including the street lighting in Al-Walajeh, the agricultural equipment in Jiftlik, and the creation of community spaces and the restoration of education facilities in other villages. The most significant impact of the grants, however,

was that they were an effective community development tool, which allowed community members to mobilize and develop their ability to work together.

Engaging with power-holders

The project aimed to build the capacity of civil society to engage with power-holders and advocate for its rights. Communities met with power-holders at local, provincial, and national levels (via local government units, municipalities, council offices, and regional governorates) at a number of events, meetings, and open days.

One community member commented: *'We have been totally forgotten for 20 years. Never before were we visited by such important people.'* And another: *'Those [open] days gave us a chance to express ourselves to important people.'*

Unfortunately, apart from the examples mentioned above, engagement did not result in improved service delivery because, as previously outlined, the relevant duty bearers (Israeli and Palestinian authorities) were unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibilities, and working alone, the communities did not have sufficient power to change this. The project team therefore became aware that the project's model of change in this respect was unrealistic, and that it would be necessary to use other methods to achieve change (see below).

KEY LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Working with very marginalized communities

The four villages in the Jordan Valley were particularly marginalized, being very remote, dominated by tribal practices and alliances, and very under-developed. Although at the start of the project Oxfam had tended to consider them together as 'the Jordan Valley', in fact the four communities were starkly different, and it was much harder to make progress in some of them than in others.

In Jiftlik, the community consisted of seven tribes who did not always peacefully co-exist. It was also very conservative and women were particularly marginalized. Oxfam and PV realized that supporting the community to work together when the tribes did not acknowledge their common interests and did not want women to participate, was going to be very challenging. Oxfam and PV had to be extremely sensitive to cultural practices and beliefs; before working with the community they would need to spend a significant amount of time explaining the benefits of participation and building relationships with the tribal leaders. It helped that PV had been working in the village since 2008; this underlined the importance of developing long-term relationships with such communities.

It is important for those undertaking governance work in fragile contexts to be aware that marginalized communities are not homogenous, and that they may have their own power issues and conflicts. It may take time to build relationships with different community groups and explain the benefits of participation. It is also necessary to be sensitive to cultural practices and beliefs in order to build trust and ultimately to achieve change.

Capacity building in fragile contexts

The project delivered a wide range of training and capacity building, based on initial assessments of community needs. Many of the capacity-building techniques were adapted from those used in traditional development work – showing that many such techniques are still appropriate in conflict-affected or fragile contexts, although progress will often be slower.

Certain capacity-building approaches seemed to be particularly effective and appropriate for use in fragile contexts, including the use of exposure visits. The youth mobilizers' visit to Egypt, in particular, was a transformational experience. It gave young people living in a very constrained context access to fresh experiences and perspectives, which demonstrably shifted their outlook. A visit by the community committees to other EU-funded projects in the West Bank in September 2012 was also very important, in that it allowed communities to share ideas and experience around fundraising and to learn directly from peer organizations.

Mentoring and accompaniment by NGOs were relatively effective, but were limited by the capacity of partners: PV worked in four villages with numerous groups and could only give each limited support. Enabling established CSOs to more effectively support community groups, and helping them to network and learn from one other, would have been a very effective strategy.

Those working on capacity building in fragile contexts should consider a range of techniques in addition to conventional workshops and trainings. Exposure visits and peer learning from other organizations can be particularly effective. Mentoring of community groups by more experienced CSOs can be effective, as this helps to embed learning in practice.

Importance of linking grassroots empowerment work to national and international advocacy

The project's original theory of change had been to empower communities and CSOs to be able to engage with duty bearers to secure their rights to better services. While the project was effective in empowering communities, it was not able to improve the situation in Area C or secure more resources or better services for communities.

This highlights the contradiction in the project's original theory of change. The project attempted to work at village and community levels to influence local, provincial, and national power-holders – but they were unwilling or unable to meet their responsibilities for service provision (and therefore very hard to influence). To *actually* achieve change, a more concerted advocacy programme would have been needed, connecting communities to powerful non-state actor 'allies' (at national and international level) which would have been able to exert influence on Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

In future, community committees could be brought together into a network, giving them a strong voice and a platform from which to put pressure on Palestinian and Israeli authorities responsible for services in Area C. At the same time, such a community network could be connected to powerful national and international non-state actors including representatives of the private sector, academia, national and international NGOs, and other elite groups. These allies would then be able to work with them to advocate for political solutions to the problems of Area C. The limited impact of the West Bank project underlines the importance of linking grassroots governance work to national and international advocacy, (where this will not expose partners and communities to risk), in order to achieve political change.

Learning from the West Bank project is now feeding into other WWS projects in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Gaza, which are supporting citizens to engage more effectively with power-holders, and using a range of innovative and effective techniques to influence power-holders and achieve change.

For governance programmes operating in contexts where authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibilities as duty bearers, linking communities with other powerful national and international actors to advocate *with* them may be the most fruitful way to achieve change.

NOTES

- 1 WWS is working in Yemen, Afghanistan, OPTI, and South Sudan.
- 2 In the West Bank, the WWS programme provided 10 per cent co-funding to an existing project, 'Fostering Community Change' (funded under the EU's Non-State Actors funding stream) which matched the objectives and approach of WWS. However, this project does not represent 'new' work initiated by WWS (as does the South Sudan project for example).
- 3 Bimkom reports that 93.5 per cent of applications for building permits were rejected between 2007 and 2012; and 97.5 per cent were rejected between 2009 and 2012. Bimkom (Planners for Planning Rights) is an Israeli non-profit organization established in 1999 by planners and architects seeking to address human rights concerns in their spatial and urban designs.
- 4 MIFTAH (2011) 'Citizens' Rights – Awareness Guide 2011'.
<http://www.miftah.org/Publications/Books/CitizensRightsGuideBookEng.pdf>
- 5 Oxfam (2012) 'On the Brink: Israeli settlements and their impact on Palestinians in the Jordan Valley', briefing paper.
<http://www.oxfam.org/en/eu/policy/israel-palestine-on-the-brink>

© Oxfam GB, October 2014

This paper was written by Louie Fooks, Programme Learning Officer, Oxfam and edited by Louie Fooks, Series editor of *Governance and Fragility Programme Insights*.

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB under ISBN 978-1-78077-713-9 in October 2014.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK. Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 18 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.