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# Rights-based Approaches

LEARNING PROJECT





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LEARNING PROJECT

AUTHORS: Jude Rand with Gabrielle Watson  
DESIGN: Maxstudio  
PHOTOS: CARE USA and Oxfam America photo archives

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Floor 5  
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(800) 77-OXFAM  
info@oxfamamerica.org  
www.oxfamamerica.org

CARE USA  
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Atlanta, GA 30303  
1-800-681-2552  
info@care.org  
www.careusa.org

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# Foreword

The failure to respect, protect or fulfill human rights is a fundamental and leading obstacle to economic development and social justice. As international non-governmental organizations dedicated to alleviating poverty, CARE International and Oxfam International recognize and accept the moral imperative to address rights violations and discrimination wherever we work. Both organizations have thus made conscious choices to adopt rights-based approaches.

Practically speaking, however, we are still struggling to understand what this major organizational shift means. The term “rights-based approaches” (RBAs) has become so familiar that we tend to assume that it is well understood and that it is a foregone conclusion that rights-based approaches offer more potential for sustainable impact. A few reports and case studies offer examples of successful projects using a rights-based approach, but no studies have systematically demonstrated that rights-based approaches strengthen development work. Similarly, no studies have compared RBA projects with non-RBA projects or identified “best practices” and lessons that could be used to improve the application of rights-based approaches in programming.

The *RBA Learning Project* was thus designed to answer some of these questions. Frequently collaborating to provide relief and rehabilitation responses in the field, CARE USA and Oxfam America, with funding from the Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, have been delighted to work together on this learning initiative.

The case studies developed and analyzed during the course of this project provide lessons learned during both organizations’ increasingly rigorous application of rights-based approaches in a variety of contexts. More importantly, they provide compelling conclusions about the differences between rights-based and more “traditional” projects, and their relative impacts. The individual and collective assessment of 26 seasoned development workers is that by adopting rights-based approaches, we will not only increase opportunities for people to meet their own needs, but also influence societal and structural changes that promote equity, justice and livelihood security for all, thereby ensuring that people can live in dignity and without fear.

We hope that this publication will be of practical assistance to our field-based staff, partners and other development practitioners in the design and implementation of rights-based projects. As we move to adapt our programming frameworks and struggle to better understand what RBA means for the work we do, it is important to remember that we are not alone. Not only have CARE and Oxfam learned from each other, but we also seek to learn from others and to share lessons with the wider development world.



**Helene Gayle MD, MPH**  
**President and CEO, CARE USA**



**Raymond C. Offenheiser**  
**President, Oxfam America**



# Acronyms & terms

ADAPD	Association for Technical Assistance and Development Projects (Oxfam's partner in Guatemala)
ADEPA	Association of Small Producers of the Central Highlands (of Guatemala)
Block supervisor	A local-level official within the Bangladesh DAE
CAFTA	Central America Free Trade Agreement
CBO	Community-based organization
CI	CARE International
<i>Char</i> land	River or coastal land that periodically submerges and re-emerges (Bangladesh)
DAE	Bangladesh Department of Agricultural Extension
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DOL	Bangladesh Department of Livestock
DOF	Bangladesh Department of Fisheries
DPPC	Ethiopian Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EC	European Commission
FFS	Farmer Field School (agricultural methodology)
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
<i>Injera</i>	Spongy flatbread eaten as staple in much of Ethiopia
IPM	Integrated Pest Management (agricultural methodology)
<i>Kebele</i>	The smallest administrative unit of government in Ethiopia
<i>Khas</i> land	Bangladesh government-controlled land intended to be allocated for the use of the poor
LEISA	Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (agricultural methodology)
LIFE	Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises (CARE Bangladesh project name)
LIFT	Local Initiatives for Farmer Training (CARE Bangladesh project name)
M&E	Monitoring & evaluation
MPIDC	Multipurpose Infrastructure Development Committees (Food For Work project, Ethiopia)
NoPEST	New Options for Pest Management (CARE Bangladesh project name)
ODPPB	Oromia Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Bureau (Ethiopia)
OI	Oxfam International
RBA	Rights-based approaches to development
RCWDA	Rift Valley Children and Women's Development Association (Ethiopia)
SEDA	Selam Environmental Development Association (Oxfam's Rift Valley Irrigation Project partner, Ethiopia)
SPHERE	The SPHERE Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
<i>Teff</i>	Indigenous grain used to make <i>injera</i>
<i>Thana</i>	Former name for sub-districts in Bangladesh. In a recent governmental reorganization, the majority of <i>thanas</i> were re-designated as <i>upazilas</i>
Union	The smallest unit of local government in Bangladesh
Union <i>Parishad</i>	Elected governing body at the Union level (Bangladesh)
<i>Upazila</i>	Governmental sub-district composed of an average of 10 Unions (Bangladesh)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	UN World Food Programme
<i>Woreda</i>	Ethiopian district, falling under regional government. Governs the <i>kebeles</i> within its administration



# Background

## Rights-based Approaches

**T**he purpose of international relief and development organizations is to reduce poverty and to alleviate suffering. Traditionally, this response has entailed direct delivery of services, such as disaster relief, food aid, health services and education. Over the decades, despite many successes related to these interventions, it has become evident that global needs are not diminishing. In recent years, many relief and development organizations have understood that what they have traditionally called “basic needs” are in fact “human rights”, and that the lack of access to fulfilling such needs may stem from violations of human rights. For example, lack of safe drinking water is a violation of an economic and social right. And fear of speaking out about rights violations is prevalent in contexts where civil and political rights are not respected, protected or fulfilled—in other words, where they are violated. This recognition has prompted an evolution from a development model based on filling poor people’s needs to one in which people are able to claim what is rightfully theirs—a model known as *rights-based approaches* (RBA).<sup>1</sup>

Rights-based approaches to development are grounded in the normative framework of human rights and in direct interventions at building rights-holders’ capacity to claim their rights and duty-bearers’ ability to meet their obligations. Using rights-based approaches, development actors employ a variety of methods—including policy analysis, advocacy and capacity building of both rights-holders and duty-

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<sup>1</sup> As this report shows, there is no single rights-based approach; rather, there are many approaches to rights-based programming—hence the use of the plural “rights-based approaches” throughout the paper.

bearers—to help facilitate a process of empowerment for poor and marginalized peoples and communities. Rights-based approaches are grounded in the International Bill of Rights, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally agreed-upon instruments, which provide globally recognized standards for what it means to live in dignity. Ultimately, rights-based approaches are aimed at creating the conditions under which people can live in dignity and peace and develop their full potential.

## The RBA Learning Project

Over the past several years, as part of their commitment to helping families and communities overcome poverty and social injustice, CARE USA (CARE) and Oxfam America have progressively adopted rights-based approaches. Table 1 presents the CARE and Oxfam visions and programming frameworks, demonstrating the extent to which each organization has embraced the RBA model.

Over the course of adopting the model, CARE and Oxfam America have uncovered numerous questions about the conceptual and practical applications of rights-based approaches. One of the fundamental questions is whether and how it can be demonstrated to project participants, host governments, staff and donors that rights-based approaches make a difference, and that this difference can be proven. Building on the successes of a partnership piloted in 2002-2003 with the support of the Ford

TABLE 1  
Oxfam’s and CARE’s Visions, Aims, Principles and Programming Frameworks

<p><b>OXFAM AMERICA</b></p>	<p><b>Vision:</b> Oxfam America envisions a world in which all people shall one day know freedom—freedom to achieve their fullest potential and to live secure from the dangers of hunger, deprivation, and oppression—through the creation of a global movement for economic and social justice.</p>	<p><b>Aims:</b> Oxfam wants to help ensure that every individual is assured of a sustainable livelihood (the means to earn a reasonable living over many years); education and health (access to basic services); life and security (when conflict or natural disasters strike); a right to be heard (by those who make the decisions that affect their lives); and a right to equity (not to be disadvantaged because of their gender or ethnic identity).</p>	<p><b>RBA Framework:</b> Oxfam believes that human beings’ inherent dignity entitles them to a core set of rights that cannot be given or taken away; it works to empower communities and individuals to know and claim their rights, it identifies those responsible – legally or morally – for respecting, protecting and fulfilling people’s rights, and holds them accountable for their responsibilities; and it recognizes the multi-level nature of rights obligations and violations, and the need to address them systematically and strategically.</p>
<p><b>CARE</b></p>	<p><b>Vision:</b> CARE seeks a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. CARE will be a global force and a partner of choice within a worldwide movement dedicated to ending poverty. We will be known everywhere for our unshakable commitment to the dignity of people.</p>	<p><b>Programming Principles:</b> In order to fulfill its vision, all of CARE’s programs should conform to six programming principles: promote empowerment; work with partners; ensure accountability and promote responsibility; address discrimination; promote the non-violent resolution of conflicts; and seek sustainable results.</p>	<p><b>Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication &amp; Social Justice:</b> To clarify the connections between its RBA, Household Livelihood Security and other program frameworks, CARE has identified three upper-level outcome categories for all of its work: Improving human conditions; improving social positions; and creating a sound enabling environment.</p>

Foundation, CARE and Oxfam undertook the *RBA Learning Project* to evaluate their respective work and to devise best-practice strategies for making the greatest possible impact for the people and communities they serve.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the RBA Learning Project were to explore the fundamental assumption that implementing rights-based approaches increases program impact, and that the impact can be demonstrated. With the support of the Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, CARE and Oxfam America undertook the CARE & Oxfam America RBA Learning Project. The specific objectives of the project were:

- To identify the key differences between “traditional” development projects and development projects using rights-based approaches
- To identify how using rights-based approaches changes the impact of projects

The project will disseminate the lessons learned widely throughout the development community.

## CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

CARE and Oxfam adopted a comparative case study methodology to draw lessons from projects that have consciously adopted rights-based approaches, versus those that are using (or have used) a more traditional development approach. The plan was to develop four matched pairs of projects, each pair addressing a similar issue (e.g., two food security projects in a given country), while one of the two used rights-based approaches and the other did not. The RBA Learning Project would then compare the projects to identify key factors that characterize rights-based approaches and compare the impact that RBA projects achieve with that of non-RBA projects.

In the end, it was not possible to select pairs that were similar in all respects except for presence or absence of the RBA factor. In the CARE Ethiopia cases, one project was the sequel to another, and had adopted a more rights-based approach based on lessons from the earlier project. In the Oxfam Ethiopia and Oxfam Guatemala cases, the projects within each pair worked with different groups and addressed different development issues. Only in the CARE Bangladesh cases were there similarities, but even then, each was put forth as a project that had gradually adopted some elements of a rights-based approach. In addition, most projects actually fell somewhere along the rights-based spectrum; none fell squarely at one end or the other. Thus, the intent of comparing projects that were rights-based with others that were *not* rights-based proved impossible.

Although imperfectly paired, however, the case study methodology provided a field-based and practitioner-validated means for analyzing rights-based approaches. The eight cases cover an interesting range of approaches to a number of development issues; they shed light on the differences in approaches taken by CARE and Oxfam (which in itself provided excellent insights for future joint learning); and they enabled CARE and Oxfam to draw useful conclusions about the differences between RBA and non-RBA projects, and their relative impacts.

Taking these programmatic realities into account, the workshop methodology was designed to acknowledge and work with these factors, drawing lessons from this more nuanced set of cases. Over the course of approximately 10 months, project staff wrote the case studies, some with assistance from consultants. Final drafts of the case

studies and case-specific discussion questions were shared among project participants two weeks before the workshop. (The cases are attached in Appendix A. They are summarized in Table 2.)

## RBA LEARNING WORKSHOP

In January 2005, 26 CARE and Oxfam staff from 12 countries came together in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to analyze the eight case studies and to explore the implications of rights-based approaches. The vast majority of participants were field-based project staff. Collectively, the group represented hundreds of years of experience in relief and development programming.

Following case-specific analyses, the group went through exercises to identify the elements that characterize projects as rights-based—or not—and whether rights-based approaches make a difference in terms of impact. Participants were asked to place each project on a scale that ranged from one (non-RBA) to 10 (fully RBA), and to justify and defend their choices. This exercise generated lively discussion, out of which a list of “essential elements” of RBA projects was more or less agreed. (See Section 3 below.) The participants then reviewed the projects for the types of impact they had, analyzing the projects in terms of whether impacts were short- or long-term, and the extent to which they had bearing on people’s lives, on civil society organizations and/or on structures of governance and societal norms. Finally, the group examined the projects that were rated highest and lowest on the RBA scale for correlations between their respective “essential elements” and types of impact.

The conclusions presented in this publication are based on broad agreements reached at the workshop by the 26 participants, based on their individual and collective experience of having worked on traditional and RBA projects for or with CARE and Oxfam.<sup>2</sup> The case studies are field-based and rich in content, and the workshop methodology aimed to capture the seasoned reflections of experienced practitioners. The conclusions may therefore be considered to be reliable judgments (even if not empirical evidence) about the differences between the two approaches and their relative impacts.

This paper is *not* a theoretical treatise on the meaning of RBA. There is a large and growing literature for this. It is not written for the development theorist, but for the field-based development practitioner who is struggling to understand what adopting a rights-based approach means for her or his work, and what promise it may hold for poor and marginalized communities. Through the examination of specific projects that were either designed to be rights-based, or later revised to adopt the approach, readers are given the opportunity to learn and explore issues through the trials, experiences and findings of others. Through the case studies, Oxfam and CARE staff and partners will benefit from exposure to RBA models in settings and contexts that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

To this end, a **Facilitator’s Guide** is attached as Appendix B. The Facilitator’s Guide provides structured exercises for development practitioners to replicate the reflection and learning process followed during the RBA Learning Workshop, and for conducting similar analyses with their own projects. The exercises are designed for field staff, and can also be valuable for non-program staff and partner organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Owing to wide diversity in their respective experiences, workshop participants had a range of perspectives, not all of which could be fully reflected in this report.

## The Case Studies

**F**or ease of reference, Table 2 presents a summary of the eight case studies. However, it is recommended that readers become familiar with the full case studies, attached as Appendix A, before they read the main body of this report.

With the exception of the Guatemala Empowerment for Small Producers project (which had had an in-depth external impact assessment), the impacts listed in the last column of Table 2 are based on program staff evaluations aided by workshop participant inquiries and probing. Some of the projects are ongoing and it is still too early to measure long-term impact; others were implemented in the recent past, but had not attempted to measure RBA impacts.<sup>3</sup> The impacts listed in the table are thus conclusions about the types of impact each project is likely to have had (or to have), based on examination and discussion of the case studies by program staff and workshop participants. Given the depth and range of experience of workshop participants, and the rigorous workshop methodology, however, CARE and Oxfam America are confident that the conclusions about the features of RBA projects and types of impact they are likely to have are both representative and reliable.

The cases are presented in rank order along a continuum of more to less rights-based, as assessed by workshop participants.

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<sup>3</sup> Monitoring and evaluation of RBA projects was identified as a real and future challenge. See Section 6 below.

TABLE 2 Summary of Case Studies

Rank on RBA Scale	Project Name	Problem Analysis and Project Hypothesis	Rights Issues Directly Addressed	Goals and Objectives	Level of Intervention, Methodology and Process Used	Planned or Demonstrated Results: Impacts on...
8	<b>OXFAM AMERICA (ETHIOPIA)</b> Make Trade Fair Coffee Campaign	Coffee crisis: Farmers are not getting a fair price for their coffee because of middlemen, blocked access to international markets and collapse of international coffee price. If farmers get direct access, and can tap into fair trade and gourmet markets, they will get a better price, and will have sustainable livelihoods.	Adequate livelihoods Access to information Access to markets and capital resources (gender discrimination)	Change policies to secure direct access to international market and eliminate middlemen and tax barriers Improve coffee producer association's production and international marketing capacities	<i>Local, National, International</i> International conference to promote Ethiopian coffee, raise awareness of the coffee crisis and gain political support for action Lobbying government on specific tax and market access policy changes to favor small producers Research and public education about the issue International marketing assistance (Direct service provision) Technical assistance for production Technical assistance for internal governance reforms to increase accountability	<b>Livelihoods</b> Improvement in living conditions of coffee farmers <b>Civil society</b> Better relationships between cooperatives and decision-makers; change in the status of unions (Impacts at the level of civil society and governance could eventually lead to further impacts on people's lives.) <b>Governance structures</b> Changes in policy allowed cooperatives to export directly <b>Additional impacts</b> Improvement in the quality of coffee and improvement in the economy
7	<b>OXFAM AMERICA (GUATEMALA)</b> Overcoming Racism and Discrimination through Active Participation by the Mayan People	Making up 70 percent of the population, Guatemalan indigenous people suffer extreme poverty, political exclusion, discrimination and racism. Increasing respect for indigenous people will contribute to democracy and the integration of different cultures into society.	Racial discrimination The right to cultural identity Access to legal system(s)	Facilitate access to official justice system and foster development of Mayan justice system Foster creation of institutions in which Mayans can participate politically to combat racism and discrimination Promote the adoption of policies to enhance food security Increase effective participation at all levels by Mayan women	<i>Local, National</i> Provide legal assistance in individual and group dispute resolution using Mayan law or facilitate access to official courts Seek formal recognition of Mayan law within Guatemalan legal system Build accountability structures to ensure discrimination is addressed by government through participation in the Commission against Racism and Discrimination	<b>Livelihoods</b> Dispute resolution; cultural identity and dignity <b>Civil society</b> Increased/improved social movement <b>Governance structures</b> Recognition of Mayan legal system; peace-building; more equitable justice

Rank on RBA Scale	Project Name	Problem Analysis and Project Hypothesis	Rights Issues Directly Addressed	Goals and Objectives	Level of Intervention, Methodology and Process Used	Planned or Demonstrated Results: Impacts on...
6	<b>CARE BANGLADESH</b> Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises and New Options for Pest Management	The future of Bangladesh lies in sustainably increasing the productivity of land through adopting environment-friendly technologies and farm management practices. Farmers' groups are best equipped to articulate and address their own needs, and to disseminate and learn about useful technologies.	Unequal access to agricultural extension (discrimination) Unfair sharecropper arrangements (right to adequate livelihood) Farmers are poor and malnourished, with low capacity to improve (right to adequate livelihood) Unequal access to common property resources (access to land)	Increase food security for 60,000 agricultural households Support the formation of new small farmer associations	<i>Local, National</i> Farmer Field Schools to foster learning, experimentation and adoption of new approaches Linked with mainstream extension services Encouraged formation of autonomous farmer CBOs beyond the life of the project Marketing technical assistance Organizational development support for farmer groups through rights education	<b>Livelihoods</b> Access to <i>chhas</i> land and improved sharecropping conditions, leading to higher production levels <b>Civil society</b> Individual farmers organized; involvement of CBOs in social advocacy and charitable work in their communities; increased recognition of, respect for and service to farmers' organizations; wider networks and access to information and technology; increased confidence and ability to advocate for policy/practice changes; stronger women's organizations <b>Governance structures</b> Duty-bearers more responsive to smallholders; better service provision, including access to credit and increased agricultural inputs.
5	<b>CARE ETHIOPIA</b> Civil Society Capacity Strengthening Project	Poverty emanates from people's positions in society and their relations to power in decision-making processes. Community empowerment and improved engagement with government bodies will result in good governance and poverty alleviation.	Participation of civil society in policy and program decision-making, especially that of community-based organizations (CBOs) and government bodies at the city level Collective association	Create civil society organizations (CSOs) and federations of CSOs Foster links between CSOs (CBOs in this case), government and private sector to find shared goals and clear responsibility for meeting them	<i>Local</i> Capacity building provided for fledgling CBOs building on existing funeral society association Internal accountability and administrative structures Coaching for partnering with local development actors Money for office equipment	<b>Livelihoods</b> Improved social security for vulnerable groups <b>Civil society</b> Widening space for civil society and secondary effect to other areas; federation has diversified its funding base; federation demonstrating elements of democratic governance; federation now providing services <b>Governance structures</b> Kebele administration consulting with federation on development issues; kebele and other stakeholders engaged in consultative decision-making

Rank on RBA Scale	Project Name	Problem analysis and Project Hypothesis	Rights Issues Directly Addressed	Goals and Objectives	Level of Intervention, Methodology and Process Used	Planned or Demonstrated Results: Impacts on...
4	<b>CARE BANGLADESH</b> Local Initiatives in Farmer Training Project	Monopolization of land in coastal area has subjected poor landless farmers to evictions and sharecropping conditions. Farmer households, mostly female-headed, will have better livelihoods and nutrition if their homestead production is improved.	Adequate livelihoods through improved homestead production for domestic consumption and expenditure savings (Unequal access to common property resources – access to land)	Increase homestead production by providing access to quality inputs (seeds) and bio-intensive production training through local extension systems Establish rural system for seed supply Improve household nutrition	<i>Local</i> Initially, primarily agricultural training targeted at women in FFSs and grade schools for homestead gardening and seed selection and production FFSs encouraged to organize themselves into associations beyond the life of the project Collaboration with Dept. of Agriculture Extension staff coming to project site to provide services to farmers in remote locations At request of participants, new sessions on dowry and early marriage were added, and information on policies regarding common <i>char</i> lands	<b>Livelihoods</b> New knowledge and maximization of self-help potential; women's increased incomes; local suppliers' incomes increased; visible impact of nutritional pilot; local suppliers and networks well entrenched <b>Civil society</b> Social stimulation and solidarity; associations of local suppliers formed; responsibility for service centers with local actors; capacity building of local NGOs <b>Governance structures</b> Government/duty-bearers meeting service provision responsibilities; women's role in family decision-making enhanced; community structures/attitudes changed due to all of the above
3	<b>OXFAM AMERICA (GUATEMALA)</b> Economic, Political and Social Empowerment for Small Producers in Guatemala's Central Highlands	Despite peace accords, Guatemala still suffers from inequitable distribution of income, lack of political participation of all peoples, a stagnant domestic economy and ongoing human rights abuses. By combining economic, political and social empowerment, highland people will be able to improve the quality of their lives.	Equal access to government programs Access to markets and inputs at fair prices Political participation	Improve the quality of life for 26 communities (1,500 households) by making them more self-sufficient in agricultural production and marketing, accessing government social compensation funds and increasing their participation in public political life	<i>Local, National</i> Technical assistance in crops, help setting up CBOs for marketing and credit, and women's issues Direct service in accessing social compensation funds TA in setting up information center to help community access funds directly Training and support for electoral organizing	<b>Livelihoods</b> (Temporary) increase in incomes, communal services, improved infrastructure, and family integration as result of increased income <b>Civil society</b> Influence and engagement of civil society <b>Governance structures</b> Questionable impact on political and social policy

# 2 The Case Studies

Rank on RBA Scale	Project Name	Problem Analysis and Project Hypothesis	Rights Issues Directly Addressed	Goals and Objectives	Level of Intervention, Methodology and Process Used	Planned or Demonstrated Results: Impacts on...
2	<b>OXFAM AMERICA (ETHIOPIA)</b> Rift Valley Small-scale Irrigation Project	Small farmers are being pushed off their land because they can't produce enough to compete with commercial producers and the government wants tax revenues. Irrigation will increase production and food security, and protect land security. In the process, people will have basic needs met and gain confidence to discuss rights.	Access to land Access to water Women's rights Economic rights	Build irrigation systems and train people in their use Increase nutrition and livelihoods Increase land security (though not through policy change)	<i>Local</i> Built irrigation systems, trained people in their use	<b>Livelihoods</b> 200 households have irrigation Access to land tenuously secured Household income increased <b>Civil society</b> Some households petitioning for certificate to land Capacity to lobby increased <b>Governance structures</b> Violence against women reduced Compliance to policy improved Potential future demonstration effect
1	<b>CARE ETHIOPIA</b> Infrastructure Improvement/ Urban Food-for-Work Project	Flood of people to the capital city at end of civil strife is overwhelming city's employment-generating and food distribution systems, leading to food insecurity in slums. Creating public works projects to occupy people in exchange for grains and oil will upgrade infrastructure in slums and provide temporary food and cash supplement to alleviate beneficiaries' hunger.	Not articulated "Livelihood security framework" cited High female participation (but discrimination against pregnant and lactating women) Right to food and protection?	Short-term employment Build basic infrastructure in slums Increase the capacity of neighborhood groups to do self-help projects	<i>Local</i> Food-for-work, providing six months of manual labor to selected beneficiaries in exchange for grains and oil Communities given a menu of infrastructure projects to select among Building drainage, road and water infrastructure and latrines Some beneficiaries hired into supervisory and trades positions Distributing grains and oil from U.S. government as "payment" for labor	<b>People's lives</b> Improved infrastructure Temporary increase in household food and cash resources Improved health status Improved livelihood through rental income <b>Civil society</b> Cooperation with local government units generated good will between residence and public administration





## Elements of RBA Projects

**B**ased upon analysis of the case studies, four small groups of participants debated the placement of each project on an “RBA Spectrum” that ranged from 1 (non RBA) to 10 (RBA). The groups then shared their “votes” and these were examined by the whole group and discussed at some length. These ratings were not meant to be judgments about the value of the projects, but rather an assessment of their perceived alignment with rights-based approaches.

As Table 3 shows, there was very little disagreement about where to place the projects along the spectrum. The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign and Guatemala Overcoming Racism projects were seen to be most consistent with rights-based approaches, although neither was thought to have fully adopted a rights-based approach. The Ethiopia Rift Valley Irrigation and the Urban Food for Work projects scored lowest on the scale. (The Ethiopia Food for Work project made no claim to be a project that had used a rights-based approach.) The remaining five projects clustered in the middle of the range.

TABLE 3

**RBA Spectrum–Workshop Participants’ Rating of Projects on an Ordinal RBA Scale**

Project	Non-RBA					RBA					Total out of possible score of 40	Alignment with RBA
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Ethiopia - Coffee Campaign							XX	X	X		31	78%
Guatemala - Overcoming Racism						X		XXX			30	75%
Bangladesh - Farming and Pest Management						XXX	X				25	63%
Ethiopia - Civil Society Strengthening				X	XX	X					20	50%
Bangladesh - Farmer Training			X		XXX						18	45%
Guatemala - Empowerment for Small Producers		X		X	X	X					17	43%
Ethiopia - Rift Valley Irrigation			X	XX	X						16	40%
Ethiopia - Urban Food for Work	X	XX	X								8	20%

This exercise generated a rich discussion about the design features common to the more RBA projects, and concluded by generating a list of elements that participants felt characterize RBA projects. These elements and some of the core content of the discussions are captured in the descriptions of each of the elements that follow.

**“Essential” Elements of RBA Projects**

1. Thorough analysis of underlying causes of poverty, including explicit and ongoing analyses of power, gender and risk
2. Community-centered development, including building sustainable capacity to claim rights and to drive decision-making
3. Duty-bearers engaged, strengthened and held accountable
4. Advocacy for sustainable change in policy and practice
5. Alliance-building
6. Working at multiple levels (e.g., local, national, international)
7. Focus on groups that are marginalized and discriminated against
8. Problems framed as rights issues and linked to international, national or customary standards

## Thorough Analysis of Underlying Causes of Poverty, including Explicit and Ongoing Analyses of Power, Gender and Risk

Workshop participants felt that paramount among the eight elements of rights-based approaches is a comprehensive problem analysis including analysis of the position poor people have within society. Integration of rights-based approaches has to do with probing to achieve a different level of analysis grounded in people's inherent rights and the obligations of duty-bearers. Persistently asking *why* is key. In the past, for example, explanations like "...because the municipality can't afford fuel" would be accepted as the reason for the government's failure to make drinking water available to the poor. INGOs would then design programs that compensated for government's shortcomings. With the rights-based approach, the analysis goes deeper: Why can't it afford fuel? Where is it allocating its resources? Is it providing water to other localities? Is corruption at the base of the resource-allocation issues? Could the international community bring pressure to bear?

Rights-based approaches require analysis that pushes people to reflect beyond the commonly stated problems and to get into the uncomfortable, hard-to-discuss but critically important factors about power relations that have to be tackled for the issues to be meaningfully addressed. With this kind of analysis, the intervention is less likely to involve service provision, and more likely to address underlying issues like corruption, lack of transparency or lack of participatory governance.

Thorough analysis of underlying causes of poverty gets at *why* rights are not being realized, *who* is responsible for promoting and protecting them, *what* aspects of the governance structure need to be changed in order to make it enabling, and *how* poor people can play central roles in claiming their own rights.

To effectively inform the design of projects that seek to have lasting impact on rights, the problem analysis must include ongoing and issue-specific analyses of power, gender and risk. (CARE and Oxfam America recognize that there is future work to be done to develop and recommend protocols and methods for carrying out these analyses.)

### POWER ANALYSIS

Power has been simply and instrumentally defined by gender activists as "the ability to get what you need, keep what you have, and influence others in order to meet your interests."<sup>4</sup> This definition implies that in order to be empowered, one needs capacity to exercise choice in the face of power relations and structures. The theory of power with which CARE has begun to work hypothesizes that no one is powerless: all individuals, regardless of social status, have the ability to reflect on relationships, to learn, and to take individual or collective action. Conversely, no one is all-powerful. According to this theory, the underlying causes of poverty are not static or absolute, but are rather the result of a constant process of struggle over power and access to resources. Strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable to engage in this process is what rights-based approaches are about.

<sup>4</sup> CARE USA. (2005). Power and Empowerment. Unpublished paper.

The participants felt that in order to support people's efforts to take control of their lives and to fulfill their rights, it is necessary to understand their societal relationships, how decisions are made and by whom, and how people access the decision-making process.

When we speak about power, we generally think about state actors, but power relations exist at all levels and in all spheres of life. Men may hold power over women; landowners may hold power over sharecroppers; one ethnic group may hold power over another; and big corporations may hold power over market mechanisms. In every case, power can take multiple forms, and may be positive and generative, or negative and destructive.

Oxfam America's power analysis of the root problem of the Ethiopian coffee crisis led to a strategy with very concrete results. Previously, farmers were vulnerable to middlemen who exploited and robbed them. Now, they are able to sell directly to international buyers and are being paid a fair price. Blocked access to information was another component prohibiting farmers from getting a fair price for their coffee. Through this project, unions and cooperatives learned how to access specialty markets and get key information about market structure, price fluctuations, access and entry requirements. The power analysis done by project designers led to interventions that directly addressed these barriers to coffee farmers realizing their right to an adequate livelihood.

Participants agreed it is best to do a power analysis at the very beginning of a project. But, if this is not possible or was not done for whatever reason, it can always be done later. They agreed it is never too late to do good analysis. Indeed, power analysis has to be ongoing throughout the life of a project. The important thing is to heed the results of the analysis, even if it means changing the course of the project. Every time an issue comes up, the project should do an issue-specific power analysis and make changes as appropriate. In the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign case, for example, although advocacy broke the back of an export monopoly, Oxfam and the coffee unions periodically examine whether there are effective checks and balances against the growth of new monopolies, or whether the governance structures of the newly empowered farmers' cooperatives continue to ensure accountability.

## GENDER ANALYSIS

Women constitute a disproportionately marginalized and vulnerable group. Gender discrimination is responsible for inequalities of access and power in virtually every country where CARE and Oxfam work, and one that presents a particular challenge for advancing equity and diversity. For this reason, problem analysis in general and power analysis in particular should include specific and ongoing focus on gender. Does national, religious or customary law prohibit girls from equal access to education or women from participation in the workforce? Are women and girls denied equal access to intra-household resources or inheritance? Do they have recourse to justice in the event of domestic abuse? Do they have the ability to get what they need, keep what they have, and influence others in order to meet their interests?

The Bangladesh Farmer Training project demonstrates the need to do specific gender analysis. Efforts to improve women's social position through homestead production activities alone proved insufficient given the deep-rooted gender biases that are observed in most Bangladeshi institutions and rural society. While skills to enhance homestead productivity certainly helped women, in order to sustain gains in productivity, women needed to be empowered to better articulate and claim their rights and entitlements.

The successor project, the Farming and Pest Management project, provides an excellent illustration of gender analysis done by project participants. It is too early to tell whether the efforts toward addressing the issues of dowry and polygamy raised by women in the Farmer Field School groups can be effective. But it is interesting that the social issues were proposed by women-led organizations on their own initiative, which suggests that the Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project has effectively empowered women to operate independently on issues of importance to them. For project staff, there have been valuable lessons in this. They learned that projects have to be iterative and responsive to community concerns. They also learned that addressing wider social issues that do not directly relate to cropping but influence sustainable food security may be as important as technical interventions.

The Ethiopia Food for Work project, on the other hand, demonstrates the danger of not doing specific gender analysis. Although it was stipulated that women should constitute 60 percent of project participants, pregnant and lactating women were excluded on the grounds that the work would be too physically demanding. In effect, this decision was discriminatory, and further marginalized an already marginalized group. A sound gender analysis that included asking women themselves what they need might have led to special provisions (e.g., less strenuous roles for lactating and pregnant women, or food for babysitting other workers' children).

### RISK ANALYSIS

Promoting rights and the interests of vulnerable groups very often involves challenging people who hold political and economic power. The proposed changes may be unpopular with those people, so advocating for their enactment may involve a certain element of risk, obviously for the local stakeholders, but often for the outside organization as well. Risk analysis is therefore an essential element of the problem analysis.

Have those most vulnerable to potential risks been at the center of the risk analysis? How can we engage institutionally with a government (or another duty-bearer) that does not buy into fundamental human rights? Are there factors keeping the community from speaking out? Will people be harassed as a result of speaking out? What is our strategy for mitigating risk and/or for clearly defining no-go areas? How can we prepare for intimidation and challenges to our rights-based work? How far should we go when pushing our agenda forward? What harm might we cause? Do the benefits outweigh the potential harm? These are all important questions that must be asked up front and repeatedly. (SPHERE<sup>5</sup> and Benefits-Harms tools are excellent for these purposes.)

The Ethiopian cases provide good examples of the importance of a risk assessment in RBA projects. The Ethiopian government considers civics society organizations as adversaries and has limited their ability to advocate or carry out civics projects. Oxfam assessed that in the early stages of its campaign, Oxfam (not its partner) would need to take the lead in dealing with policy change. Engaging government as a participant early on in the process was also deemed critical. Oxfam sought to model a healthy relationship between government and civil society in effecting change that was beneficial to both small producers and government revenues. Oxfam felt that mitigating

<sup>5</sup> The SPHERE Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, a program of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and InterAction with VOICE, ICRC and ICVA. Oxfam GB. Oxford. 2000.

the risk to local civil society organizations (CSOs) was critical in the early stages of the campaign, but also believed that by directly building trust with the government, it could lessen the risk for local CSOs in the future.

Selam Environmental Development Association (SEDA, Oxfam’s Rift Valley Irrigation project partner), on the other hand, assessed that openly challenging the government on land tenure issues or openly doing civic education would prove too risky for individual farmers and potentially for SEDA itself. It chose instead to tackle the issue of land tenure by enhancing farmers’ agricultural production, which in turn allowed the farmers to pay their taxes and to hold on to their land. SEDA participates in and initiates discussions regarding the land tenure system, and it does a little bit of advocacy work, but it wants to be very careful about how it speaks out.

The workshop participants stressed that while analyzing a problem in terms of rights or power relations is an important element, the analysis alone does not make a project rights-based. Once the underlying causes are understood, the challenge is to design interventions that actually address them. This implies that the methodologies or strategies employed in RBA projects differ from those employed in traditional projects. Although the distinctions are rarely black and white, and while some of the best projects utilize both traditional and RBA methodologies, an examination of the

**TABLE 4**  
**Examples of Methodologies that Characterize RBA versus Traditional Projects**

Project Element	RBA projects	Traditional projects
<b>Community-centered development</b>	Build capacity in terms of policy analysis, media relations, alliance building and advocacy	Build technical capacity, e.g., irrigation or organizational capacity to write proposals or to account for donor funds; emphasize technology, inputs
<b>Role of duty-bearers</b>	Include local governance elements in civil society strengthening projects; emphasize representation, accountability, democratic practice	
<b>Advocacy</b>	Support communities and organizations in their efforts to advocate for changes in policies and practices, structures and systems	Advocate for community-driven development, and for bi- and multi-lateral aid donations
<b>Alliances</b>	Strengthen civil society linkages such as unions, collectives, lobbies and watchdog groups to work together to solve issues	
<b>Level of intervention (e.g., local, national, international)</b>	Seek linkages between community groups and national and international entities with capacity to influence national and international policies, programs and practices	Work primarily or exclusively at the household and community levels
<b>Target or focus of intervention</b>	Focus on the interests of a “class” of vulnerable people, such as ethnic minorities or poor coffee growers	Address the needs of a select target group, such as one specific group of people in a given district or slum
<b>Problem framing</b>	Frame problems in terms of rights, such as lack of access to information or legal representation, lack of participation in governance, discrimination, or protection issues	Frame problems in terms of “needs” such as credit, employment, sanitation, food, water, services

## 3 Elements of RBA Projects

case studies in this series yields a set of examples of the methodologies that typically characterize RBA versus traditional projects. They are presented in Table 4 using the rights-based elements identified by workshop participants to highlight the contrast.

Oxfam America’s experience is that good RBA work is often based on long-standing traditional project work, such as building capacity of partners and cultivating working partnerships at the local level. Indeed, traditional work is enhanced or improved by targeted RBA elements, such as when accompaniment in legal cases is complemented by targeted policy and practice change, as was the case in the Guatemala Overcoming Racism project. And once systemic changes have taken place, there is often a need to return to traditional project work to ensure that the benefits of the policy changes positively impact the community. For example, local partners may need capacity and systems to capitalize on the newly instituted policies or practices.

Introducing RBA is context specific. When an RBA project is designed, the ability to implement it can be delayed by the need to meet immediate needs, address conflict situations, and manage overall risk. Rights-based objectives may be undermined if development practitioners are not sensitive to the context within which RBA activities are carried out.

The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project has actually adapted its strategies to changing circumstances. It has worked in different modes, from direct service in the provision of legal assistance and conflict-resolution services to the formulation of law-reform proposals. This project demonstrates that rights-based approaches need not exclude service delivery, but that service delivery or meeting immediate needs should be (concurrently or eventually) fitted into something broader – something that will effect more sustainable impact.

### Community-centered Development, including Building Sustainable Capacity to Claim Rights and to Drive Decision-making

Community empowerment is central to rights-based approaches, which view people as lead actors in their own development. They seek to build community capacity to articulate and claim rights and to insist on government (and other duty-bearers’) accountability. *This is perhaps the element that most clearly distinguishes traditional development approaches from rights-based approaches.*

“The rights-based approach requires that people be viewed as active agents of their own development. This understanding has held sway in much of the development world (well before the rights-based approach) and a wealth of experience in “people-centered” development already exists. However, the rights-based approach takes empowerment a step further in aiming for not only the ability to sustain oneself, but the additional capacity to influence public policies and make claims in defense of one’s rights.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project is a good example of this. It focuses on building a platform for addressing a broader range of social issues, in

<sup>6</sup> Jochnick, C. & P. Garzon. Rights-based Approaches to Development: An Overview of the Field. A paper prepared for CARE and Oxfam America. October 22, 2002. p. 11.

addition to addressing issues of sustainable agricultural gains and enhanced access to government extension services. As Farmer Field School groups developed, participants began to raise issues related to structural constraints such as access to common natural resources and exploitative tenancy arrangements. The women in the groups raised complex social issues such as dowry and polygamy. Although not part of the original project design, with its gradual adoption of a rights-based approach, the project embraced the new directions and ran with them. The project now raises awareness on a number of social issues by providing orientation on existing laws and policies and the declared responsibilities of the duty-bearers.

## Duty-bearers Engaged, Strengthened and Held Accountable

Projects using rights-based approaches emphasize not only concrete problems and people’s needs and rights, but also responsibilities, in particular the government’s legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfill people’s rights.

The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project seeks to hold government accountable for the impacts of its policies. At a basic level, it is being asked to protect the right of cooperatives to establish financial relations.

Identifying and engaging duty-bearers means changing the strategies projects use to reach their goals. The Bangladesh Farmer Training project began with the primary objective of enhancing productivity of smallholders. It evolved when it became obvious that the Department of Agricultural Extension was not doing its job and that it was biased against women and small-scale farmers. The project’s approach was to identify the decision-makers (the union *parishads*) and to determine why they were not doing their jobs. Eventually, its strategy was to engage the union *parishads* in constructive dialogue. It reasoned that putting them in the driver’s seat would make them more responsive. The shift toward rights-based approaches represents for the project not just a change in on-the-ground implementation methodology, but a change of discourse.

One perspective of workshop participants is that the rights-based approach need not “name and shame” and make charges about the “denial” of rights. Such an approach has the potential to make villains or adversaries—instead of potential partners—out of duty-bearers. Unlike the methods often used in civil and political rights activism, economic and cultural rights groups sometimes prefer to seek engagement and mutual fulfillment. Balanced, two-pronged approaches that address obligations from both sides steer participants toward developing



## 3 Elements of RBA Projects

plans that recognize their respective accountability and responsibility to promote the accountability of other relevant stakeholders. Oxfam and CARE are moving more and more to the perspective that finding win-win situations for governments and communities is the optimal form of advocacy. The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project is a good example of this.

In order to realize their rights, people have to know them. Governments and other duty-bearers, on the other hand, have the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill rights, and must have the authority and resources to fulfill their duties towards rights-holders. A lack of resources alone is not an excuse not to meet obligations. Any action (such as budgetary allocation) that results in human rights violations, even if unintentional, is still a violation. Thus, the reason for non-fulfillment of rights has to be part of the problem analysis and part of the capacity building.



*In order to realize a right, government officials or other duty-bearers must have the responsibility, authority and resources to be accountable to and fulfill their duties toward rights-holders. The role of the development practitioner includes education of authority figures to know and understand rights and responsibilities, to analyze issues through a rights framework, to develop the technical capacity to respond to claims, and to develop advocacy, awareness and communication strategies to work with rights-claimers.<sup>7</sup>*



Non-state actors, as a category of duty-bearers, were not a focus at the workshop, primarily because there were few examples of actively engaging non-state actors. But this is an important category of duty-bearers for development practitioners to consider. There is broad understanding within the human rights literature that states have the primary duty to respect, protect and fulfill citizens' rights. Part of their duty to protect rights includes regulating the activities of non-state actors, like businesses and private organizations, so that citizens' rights are not violated. By extension, and there is growing consensus on the matter, non-state actors have a corollary duty to respect peoples' rights, within the sphere of their activities. If the state fails to regulate private behavior adequately, this does not mean that non-state actors need not abide by their duty to respect peoples' human rights. This is an area that merits deeper exploration within the RBA literature and development community.

### Advocacy for Sustainable Change in Policy and Practice

One of the most significant advances that rights-based approaches have influenced is the focus on making lasting changes in the systemic policy and governance environment. If people are poor because they are being excluded from certain benefits or access to resources necessary for securing their livelihoods, no amount of service delivery will make up for this. Policy change is needed. Advocacy work of one form or another to bring this about becomes an essential item in the development toolkit. When dealing with issues that are as fundamental as human rights, raising awareness

<sup>7</sup> O'Neill, W.G. (2003). An Introduction to the Concept of Rights Based Approach to Development: A Paper for InterAction. December 2003. p. 4.

is not enough. Rights-based approaches focus on building capacity to claim rights, to advocate for new policies or changes to existing policies or practices, to network, to organize and to participate in local governance.

Of the cases in this set, only the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign and the Guatemala Overcoming Racism projects took overt advocacy approaches, which may explain why workshop participants rated these two projects as “most RBA”. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project’s advocacy for changes in policies and discriminatory practices in Guatemala has resulted in greater integration and attention to indigenous peoples by the government and society in general. Through concerted national and international advocacy, the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project changed Ethiopia’s coffee industry beyond the actual sale of coffee to a full government endorsement of policies more favorable to farmers and cooperatives.

In order to change policies that negatively impact the poor, development practitioners have to address relationships, frameworks and constraints that restrict even good policies from being implemented. Rights may be denied as a result of discriminatory or negligent policies, but even where policies are sound, rights abuse may occur as a result of poor implementation. Methodologies associated with policy change include research, alliance building and advocacy, while practice change uses very different methodologies, such as training, awareness raising, legal assistance and mediation.

**TABLE 5**  
**Levels of policy/practice change and the methodologies associated with each**

STATUS	ASSOCIATED METHODOLOGIES
Policy does not exist	Research, alliance building, advocacy
Policy exists but is not being implemented (due to lack of will, lack of knowledge, or both)	Awareness raising, legal assistance, training
Policy exists but no mechanisms for application	Institution/mechanism building, plus all of the above

The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project is using legal assistance, creation of a consultative mechanism and awareness raising about the Mayan legal system to influence public law reform. In the Ethiopia Rift Valley Irrigation case, the issue is the ambiguous land tenure policy, so the intervention should gradually shift to alliance building and advocacy for policy reform. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the policy framework is in place—but is not being translated into practice. In this case, mediating solutions using existing laws is working to influence practice changed.

The Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project chose not to directly engage in advocacy or to overtly press for policy change. Nor did it engage in structured attempts to compel official duty-bearers to enforce legal rights and entitlements. Instead, the project’s interventions had more the flavor of mediated solutions—a conflict-resolution approach to rights and entitlement issues, taking into account needs and constraints of both duty-bearers and rights-holders and working within (rather than attempting to change) existing structures. Instead of working with those with formal responsibility for enforcing the law, the project chose to raise

# 3 Elements of RBA Projects



awareness of legal rights and to use the law as leverage to bring the respective parties (in this case landowners and tenant farmers) together to “negotiate” more equitable arrangements consistent with existing legal rights.

This distinction is not intended as a criticism of the project, which brought significant benefits to project participants in terms of rights and entitlements. However, it is important to recognize the difference in strategy with regard to rights and entitlements. A conflict-resolution approach does not generally bring broad-based structural change impacting target populations as a “class” (e.g., policy change or reallocation of resources at the national or regional level, or more effective enforcement of legal rights in general). Nonetheless, it may be an effective strategy with regard to securing benefits for project participants and it may have powerful spill-over effects by raising awareness and changing public discourse on rights.

Mediated-solution approaches may be the most development agencies can do in contexts where it is too dangerous to do rights activism. In Ethiopia, for example, being suspected of civic education or anti-government activities could result in the removal of an NGO’s certificate or the imprisonment of its employees.

This raises a final point with respect to empowerment and advocacy. International NGOs can play a valuable role on behalf of their national partners in contexts where national partners do not have the political space to advocate for rights. Many of the initiatives that Oxfam regional staff initiated would have been difficult or dangerous for coffee union and cooperative members to take on: making overtures to public officials, organizing large public events that highlight the failure of government to take action in a crisis situation, pushing the government to lift restrictions that benefit certain parties, and so on. Opening these pathways may make it easier for Ethiopian civil society actors to follow because it has been demonstrated that the strategies work, and because the union and cooperative leaders have observed how such advocacy is done.

That being said, it is very important that INGOs proceed with equal concern for participation and capacity building so that affected groups and communities gain the ability to become long-term advocates on their own behalf. Oxfam and CARE are big, credible organizations. INGOs need to be ever attentive to ensuring that their stature and success with advocacy opens doors for partners and other development agencies.

## Alliance-building

Working in alliance is a tactic within a larger advocacy campaign to build voice, diffuse risk, bring different skill sets to the campaign and gain inroads into issues that would otherwise not be accessible. Alliances create the space for duty-bearers and rights-holders to engage in constructive dialogue for sustainable change. For INGOs like CARE and Oxfam, such partnerships should include other NGOs (both national and international), multilateral organizations such as the UN and the development banks, civil society organizations, the private sector and/or appropriate levels of government.

A specific objective of the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project was to build alliances with partners to influence and encourage the government to address the consequences of the coffee crisis on poor farmers and the nation as a whole. Through its international conference, it brought together consumers, consumer governments, the Ethiopian government, exporters, importers, roasters, policymakers and coffee producers to jointly explore and resolve the severe impact of the coffee crisis on poor

farmers. This enabled the campaign to build alliances with “unusual suspects” and gain much more traction for the agenda the farmers were pushing.

In Guatemala, there were few if any mechanisms for dealing with the government and for promoting pro-Mayan public policies that were reached by consensus. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project staff, working in alliance with other Mayan organizations, promoted the creation of the Presidential Commission on Discrimination and the Mayan Consultative Council, which have helped to fill this void. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project is also building relationships with educational groups, including universities. As a result, there has been an improvement in its documentation and greater coverage of its work in providing legal services.

## Working at Multiple Levels

Working at multiple levels is a strategic outflow of the power analysis that goes into developing a project approach or advocacy campaign. Potential actors and duty-bearers may be found at various levels and, while not always essential, the more effective interventions address the roots of poverty from various fronts.

Power relations may be addressed within the household, at the community level, with local officials, and at national and international policy levels. Projects that empower communities while they strengthen local government and advocate for national policy reform are certainly more effective at reducing corruption (for example) than projects that simply address the issue from the top down. Systemic and structural change will be more sustainable if communities are able to participate in local decision-making and to monitor government performance. Engaging the private sector and encouraging socially responsible business practice are also effective means for ensuring government accountability and reliable services for the poor.

Once again, the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project provides a good example. The international *Make Trade Fair* campaign sought to change the purchasing practices of the big buyers, which had the potential to help all 25 million coffee growers in the world. The plight of Ethiopian coffee farmers is used within the larger campaign to illustrate the greater problems of unfair global trade policies. In turn, the international campaign has brought international attention to the plight of Ethiopian farmers, adding strength to the national campaign. Campaign messages are targeted at partners (to engage in the campaign to encourage the government to address the consequences of the coffee crisis), at consumers, consumer governments, roasters and policy-makers (about the severe impact of the coffee crisis), at the Ethiopian government and corporations (to change policies and practices for the benefit of small-scale coffee farmers), and at the general public (to generate popular support for the campaign and to mobilize the public to take action). The project was actually instrumental in putting the issue of agricultural commodities on the agenda of the G8 meeting in June 2003. In addition to lobbies at various levels, Oxfam is working to strengthen the managerial and productive capacity of cooperatives.

## Focus on Groups that are Marginalized and Discriminated Against

Adoption of rights-based approaches means that problem analysis focuses more specifically on marginalization and discrimination as underlying causes of poverty, and

that interventions seek to address the conditions that lead to societal exclusion. While RBA projects do not always have to focus on the most marginalized and discriminated against, they need to be aware of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and what that means for the intervention. Discrimination-blind projects can inadvertently reinforce dynamics of exclusion and inequitable power relations.

The state parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights “undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the...Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”<sup>8</sup> While the Covenant provides for progressive realization of rights and acknowledges the constraints related to limited resources, it also imposes on state parties various obligations that are of immediate effect. Non-discrimination is an immediate obligation of state parties that is not subject to the “progressive realization” clause. State parties have immediate obligations in relation to the right to water, for example, such as the guarantee that the right will be exercised without discrimination of any kind.

The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project is the best example of a project that addresses discrimination and marginalization, by seeking to equalize access to legal protection for indigenous groups. Its various components advocate for government policies that emphasize democracy and the integration of different cultures and forms of social organizations; and seek to change the laws and institutions that continue to favor those who hold economic and political power, resulting in structural problems including extreme poverty, political exclusion, discrimination and racism.

By discriminating against smallholders in the allocation of common-property natural resources, Bangladeshi officials contribute to the worsening cycle of poverty. The Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project has facilitated the establishment of farmer organizations that have more power to access common-property natural resources and essential extension services. Through rights education and through engagement of duty-bearers in discussions about the rights and needs of small-scale farmers, it is directly addressing discrimination at the level of local governance.

## Problems Framed as Rights Issues and Linked to International or National Standards

Rights-based projects explicitly link development objectives to fundamental human rights as enshrined within international and national rights standards. Within the literature on rights-based approaches, this is a central, defining aspect of RBA.

Rights-based projects also link development to self-defined rights. Human rights, as a field and as a framework, is in constant motion. It is being defined and shaped through a constant process of assertion and contestation. Historically, much of the content of the human rights framework has been defined by government-selected representatives of primarily western states, gathered at the United Nations. Today, rights are asserted and claimed by people all over the world through both official

<sup>8</sup> *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966; entered into force January 3, 1976.

and unofficial processes. For example, today there is growing consensus over the international right to water, though this is not officially embodied in international law. Self-defined rights can be defined as rights that are articulated and asserted by a community of people who feel that enjoying them is fundamental to their ability to live in dignity as human beings.

While proposing mutually beneficial outcomes, invoking moral responsibility and constructive partnering are all powerful incentives for engaging duty-bearers, sometimes it is necessary to emphasize legal obligations to hold duty-bearers responsible. Linking analysis of development issues and their root causes to the normative framework of human rights assists program designers and rights-holders to identify duty-bearers, and provides a yardstick against which their performance may be measured. Grounding an advocacy campaign in legal standards lends credibility and strength to the campaign.

In the case of the Guatemala Overcoming Racism project, the International Labor Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous People (ILO 169) created a political opening and framework for much of the campaign. Guatemala is one of the few countries in the world to have ratified ILO 169, but the government probably did not think that the ratification would be used to hold them accountable in such concrete ways. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project used it as a basis for arguing that indigenous people should be able to participate in the decisions that affect them, a principle enshrined in the Convention and now Guatemala's own constitution. Efforts to create a Presidential Commission on Discrimination and to reform the official legal system were effective in large part because they were able to invoke these norms.

## Conclusion

The above are the most salient elements of rights-based approaches identified by workshop participants. Some of these elements clearly distinguish rights-based from traditional development approaches. This does not mean that every project has to include or focus equally on every element. It also does not mean that this is an exhaustive list of the elements that make up rights-based approaches. It is the fruit of one group's reflections on their own experiences, albeit extensive and diverse. The workshop participants did feel that, at a minimum, every one of these elements should be considered as an option, and weighed and built in to the extent that the context will allow or to the extent that the rights issues demand.

Since the workshop, these "essential elements" have been compared with the features of RBA projects identified within other RBA frameworks (Oxfam America's *RBA Framework*, CARE's *Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication and Social Justice*, CARE International's *Programming Principles*, the UN *Statement of Common Understanding on Human Rights*, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' definition of RBA,). Table 6 summarizes the points of concurrence between the various frameworks. Among other common threads, three stand out, namely that rights-based approaches 1) frame problems as rights, linked to international, national or customary standards; 2) emphasize capacity and agency of rights-holders; and 3) engage and hold duty-bearers accountable for meeting their obligations.

# 3 Elements of RBA Projects

TABLE 6 Comparison of RBA Elements identified by RBA Learning Project with Other RBA Frameworks

RBA Learning Project “Essential Elements”	Oxfam America RBA Framework <sup>9</sup>	CARE Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice <sup>10</sup> and CI Programming Principles <sup>11</sup>	UN Statement of Common Understanding <sup>12</sup>	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights RBA Definition <sup>13</sup>
1. Thorough analysis of underlying causes, of poverty including explicit and ongoing analyses of power, gender and risk	Analysis of power structures, exclusionary mechanisms and failure of duty-bearers to meet obligations, including a strategic RBA Lens Analysis: What are the rights being violated? Who are the actors and duty-bearers? What are their obligations? What are the entry points for civil society? How can rights be upheld?	Analysis identifies and addresses underlying causes of poverty and rights denial. Focus on four underlying causal categories: gender inequality, social exclusion, unmet rights to access to resources and services, and poor governance. Projects promote just and non-violent means for preventing and resolving conflicts.	Project assessment identifies human rights claims, rights-holders and duty-bearers and underlying structural causes for non-realization of rights	
2. Community-centered development, including building sustainable capacity to claim rights and to drive decision-making	Communities and individuals empowered to know and claim their rights	Organization stands in solidarity with poor and marginalized people, and supports their efforts to take control of their own lives and to fulfill their rights. Projects ensure that key participants representing affected people are involved at all stages; build capacity to access resources, markets and social services; build capacity to exercise voice; build organizational capacity; promote civil society participation.	Assessment gauges capacity of rights-holders to claim rights. Projects and programs build the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights	Empowerment – people (rights-owners) are at the center of the development process and have the power to improve their own communities and influence their own destiny Participation of rights-holders in an active, free and meaningful way, to access information, to take part in decision-making, and to access complaints and redress mechanisms
3. Duty-bearers engaged, strengthened and held accountable	Those responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling people’s rights identified and held accountable	Organization seeks ways to be held accountable to poor and marginalized people whose rights are denied; projects identify those with obligations and support and encourage their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities; promote civil society participation, accountability, equitable distribution of capital and assets, open and equitable systems, sound environmental stewardship.	Assessment gauges capacity of duty-bearers to fulfill obligations. Projects and programs build the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations	Accountability – obligations of duty-bearers to protect, promote and fulfill rights are strengthened

9. Oxfam America. *RBA Framework: understanding emerged from an RBA workshop in Cambodia held in 2002*. Oxfam America internal training documents.

10. McCaston, M.K. *Moving CARE’s Programming Forward*. Summary Paper: Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice & Underlying Causes of Poverty. October 2004.

11. CARE International. *Programming Principles*, undated.

12. [http://www.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/AnnualMeeting/SCN31/31\\_humanrights.htm](http://www.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/AnnualMeeting/SCN31/31_humanrights.htm)

13. [www.unhcr.ch/development/approaches.html](http://www.unhcr.ch/development/approaches.html)

RBA Learning Project “Essential Elements”	Oxfam America RBA Framework	CARE Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Justice	UN Statement of Common Understanding	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights RBA Definition
4. Advocacy for sustainable change in policy and practice	The RBA Lens Analysis helps identify actors and strategies for action, which leads to greater empowerment, accountability and transparency and eventually to the fulfillment of human rights	Work with others to maximize impact, build alliances and partnerships with those...who have responsibility to fulfill rights, and alleviate poverty through policy change and enforcement; work toward open and equitable government systems; social assistance protection; fair domestic and international regulatory framework; strong and fair environment for economic growth; conflict mitigation.		
5. Alliance building	Oxfam has always worked with partner organizations for its program work. A rights-based approach calls Oxfam to also engage in campaigning, advocacy, awareness raising and alliance building	Build alliances and partnerships with those who offer complementary approaches, are able to adopt effective programming approaches on a larger scale, and/or who have responsibility to fulfill rights and reduce poverty through policy change and enforcement.		
6. Working at multiple levels (e.g., local, national, international)	Multi-level nature of rights violations and obligations recognized	Underlying causes are most often the result of interaction of political, social, economic and environmental factors related to systemic and structural underpinnings of underdevelopment at societal and global levels.		
7. Focus on groups that are marginalized and discriminated against	Human beings’ inherent dignity entitles them to a core set of rights that cannot be given or taken away. Oxfam’s aims focus on sustainable livelihood; education and health; life and security; the right to be heard; and the right to equity	Oppose discrimination and the denial of rights based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, caste, opinion or sexual orientation. Focus on improving social equity so that people can live a life of dignity without discrimination; promote and facilitate social inclusion.	All projects contribute directly to the realization of one or several human rights	Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups
8. Problems framed as rights issues and linked to international, national or customary standards	Grounded in and gains legitimacy from the rights enshrined in international and national law	By identifying and addressing underlying causes of poverty and rights denial, focus of problem analysis is on human rights issues. (No explicit reference to international, national or customary standards)	Projects are informed by recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms Human rights standards and principles from human rights instruments guide all programming: Universality & Inalienability; Indivisibility; Inter-dependence; Equality and non-discrimination; Participation and inclusion; Accountability and rule of law Both outcomes and processes are monitored and evaluated, guided by human rights standards and principles	There is an express linkage to human rights



## Impacts of Traditional and RBA Projects

**H**aving identified the “less RBA” and “more RBA” projects in the set, and the elements that distinguish them, the participants next analyzed the impacts, both short- and long-term, of the eight projects—on people’s lives, on civil society, and on governance structures. They then identified the impacts associated with projects that fall at either end of the spectrum, and reflected on the trends they saw emerging from their analysis and discussions of the project impacts. Participants did not feel that the comparison of the two sets produced a conclusion of one approach having “more” versus “less” impact. Rather, they discerned an association between each of the two approaches and the *types* of impacts associated with them.

Traditional projects focus more specifically on *immediate causes* of poverty related to human conditions and life-and-death situations like malnutrition and natural disasters; and on *intermediate causes* of poverty related to people’s needs, such as access to services, skills and technology. Their impacts are tangible, immediate and readily recognizable in people’s daily lives, such as lifesaving access to food, income, infrastructure and social services. The Food For Work project developed good quality infrastructure, it put food on tens of thousands of tables and it created massive (if short-term) employment in a context where displaced people and demobilized soldiers had no means to earn a livelihood. The Ethiopia Rift Valley Irrigation project assisted farmers to increase their production, to feed their families and to hold on to their ancestral lands.

The shift toward rights-based approaches does not imply that such interventions are no longer required or valid. Rather, rights-based approaches complement traditional approaches by *also* addressing *underlying causes* of poverty and exclusion, namely social, political and economic structures. Thus the types of impacts participants associated with the more rights-based projects included some of the more tangible and immediate results, but also included increased capacity of CSOs and communities to claim rights and increased responsiveness of government entities to development issues.

The Ethiopia Civil Society Strengthening project, for example, built upon the limitations of the Ethiopia Food for Work project by fostering collaboration between civil society and local authorities, and by building the capacity of civil society groups to influence policies related to their food security. The Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project, while continuing with technical training, facilitated the formation of farmers’ groups for better representation and encouraged and assisted women’s groups to pursue social agendas. These “hybrid” projects illustrate the continuum of interventions that, when combined, may most effectively address the range of causes of poverty and social injustice.

Table 7 summarizes the broad distinction between impacts of RBA and non-RBA projects, as articulated by workshop participants.

**TABLE 7**  
**Impacts of RBA and Traditional Projects**

“MORE RBA” PROJECTS	“LESS RBA” PROJECTS
Civil Society groups able to claim rights and influence policy and practice change	Focus on people’s lives
Impacts on peoples’ lives are secured through social or political recognition of their right to enjoy the benefit	Tangible, measurable outputs
Not always, but government comes to recognize both the group and their rights, as legitimate changes in policies and practices result from this recognition	Most long-term impacts are spill-over, or secondary effects from project outputs

## Categories of RBA-associated Impacts

**W**hile frequently less immediate and less tangible than the impacts of more traditional projects, the impacts of RBA projects address those factors that give rise to immediate and intermediate causes of poverty, and are therefore likely to develop more sustainable solutions. Participants identified nine categories of impact that RBA projects have, in addition to the tangible and direct improvements in peoples' lives sought in traditional and RBA projects alike. According to their analysis, RBA projects:

1. Effect changes in policy and practice
2. Have impact at multiple levels
3. Affirm the dignity of all human beings
4. Change power dynamics
5. Strengthen civil society to claim rights and to hold duty-bearers accountable
6. Strengthen peace and personal security
7. Open the political culture
8. Engender greater responsiveness, responsibility and accountability on the part of duty-bearers
9. Effect fundamental and sustainable change

Each of these categories is elaborated below, with illustrations from the case studies that show how the category of impact has the potential to change people's lives.

## Effect Changes in Policy and Practice

Because rights-based approaches involve greater attention to government and the enabling environment for rights fulfillment, change at the levels of policy and practice is the ultimate goal. Such systemic change has the most potential to affect big underlying causes and large numbers or classes of people (such as the Mayan people or coffee growers), not just discrete communities. Policy and practice change is most directly correlated with the following elements of an RBA project: root-cause analysis, interventions that directly address root causes, advocacy campaigns, alliance building, engaging and holding duty-bearers responsible, and working at multiple levels.

The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project's efforts resulted in formal recognition of the Mayan legal system in Guatemala and the creation of mechanisms for Mayan people to influence ongoing policy formation. These impacts were in addition to the direct service provision (legal aid and dispute resolution), which had immediate impacts on people's daily lives on an individual basis.

The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project resulted in changed national laws, permitting cooperatives to export directly and lifting taxes on internal coffee transportation that had been penalizing independent small producers.

In the Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project, government extension services went through a reform and innovation process as a result of the constructive engagement of Farmer Field School organizations. The results were increased provision of credits and more effective agricultural extension services tailored to the needs of small producers.

## Have Impacts at Multiple Levels

Impact at multiple levels was identified as a result more often associated with rights-based approaches than with traditional development interventions because RBA projects are founded on a root-cause analysis that often uncovers complex, multi-leveled structural barriers to people realizing their rights.

The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign and the Guatemala Overcoming Racism projects influenced changes at the level of people's living conditions (increased incomes, cultural identity), at the level of civil society (status of coffee unions, increased social mobility) and at the level of governance (new export regulations, more equitable justice). The Ethiopia Food for Work project, on the other hand, had immediate (but temporary) impacts on people's livelihoods and on relationships with local government, but had no apparent impact on governance structures.

## Affirm the Dignity of All Human Beings

Rights-based approaches focus on equality, social justice, identity and the right to be heard, and emphasize the inherent dignity and worth of *all* human beings.

A Guatemala Overcoming Racism leader says that using Mayan law is a way for families and communities to fight against racism and discrimination because it affirms

## 5 Categories of RBA-associated Impacts

the dignity of Mayan people and the value of their principles and culture. In order to stand tall against aggressors and exploiters, one needs to feel tall.

The Farmer and Pest Management project encouraged the formation of autonomous groups and the self-identification of issues, which were taken seriously and supported by project staff. This affirmed the value and dignity of project participants. As a result, the groups were empowered to take action on the dowry and land-tenancy issues, seek out support from legal and religious authorities, and begin to take action to address the problems they had identified.

### Change Power Dynamics

Rights realization is inextricably related to power relations, and changes in power relations are a direct result of rights-based approaches' focus on underlying causes, community-led approaches and gender analysis.

Ethiopian coffee farmers were vulnerable to exploitative exporters until the Coffee Campaign project broke the monopoly on international trade. Bangladeshi sharecroppers were at the mercy of big landowners until the Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project assisted farmer groups to negotiate fair leasing arrangements. In many traditional societies, women do not have equal access to assets or resources, and lack control over their lives. With the engagement of the *imams* in forums to discuss issues such as dowry and polygamy in Bangladesh, deeply ingrained power relations are being challenged and addressed.

### Strengthen Civil Society to Claim Rights and to Hold Duty-bearers Accountable

Even traditional development projects have been focusing on empowerment of civil society for some time. However, rights-based approaches emphasize the role of civil society in participatory governance and advocacy for policy reform. Where strengthening civil society used to focus on operational capacity building, it now focuses on

internal governance and transparent decision-making, power relations, alliance building and engaging duty-bearers. The emphasis has changed from building capacity for technical purposes (self-help, infrastructure development, income generation, even democratic self-governance) to building capacity to claim rights and to hold duty-bearers accountable.

The Ethiopia Civil Society Strengthening project has widened the space for civil society action by facilitating consultative decision-making between CSOs and local administration. Likewise, as a result of the solidarity built through organizing farmers' groups, the Bangladesh Farmer Training project has led to greater recognition of the role of civil society in holding the government accountable for provision of extension services. Stronger women's organizations created or facilitated by the Bangladesh Farming and



Pest Management project led to the identification of social problems and means to address them (such as *imam* forums). These are all positive examples of the multiple impacts of rights-based approaches on civil society strengthening.

## Strengthen Peace and Personal Security

Workshop participants also thought that peace and personal security is strengthened as a result of the focus on fundamental rights issues, on holding duty-bearers responsible and on focusing interventions on those whose rights have been denied. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project's facilitating access to justice, whether under the official or the Mayan legal system, will have an obvious impact on people's personal security, as well as making a contribution to keeping the peace in the post-war period.

Workshop discussions included many references to land security, food security and livelihood security. But other than the Guatemala Overcoming Racism project's experience, none of the projects directly or explicitly addressed personal security or peace. Yet this impact came up repeatedly in participant discussions. Many made the link between land, food and livelihood security, and



personal security and peace. For many, there can be no personal security if they and those around them are wanting for the basic requirements to live in dignity. Hunger, lack of adequate housing, displacement and employment insecurity are all causes for conflict and instability. They make people vulnerable to appeals by armed factions if they live in conflict zones. In times of humanitarian crisis, predatory behavior by people wanting to take advantage of the situation can wreak havoc on communities that lack the basic resources and social and physical infrastructure to protect themselves.

While the links between livelihood and personal security—and the interventions needed to address these links—were not directly addressed in the workshop or the case studies, the intersection between rights-based analysis and conflict is ripe for further examination.

## Open the Political Culture

Rights-based approaches focus on advocacy, and alliance building has a direct impact on gradually opening the political culture to people's participation in decision-making.

# 5 Categories of RBA-associated Impacts

One of the long-term goals of communities claiming their rights is that, over time, this becomes increasingly accepted and expected as part of decision-making within societies. Yet, it may initially be difficult for local actors to speak openly and candidly about failures on the part of government or exploitation on the part of powerful individuals. In these cases, the direct or indirect involvement of international organizations (at least initially) can lend legitimacy and some measure of protection for local organizations. As we have seen through the Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project, it may also have a powerful modeling effect for more independent work by local actors down the line. There is also safety in numbers, so RBAs' emphasis on alliance building may provide safer spaces for advocacy work that might be too risky or less effective if undertaken by a single group.

## Engender Greater Responsiveness, Responsibility and Accountability on the Part of Duty-bearers

Here again is where we see a truly distinguishable impact of the rights-based approach. Traditional development approaches rarely, if ever, attend to responsibility-bearers. RBA by contrast, emphasizes the legal and moral responsibilities of all human beings to uphold rights.

The Ethiopia Coffee Campaign project held the government accountable for making changes in policies that allowed Ethiopian cooperatives to export directly. The Guatemala Overcoming Racism project is holding the official legal system accountable for making justice accessible to Guatemala's indigenous groups in their own languages. The Bangladesh Farming and Pest Management project is holding the Bangladeshi Department of Agricultural Extension accountable for providing extension services to smallholders.

## Effect Fundamental and Sustainable Change

In essence and in combination, participants share the conviction that all of the above impacts add up to fundamental and sustainable changes. To use a medical analogy, rights-based approaches get at the underlying causes of the illness and cure it; they do not just relieve the symptoms. This is because rights-based approaches begin with a comprehensive understanding of *why* rights are not being realized, *who* is responsible

To use a medical analogy, rights-based approaches get at the underlying causes of the illness and cure it; they do not just relieve the symptoms.

for promoting and protecting them, *what* aspects of the political or social structures need to be changed in order to make it enabling, and *how* poor people can play central roles in claiming their own rights.

The Ethiopia Food for Work and Guatemala Empowerment for Small Producers projects illustrate this final element. These projects are unlikely to have sustainable impacts on the rights or on the economic development of poor and marginalized communities. Despite many other strengths, neither of these projects incorporated

critical analysis of power relations, strategic strengthening of civil society as an interlocutor with and watchdog over government, strengthening government responsibility and accountability, or advocacy for legal and policy reform at various levels. Project staff and workshop participants concluded that wide-scale sustainable benefits to rural communities are highly improbable in either project, as a result.

## Conclusion

This list of RBA-associated impact categories generated at the workshop provides an initial guide for further exploration of RBA impact assessment. Participants noted that there are few tools available to assess long-term impacts separated in time and place from the specific project interventions. They also noted that the character of RBA-associated impacts is quite distinct from traditional development project impacts, as assessed and focused on within the development community. There is a real need to deepen our understanding, precision, and ability to assess and present the results of our rights-based work.

# Challenges and Next Steps in the Joint Learning Agenda

## Adoption, Application and Learning

**C**ARE and Oxfam America have been developing strong conceptual RBA frameworks. Both organizations have the very firm backing and leadership of their senior managers and both are steadily producing briefing papers, guidelines and case studies to assist the application of rights-based approaches. As a number of these case studies show, they have both come a long way since the early '90s. Staff in both organizations realize that the standards for success have shifted, which forces them to think critically, acquire new skills for deeper analysis of underlying causes of poverty and come up with appropriate responses.

Participants agreed that the two organizations should continue to work together to build understanding of rights-based approaches and the capacity to design, implement and evaluate RBA projects at the field level. In addition to examining RBA methods and impacts, it will be important to examine what mechanisms work best to build capacity for rights-based approaches with staff, partners and communities. Operationalizing rights-based approaches in the field will require regional capacity that includes skill sets not only in technical areas, but also in policy analysis, capacity building, partnership and advocacy.

One key need identified by participants is how to conduct structured root cause analysis. Having relevance for both the project design phase and the impact analysis phase, root cause analysis provides the evaluation framework around which impact indicators for any particular intervention would need to be developed.

The focus on rights will also influence training curricula on specific development issues. Issues to be addressed run the gamut from legal frameworks for land access and tenure, healthcare access, basic education, housing and public information disclosure, to nutrition levels and specific factors that increase the vulnerability of women such as early marriage, dowry and divorce, to name just a few. These issues require a fundamental shift, not just in the way CARE and Oxfam work, but also in their understandings, relationships and roles.

Rights-based approaches require that both CARE and Oxfam reflect on their respective organizational cultures, including human resource policies and practices; transparency with staff, donors, partners and participants; the types of partnerships engaged in; and standards of accountability with all levels of stakeholders.

While not discussed at the workshop or addressed in the case studies, a big challenge associated with adopting rights-based approaches is implementation in humanitarian assistance arenas and conflict zones. Complex emergencies and natural calamities require *rapid responses* that by their very nature leave little time for in-depth analysis of root causes, identification of duty-bearers or integration of community involvement. This is where rights-based approaches to disaster mitigation come in, as well as contingency and preparedness plans to prevent rights abuses within an effective emergency response. In addition, beyond the initial response to an emergency, there comes a time when root-cause analysis and project adjustments could and should be made to incorporate more rights-based elements. CARE's involvement in the development of the SPHERE Charter and Standards, and the Humanitarian Code of Conduct, and its publication of Benefits-Harms tools are evidence of its commitment to this area. Oxfam, with its focus on the disaster-preparedness and risk-management aspects of humanitarian assistance, carries out many of the elements of RBA as a natural part of its programming in this area.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

In an overview of rights-based approaches jointly commissioned by CARE and Oxfam, Jochnick and Garzon highlight the dearth of standards by which to measure, and the absence of studies that demonstrate, the impact of RBA projects.

*The need for indicators specific to ESCR [economic, social and cultural rights] for purposes of monitoring government compliance has been recognized and discussed for many years, with relatively little progress (more progress has been made in terms of standards/benchmarks defining obligations). ...The lack of attention to ESCR among advocates and government bodies/courts has left the field, until recently, devoid of jurisprudence and standards by which to measure government compliance. This lack of jurisprudence has been cited as proof that ESCR are not really rights.<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Jochnick & Garzon. p. 3-4.

# 6 Challenges and Next Steps in the Joint Learning Agenda

The present RBA Learning Project was designed to identify the programmatic elements that characterize rights-based approaches and the types of impact that rights-based approaches have. It was not designed to determine how to measure the impacts of RBA projects. Monitoring and evaluation within the context of rights-based projects is thus another big item on Oxfam and CARE's joint learning agenda. Workshop participants agreed that a joint follow-up project to identify and develop impact indicators—as well as frameworks and tools for measuring progress against them—would serve both organizations and the broader development community.

## Conclusion

By adopting rights-based approaches, participants affirmed we will not only increase opportunities for people to meet their basic needs, but we will ensure that people can live in dignity and without fear, and we will help to create an environment that promotes equity, justice and livelihood security for all.

One of the workshop participants offered a new twist on the old fishing analogy—which serves to illustrate the difference between RBA and traditional projects:

The old adage that “if you give a man a fish, he will eat for one day but if you teach him how to fish, he will eat forever” is not true. If the man knows how to fish but does not have access to the river, he will still be hungry. If he can fish and has access to the river but no fishing tools, he will still be hungry. If he can fish, has access to the tools and the river, but the river is polluted, he will still be hungry. If he finally gets some fish, and is not able to trade his fish for [whatever] reason, he will eat fish and only fish. He will not be able to get medicine when he is sick, his children will not have access to school...and the cycle continues. If throughout this process, the man is *unaware* that some of the barriers to his development are not just coincidences but human rights violations, and that there are ways to ensure that the obstacles he faces are removed...the cycle will continue.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Traore, V. (2004). Oxfam America. The Universal Cultures of Human Rights: Lessons from West Africa. April, 2004





This case study explores a rights-based approach to the coffee crisis in Ethiopia. The objective of the Make Trade Fair Coffee Campaign is to improve the livelihood and well-being of farmers through a two-tiered approach of supporting farmers' cooperative associations and changing national policies that have kept small producers from receiving a fair price for their coffee. The campaign challenges trade liberalization policies arguing that such policies are making it impossible for small farmers to realize their right to a sustainable livelihood.



## OXFAM AMERICA (ETHIOPIA) AND THE SIDAMA, YIRGACHAFE & OROMIA UNIONS

# Make Trade Fair Coffee Campaign

Approximately 25% of Ethiopians depend directly on coffee production for their livelihood.<sup>16</sup> Coffee is Ethiopia's largest export and generates 60% of all its export earnings. About 98% of the coffee production in Ethiopia is produced by small farmers who cultivate less than an acre of land. The majority of these farmers earn less than US \$1 per day. At this price, farmers cannot cover the cost of production. The prolonged decline in international coffee prices that began in 1999 triggered a crisis in Ethiopia that came to a head in 2000–2001. The value of coffee exports fell by a full third.<sup>17</sup> Although the impact of the decline in value of coffee exports was felt directly by coffee farmers who have barely been able to afford basic commodities such as food, clothing or school fees, the government response has been less than adequate in providing assistance to the farmers.

This case study will explore the impacts of Oxfam America's rights-based approach to the coffee crisis in Ethiopia, the *Make Trade Fair Coffee Campaign* (the Coffee Campaign project). Oxfam works with three unions, which in turn work with coffee producer cooperatives. Oxfam America began working with coffee farmers' unions in Ethiopia in 2000, and in 2002 launched the Coffee Campaign. The objective was to improve the livelihood and well-being of farmers through a two-tiered approach of supporting farmers' cooperative associations and changing national policies that kept small producers from receiving a fair price for their coffee.

The campaign challenges trade liberalization policies, arguing that such policies are in fact making the right to sustainable livelihood impossible for small farmers to attain. The campaign in Ethiopia fit directly into an international Make Trade Fair Campaign that Oxfam International and the federation of affiliated Oxfams launched

<sup>16</sup> Abera Tola. "Crisis in the Birthplace of Coffee." Oxfam International Coffee Campaign Report. September, 2002. p. 29

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 5

in 2002. The Ethiopia campaign and the plight of Ethiopian coffee farmers is used within the larger campaign to illustrate the greater problems of global unfair trade policies. In turn, the international campaign has brought international attention to the plight of Ethiopian farmers, adding strength to the national campaign.

## Context

### GLOBALIZATION OF TRADE

Globalization is seen by some as a triumph because it has the ability to connect individuals all over the world and to open world markets to all players. But not everyone has benefited from this global trading system. Oxfam's trade report "Rigged Rules and Double Standards" depicts the current situation as a paradox where a few have gained unprecedented wealth whereby others, millions of them poor, are being left behind.<sup>18</sup> Current trade policy rules advocate for trade liberalization in developing nations while maintaining trade barriers in developed nations that exclude exports from these same countries.

### IMPACTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COFFEE CRISIS ON ETHIOPIA

One benefit of trade liberalization is that the share of export price received by farmers should increase. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Ethiopia. The sudden volatility of price in the global market has led coffee farmers throughout the world to overproduce in an attempt to buffer themselves from falling prices. This led to a saturation of the international market, causing the price of coffee to collapse.

The collapse of the coffee price in 2000-2001 has had devastating implications on the Ethiopian farmers. Most of Ethiopia's export earnings (60%) comes from coffee, so the blow to the coffee industry affected the entire country. National trade rules that denied farmers and cooperatives direct access to international buyers were leaving farmers dependent on unfair prices and exploitation from exporters. Coffee farmers were unaware of international coffee prices and of their role in the coffee market, making them even more vulnerable to these middlemen.

### UNIONS, COOPERATIVES AND COFFEE FARMERS

Oxfam provides funding to three confederations of coffee cooperatives, called unions, in the Sidama, Yirgachafe and Oromia regions, representing 130 cooperatives. Each region, due to climate conditions of high altitude and heavy rainfall, specializes and markets a distinct variety of Arabica coffee.

In Ethiopia, cooperatives and unions date back to the military regime. The cooperatives purchase farmers' coffee as red cherry or green beans, process their coffee with hulling and pulping machines, and sell it to their respective unions at the going market price. The cooperatives also own their own storage facilities.

Cooperatives in a given region join together to form unions. The union is the centralized organ of the cooperatives, and undertakes business activities on behalf of the cooperatives. Unions' objectives are to improve farmers' income; improve the quality, productivity and sustainability of coffee production; stabilize the market price

<sup>18</sup> Oxfam International 2002. "Rigged Rules and Double Standards." 2002. p.3.

faced by farmers; and broker the best services and the best prices for farmers. The unions sell the coffee on the international market and help cooperatives access the international market by selling the product worldwide. They keep farmers apprised of the world price for coffee, help farmers and cooperatives identify and apply for credit, and provide management and technical support.

While the government used to be involved in the daily operations of cooperatives, the unions have in many ways taken over this role. The government no longer provides financial assistance to the cooperatives but rather provides technical support and capacity building. The benefit of the reduced role of government is that cooperatives are now more independent. During the military regime, the cooperatives were used to recruit young people for the war front, and as the principal buyer and seller of coffee, the government had considerable control over them. As a result, cooperatives were regarded as tools for exploiting farmers. Today, the challenge is to change farmers' perceptions of cooperatives.

## THE PLIGHT OF COFFEE FARMERS AND COOPERATIVES

During the coffee crisis—with the exception of one cooperative that went into the crisis with substantial savings—cooperatives were unable to purchase coffee from their members. The prolonged collapse of the coffee price led to a lack of working capital for the cooperatives: banks were either unwilling to lend capital due to previous debt or would only lend a quarter to half of the amount requested. The lack of working capital hindered the cooperatives' ability to purchase coffee from their members or to maintain, much less upgrade, equipment used to process or transport coffee. Their equipment was old, regularly fell apart, and could not be replaced. As a result, farmers were often left with no other choice but to sell their product to the private sector, receiving an unfair price for their product.

“

*Our eye is coffee. When the price of coffee is up we are all up. But when the price of coffee falls we all fall collectively. We have fallen. Our spirits are low. Our eyes are cast downward. How can we survive?*

”

HAJI JEMAL YESUFA

Member Farmer of the KEENTERI Cooperative

Another issue for the cooperatives has been the lack of access to up-to-date information on the international price of coffee. The unions try to tell cooperatives the going rate in the international market on a monthly and sometimes bi-weekly basis. But in a business where the day-to-day price can change drastically and alter profits considerably, this is not enough. The lack of access to information leaves the cooperatives vulnerable to the already unstable coffee price because they don't know when to sell and when to hold on to their beans.

A further weakness is the lack of managerial capacity within the cooperative leadership. Although the government and unions provide capacity building to cooperative leaders once a year, basic managerial skills are weak, and the trainings need to continue with greater frequency.

Lack of women's participation at the member, administrative and leadership level of cooperatives was identified as another issue. Female membership is approximately 4-5%. Although some coffee farmers are women—typically from households of the second and third wives of farmers in this predominantly Muslim culture—few join the union or are encouraged to. Most female coffee farmers sell to private coffee buyers and it is fair to assume they receive lower prices for their coffee as a consequence. They lack the access to coffee price information, technical assistance, and information about the organic and fair trade niche markets the cooperatives are sharing with their members. This was recognized as an issue by both cooperative leadership and male members. The cooperative leadership saw women as an obvious target for membership expansion, but had not put any initiatives in place to recruit more female members.

## Project Design

### ASSESSMENT METHOD

The project had its origins when Ethiopian coffee farmers, due to the coffee crisis, suffered an injustice from government-licensed buyers. They produced coffee and sold it to collectors who then brought it to the Addis Ababa Auction house, or could directly sell to exporters at the auction house. There, exporters bid on coffee for export. They were the only ones who could export by law. In 2000-2001, cooperatives sold coffee to exporters who paid them with checks. When they went to cash the checks, there was no money in the bank. Prices were bad, but not getting any money at all was much worse. The unions had lost more than 60 million birr (US \$7 million). This scandal generated a national debate. Government was asked to intervene but it wouldn't or couldn't.

Oxfam staff approached the unions and the Ministry of Agriculture and the cooperative bureaus of the government, who in turn provided contacts to cooperatives in the regions. In these conversations, they discussed how Oxfam could help avoid a similar outcome the following season. The unions had two big concerns. First, they wanted to improve the quality of their coffee and find a way to keep more of the value in the export chain in the hands of farmers. They also were concerned about boosting the morale of the farmers, which was very low because of low prices and because of this injustice on the part of the exporters.

Because the Oxfam staff was not so familiar with the coffee-growing areas, they commissioned some research to learn more. They shared the study with colleagues and eventually published a report, "Crisis in the Birthplace of Coffee," in September of 2002. Based on the conversations and the commissioned research, Oxfam saw its work as helping small coffee producers receive a better price for their coffee in order to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

### GROUNDING IN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

The project was framed within the broader Oxfam America aim for sustainable livelihoods. The right to a sustainable livelihood is Aim One of Oxfam International's Strategic Plan for the years 2001-2004: "The core of our program cooperation with partners, of our advocacy, communication and learning will continue to be empowering poor and excluded people to gain access to and control over the assets that help them to sustain their livelihoods. ...We will give priority to land, forests, water and other natural resources, as well as credit, financial services and knowledge.

This will help poor people, especially women, to compete in local and international markets on a fair basis, to achieve food and income security, to sustain their own livelihoods and to build secure futures for generations to come.”

This Aim is linked to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, specifically Article 11, on the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to be free from hunger.

## Implementation Strategy

### OA'S HYPOTHESIS OR RATIONALE FOR THE COFFEE CAMPAIGN INTERVENTION

Oxfam developed a two-pronged strategy. One was to lobby the government to allow small farmers to sell directly to the international market. The other was to strengthen capacity of cooperatives in terms of management and production. “In one year, we figured we could change the export supply chain, if we could allow producers to directly export to the international market by bypassing the auction house,” recounts Abera Tola, Oxfam America Program Manager in Ethiopia.

Specific campaign objectives were to build alliances with partners to influence and encourage the government to address the consequences of the coffee crisis on poor farmers and the nation as a whole; to raise awareness among consumers, consumer governments, roasters and policymakers about the severe impact of the coffee crisis; to influence the government to change policies and practices for the benefit of small-scale coffee farmers; and to generate popular support for the campaign and mobilize the public to take action. In addition, the goal for Oxfam America was to take advantage of

“ “ *In one year, we figured we could change the export supply chain, if we could allow producers to directly export to the international market by bypassing the auction house.* ” ”

ABERA TOLA  
Oxfam America Program Manager in Ethiopia

the Oxfam International global Make Trade Fair campaign, and link it to the national campaign. This would hopefully attract international media in order to expose the living conditions of poor coffee farmers to the world.

### TARGET GROUP

The project was designed to benefit Ethiopian coffee farmers. But the key target for the specific coffee campaign was the Ethiopian government. The aim with the government was to get it to change unfair trade rules and practices, specifically by eliminating or reducing taxes levied on coffee farmers; reconsider the importance of auction houses and coffee marketing boards; and offer financial support, such as loans, to coffee farmer cooperatives. Oxfam also hoped the government would begin to develop a long-term strategy for crop diversification, build the capacity of coffee farmer cooperatives to access markets, and cooperate with consumer governments and international organizations to develop sustainable solutions to the crisis caused by price volatility and collapse.

The campaign also sought to engage the public. Its goal was to raise awareness about the coffee crisis and the unfair prices that farmers receive in the domestic market and generate more local support to coffee farmers.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Oxfam works with three unions that represent about 15% of coffee farmers and account for approximately 20% of coffee produced in Ethiopia. Two of the three unions are independent of government, and one, the largest of the three, still retains some administrative ties.

Government was seen as a crucial actor from the beginning, although the decision to work with government can be a sensitive issue with civil society in developing countries. In Ethiopia, the government controls everything. A pass may even be required to visit certain regions. So it was both a major challenge and quite important to get the government on board. The government has its own prejudices and problems with NGOs, often seeing them as adversaries. One of the significant tasks of this project was to change the government's perception of NGOs.

One of the more significant factors in the successful development and execution of the coffee program was the close collaboration of Oxfam International affiliates in the region with government and members of coffee cooperatives and unions. From initial conversations with the Commissioner of Cooperatives in Ethiopia and planning with the General Manager of the largest cooperative union in the country, to gathering Oxfam America and Oxfam International support and lobbying with government officials, the result had a lot to do with the powers of persuasion.

## ACTIVITIES

Together with Oxfam staff, the unions developed a strategy to engage more stakeholders in solving the problem: the Ministry of Trade, commerce, research institutions, the chamber of commerce, the Ethiopian Coffee Exporters Association

of private exporters, the Cooperative Commission, which supervises cooperatives, and so on. The goal was to bring everyone together around the goal of promoting Ethiopian coffee, something that all would benefit from. Oxfam and the unions organized a series of multi-stakeholder meetings and began to build support for the initiative. Out of these meetings emerged a proposal to hold an international conference to promote Ethiopian coffee.

Oxfam America staff began in 2001 by reaching out and building relationships of trust with three unions. As part of this, they put union managers in touch with a specialty coffee association and the National Coffee Association. Managers attended both organizations'



annual meetings. These trips built the confidence of the cooperative leaders, who were exposed to a whole new world and made contacts with both buyers and other producers. It also demonstrated to them that Oxfam was serious about the marketing difficulties facing cooperatives.

In September 2002, Oxfam America organized the first international conference on the coffee crisis in Ethiopia. People came to Addis Ababa from all over the country, as well as from abroad. The organizers took conference participants—including ambassadors, celebrities, international and local coffee roasters, buyers, government officials, national and international media, NGOs, and civil society representatives—to the coffee-growing areas in the west and south of the country. This exposed them to small-producer living conditions, and how they were affected by the coffee crisis. It built national and international media support for the fair trade cause. After these visits “primed the pump,” so to speak, participants attended the conference. The Prime Minister, and representatives from important institutions like the World Bank, the Africa Development Bank, the United Nations and the African Union, came both as participants and resource people. The fact that Oxfam invited many of them as resource people got them engaged more than they might have been.

There was also an exhibition of farmers and products so farmers could talk to visitors and all sectors of the society. That meeting set an extremely important foundation for future sales contacts. The conference and related events drew significant national and international attention to the plight of the Ethiopian coffee farmer.

By this point, Oxfam and the unions had two strategies: get better prices for farmers, and improve production quality. For the first, Oxfam staff wanted to change the export end of the supply chain. There were some export regulations that supported a base price, but then farmers got taxed on any additional profit. Oxfam lobbying got those taxes eliminated.

Once they achieved this, the focus became to get the Ministry of Trade and the Prime Minister’s Office to allow farmers to export directly to the international market. Government officials were dubious that farmers could possibly compete on the international market, but Oxfam’s support lent credibility to the viability of the idea. Oxfam was confident that it could assist farmers to make connections with buyers. The Prime Minister decided to let them try, and the producers were given temporary permission to export directly.

At that point, Oxfam had to figure out where to sell all the coffee the cooperatives were producing. One possibility was to sell coffee directly through Oxfam affiliates in different countries. However, that did not bring immediate results. One farmers’ union, in Oromia, did manage to sell two containers of coffee to Santa Cruz Roasters in 2002, and that was a start. This was a direct outgrowth of contacts made during the Oxfam conference. Between the efforts of Oxfam staff in Ethiopia and Oxfam staff in the United States and other affiliate Oxfams, new fair trade buyers began to be identified, and some conventional buyers were convinced to buy Ethiopian beans. By the next year, 2003, coffee sales began to increase substantially and unions were actually able to see a profit and distribute dividends to farmers and hold some funds in reserve for reinvestment and working capital.

In terms of the second part of Oxfam America’s strategy—to increase the quality of coffee produced by farmers—the most important activities have been to build and strengthen the cooperative structures. Once permission to export directly was in place,

what followed was the active and extensive capacity building of the coffee cooperative to implant a business model of work and ensure a quality of coffee that corresponded to the specialty coffee quality standards. Oxfam support includes developing organizational capacity—basic things like getting computers, learning how to do accounting, and basic use of email and the Internet to contact coffee companies. Oxfam has also helped cooperative members get training in quality improvements and diversification.

Another important area, in terms of establishing the credibility and legitimacy of the unions, has been Oxfam’s participation in the development of the new by-laws that linked cooperatives into the world cooperative movement. Oxfam is helping the cooperatives structure themselves so they can be both independent of government and accountable to their members.

Oxfam has supported a strategic planning process with the unions, and expects this will continue to produce new directions for program support. Future issues include organic certification and the entry of big corporations in the region. “We are following this closely. We encourage that, but it needs to be watched. Starbucks is there, Nestle is coming, Kraft is considering establishing relations. We have to be sure it really helps the unions,” comments Abera.

Civil society in Ethiopia is still nascent and very fragile. For the program to go on, for civil society to grow, Oxfam staff believe the government perception of civil society needs to be changed from one of adversary. Ways to work in partnership with government need to be found. Through the coffee campaign work, Oxfam and the unions now have a good reputation with the government and are well-positioned to help this process mature.

## Results and Impact

### AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

The international coffee conference in Ethiopia was a milestone in the coffee campaign in bringing together various stakeholders for the first time and raising the visibility of the crisis. As a result of this visibility, and the direct access that buyers now had to coffee farmers, the sale of coffee skyrocketed and has continued to do so since then. The focus on the specialty market has also allowed farmers to sell their high-quality coffee at a higher price, some for the highest premium for certified organic fair trade coffee.

#### OROMIA COOPERATIVE UNION SALES SINCE 2001

2001: 1 container of coffee is exported  
 2002: 10 containers of coffee are exported (with addition of volunteer staff)  
 2003: 60 containers of coffee are sold internationally  
 May 2004: The Oromia Union is out of coffee after selling all of its 120 containers of coffee.

In 2003, “[dividends were] sent to each and every farmer based on his contribution. A farmer might get the equivalent of [US \$300], which was way more income than he had ever seen,” explains Abera. This amount covers the cost of sending two children to school for a year, or of purchasing enough maize to feed a family for roughly three months. In 2004, the cooperatives were able to offer a second distri-

bution of annual sales dividends, the average being well over US \$1,000 per farmer.

In addition to paying dividends to farmers from the fair trade premiums and straight profits from sales, cooperatives have directed some of the revenues to community development projects like a health post and an elementary school. As Abera notes, “these coops are now engaged in development activities by themselves instead of waiting for donors or government to do it for them. This was our dream which we all longed to see become a reality.”

With this direct access to markets and more competitive pricing, Oxfam and its partners are also benefiting non-cooperative members through a spill-over effect. Because the cooperatives are paying 40 cents per pound for red cherry, for example, the individual private sector buyer is also forced to buy at this price. Cooperatives’ significant purchasing power has created competition and stabilized prices for farmers.

There has been a significant increase in organizational capacity at each of the unions and at the cooperatives. Cooperatives are helping farmers improve the quality of their beans so they can qualify for niche markets, like organic, gourmet, fair trade markets. The cooperatives’ new relationship with the unions in helping obtain direct access to international markets is well- received by members. Union staff numbers have grown. They have gained new knowledge and skills for doing business: when to sell, to whom, and how to negotiate the best price. Unions are now doing all their own coffee promotion and buyer cultivation, including paying their own travel expenses.

Notwithstanding these tremendous results, some weaknesses remain. In the Oramia region, which was hardest hit by the coffee crisis, many cooperatives have been unable to emerge from under the large debts they had accumulated. In these areas, people are struggling to feed their families, and in some cases, are cutting down their coffee trees to grow chat, a mild narcotic that has the potential to bring them some quick income. Cooperative membership is flat or dropping.

## AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The changes in Ethiopia’s coffee industry have expanded beyond the actual sales of coffee, to a full government endorsement and policies more favorable to farmers and cooperatives. Since the beginning of the coffee work in Ethiopia in 2001:

- Coffee farmers who could not sell directly to international markets now have direct access to international buyers with no intermediary
- Coffee farmers and cooperatives are now tax-exempt
- National banks have begun giving farmers and cooperatives credits and loans, which used to be restricted to exporters
- Taxes to travel from coffee-producing regions to other regions have been lifted

The slow restoration of the coffee-fed economy has meant that coffee farmers and the chain of other industries and people that depend on coffee export are also on a path to normalcy.

## AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The Oxfam International Coffee Campaign has achieved significant results globally. Coffee farmers and producer governments declared their determination to maintain and improve the quality of coffee they sell to the world market. Consumer governments began to regard the coffee crisis as a development crisis. Most notably, the United States Senate and House of Representatives unanimously adopted resolutions

calling upon the administration to develop a global strategy to end the crisis. International agencies and NGOs have initiated advocacy work and development programs to support coffee farmers. Oxfam was also instrumental in putting the issue of commodities on the agenda of the G8 meeting in June 2003. Major coffee companies have begun to respond to the campaign. Starbucks and Peet's are selling fair trade coffee, and Dunkin' Donuts—one of the largest roaster-retailers in the United States—will introduce fair trade certified coffee in nearly 4,000 stores nationwide.

Oxfam's continued advocacy and campaigning work has mobilized enormous popular pressure on the four major roasters: Kraft, Procter & Gamble, Sara Lee, and Nestle. In the case of Nestle, thousands of consumers were mobilized to take action against the company's compensation claim against the Ethiopian government, which is struggling to address an emergency food crisis. In response to the deluge of pressure, Nestle agreed to devote the entire \$6 million award to famine-relief efforts.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

Oxfam's analysis of the root problem of the Ethiopian coffee crisis led to a strategy with very concrete results. Where before farmers had been vulnerable to middlemen who exploited and robbed them, now they are able to sell directly to international buyers and are being paid a fair price. Blocked access to information was another key component leading to farmers not getting a fair price for their coffee. Through this project, unions and cooperatives have learned how to access specialty markets that can bring higher prices for their coffee beans. Gaining key information about market structure, price fluctuations, access, and entry requirements was crucial for Ethiopian farmers to be able to sell their beans on the international market at a price that covers their operating costs and enables them to fulfill their rights to healthcare, education, and basic nutrition.

It was a rights-based approach because a) the government was being held accountable for the impacts of its policies and b) was asked to protect, in a sense, the freedom of association of cooperatives to establish financial relations. In the Oxfam International mid-term review, several of the external stakeholders interviewed noted

Now that these pathways have been opened, it may make it easier for Ethiopian civil society actors to follow—because it has been demonstrated that the strategies work, and because the union and cooperative leaders have observed how such advocacy is done.

that Oxfam could do much more with the rights dimensions of the international trade campaign, though progress was made around the issue of labor rights. The international campaign was ostensibly meant to change the purchasing practices of the big buyers, to help all 25 million coffee growers. What the Ethiopia part of the campaign got right was to look at the international campaign as an opportunity or platform to move a domestic agenda.

Oxfam’s role was central in the campaign. Oxfam dedicated considerable resources and leveraged impressive results – conducting a study, convening an international conference, organizing field visits and a trade fair, bringing in high-level international visitors, attracting media attention, etc. Whether the unions and cooperatives have gained the skills to campaign on their own is less clear. Because civil society and democratic practices are still incipient in Ethiopia, many of the initiatives that Oxfam regional staff initiated might be difficult or dangerous for union and cooperative members: making overtures to public officials, organizing large public events that highlight the failure of government to take action in a crisis situation, pushing government to lift restrictions that benefit certain parties, and so on. That said, now that these pathways have been opened, it may make it easier for Ethiopian civil society actors to follow—because it has been demonstrated that the strategies work, and because the union and cooperative leaders have observed how such advocacy is done. Even though they may not have led the initiatives, they accompanied them every step of the way. Further analysis of this future “spill-over” effect would be useful.

Oxfam is aware that the cooperatives and its members are not reaching every member within each community, particularly women as a group. Women are not being included in such training and skill-building activities because they are not members of the cooperatives. Further research should be done in this area because there is little information about the number of women who grow coffee, and who participate as members and leaders in cooperatives. It would be useful to assess whether the lack of women within cooperatives is an administrative, educational, or cultural phenomenon, or some combination of multiple factors. From this analysis it would be possible to explore initiatives that would benefit women, their families and the cooperatives themselves.



The objectives of the **Overcoming Racism project** are to promote political, legal and socio-economic participation by the people, create equitable relations between men and women, and establish respect for the rights of Guatemala's indigenous peoples. By focusing its work on developing, disseminating and asserting Mayan law throughout Guatemalan society, this project has focused the terms of debate on the issues of multiculturalism, and on changes that are needed in the judicial system.



OXFAM AMERICA (GUATEMALA) AND DEFENSORIA MAYA

## Overcoming Racism and Discrimination through Active Participation by the Mayan People

**D**efensoría Maya is a grassroots organization with about 25,000 members and a network of 800 delegates (40% of them women) who are representatives of their communities. Its mission is to help build a new multicultural, multilingual state by promoting and defending the rights of the indigenous peoples, especially the Mayan people.

When it began, Defensoría Maya was a network of indigenous communities focusing on defending human rights in general. It concentrated on issues that were priorities during the war years, including forced recruitment, dissolution of the self-defense patrols, and the army delegates assigned to the communities.

The approval in 1995 of the Agreement On Identity And Rights Of Indigenous Peoples made it possible for Defensoría Maya, in a second stage, to focus on political and cultural issues that would help indigenous peoples to have their collective rights recognized. The agreement acknowledged the existence of four peoples in Guatemala (Maya, Garífuna, Xinka and Ladino) and the government's discrimination against indigenous groups. It also called for corrective legal measures.

Defensoría Maya's analysis was that the peace accords, signed in 1996 after 34 years of war, together with the above-mentioned agreement, laid a foundation for government policies emphasizing democracy and the integration of different cultures and forms of social organizations. Under the circumstances, Defensoría Maya decided to reformulate its objectives and to focus on raising consciousness, on a national and international level, of the aspirations of the Mayan people. With help from research groups, and with extensive participation by indigenous leaders, Defensoría Maya began to study Mayan law and issued a series of publications aimed at helping

Guatemala's society, and in particular the legal sector, to better understand the Mayan justice system.

Since the signing of peace accords, Guatemala has been trying to establish the rule of law and achieve political participation by all sectors of society. Defensoría Maya hopes to contribute to both of these goals by helping Guatemala's indigenous peoples to effectively exercise their rights.

This case study analyzes Defensoría Maya's *Overcoming Racism and Discrimination through Active Participation by the Mayan People* project (the Overcoming Racism project).

## Context

Guatemala's indigenous groups—Ladinos, Mayas, Garifunas and Xincas—make up 70% of the population. Since the creation of the present Guatemalan state, the laws and institutions have strongly favored those who hold economic and political power. This has resulted in structural problems including extreme poverty, political exclusion, discrimination and racism.

During the armed conflict, more than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared. The army tried to dismantle the Mayan people because its collective lifestyle had led it to be called “communist” and to be seen as an enemy of the state. The peace accord that ended the armed conflict was signed in December 1996. While the accords do not constitute binding legislation, they do recognize the interdependency among social, economic, political and cultural rights in a multicultural society.

The *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* (Commission for Historical Clarification), which was agreed to by both the government and the opposition party, was in charge of investigating the events of the conflict and proposing actions to overcome the consequences. According to Defensoría Maya, postwar governments have not been willing to push for more serious changes in the area of human rights, and little progress has been made on the commission's recommendations. The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) points out that among the 14 pending recommendations, three stand out as urgently in need of attention: the recognition and incorporation of traditional mechanisms of conflict solving as well as the state coordination with the indigenous law; the ratification of the implementation mechanism of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the ratification of the Rome Statute for the Creation of the International Criminal Court.

While Guatemala reports economic growth, and per capita income is relatively high in comparison with other Central American countries, the most important social development rates are still alarming. In recent years the percentages of people living in total poverty and extreme poverty have increased. In terms of income distribution, the richest 20% of the population has increased its share of total income. Landholding remains highly concentrated in the hands of the elite, and agrarian reform assisted by the market, promoted by international financial organizations, has not led to advances in this area. Overall, Guatemala is still a country with insufficient respect for human rights, a very high level of social violence, and lagging social and economic development for huge portions of the population.

## Project Design and Results

The Overcoming Racism project's general objective was to promote political, legal and socioeconomic participation by the people, create equitable relations between men and women, and establish respect for the rights of Guatemala's indigenous peoples. The project's specific objectives were:

- To facilitate for the Mayan communities access to the official justice system and the Mayan justice system
- To foster the creation of institutions in which the Mayan people can participate politically, and that will combat racism and discrimination
- To promote the adoption of public policies, and the provision of information, on the subject of food security
- To increase effective participation at all levels by Mayan women

Mayan law is the basis for Defensoría Maya's work and for the project under study. Mayan law has its own structure, established over centuries by the communities. It is based on a combination of values, principles, norms, mechanisms for conflict resolution, and the recognition of the Mayan people's own authorities. Mayan law includes 18 procedures for preventing and resolving conflicts, and gives great importance to concepts such as respect and harmony.

In 1999 Defensoría Maya launched this project. After consultations between the communities associated with Defensoría Maya, and with the participation of the delegates, Mayan authorities and other external figures, a new strategic plan was approved. As enshrined in this plan, Defensoría Maya is committed to helping the indigenous peoples to strengthen their systems and institutions, and to emphasizing the people's right to political participation.

Defensoría Maya declared that in this new stage it would "assume the responsibility for building and using processes for dialogue, agreements and negotiations. ... The use of force, through arms or repression, should be a thing of the past." (Defensoría Maya 1999 Strategic Plan)

In this project, Defensoría Maya focused its efforts in three strategic areas:

### **1. Facilitating access to justice, and accompaniment in resolving individual and group conflicts in accordance with Mayan law**

Overcoming Racism provides support for people and communities who request legal assistance and guidance in order to resolve disputes and problems either within the official justice system or through Mayan law. Overcoming Racism worked mainly on individual and family cases, and most of these were resolved through recourse to Mayan law, with an emphasis on conciliation and reparations. Overcoming Racism provides two types of legal support to families and individuals: accompaniment and advice. In the first type, a regional technical team (a coordinator and legal assistants) are fully involved in the cases and follow up on them until they are resolved. In the second type, Overcoming Racism invests less time; it explains procedures and, if the case will be handled in the official justice system, it prepares complainants and witnesses. In some cases, Overcoming Racism limits itself to translating work and explaining procedures in government offices and courts.

Many people seek legal assistance at Defensoría Maya's regional offices; over the last three years, those offices have dealt with an average of 1,600 cases per year. The reason for this is the difficult situation faced by the Mayan people, for reasons of language, identity, culture, or economic need, and also because the Mayan people do not trust the official justice system. Most of the cases handled by Overcoming Racism deal with the normal problems of rural communities: child support, land inheritances, border disputes, divorces, common-law relationships, corrections in birth certificates, adoptions, guardianship arrangements for young people, and fraud.

Some of the people have learned about Overcoming Racism from the community delegates, others have heard about it on the radio, and some are sent by the official courts when court workers feel it would be better to handle the case via Mayan law. After studying the cases, the regional teams ask the people if they would prefer to reach an accord through Mayan law, or to go through the official system.

The lawyers in Defensoría Maya's central office provide support for the regional team's work with group conflicts. These cases affect the community as a whole, or have a social impact. Most of the problems are caused by government and private institutions; a lesser number are caused by individuals. Sometimes there are problems between communities, or between the church and the communities. Commonly, cases have to do with land issues, highways, conservation of resources and the use of sacred places. When collective cases are handled by the official system, the process can take several years, and require a great deal of technical assistance. When they're handled through Mayan law, the process can be brief and have minimal costs. During the three years of this project, Overcoming Racism has handled some 40 collective cases; more than half of them have been favorably resolved through the use of Mayan law.

## 2. Promoting Official Recognition of the Mayan Justice System

Overcoming Racism's biggest effort has been to seek a reform of the law that would incorporate the justice system of the indigenous peoples. Having consulted extensively with communities, indigenous authorities and other Mayan organizations, and outside legal experts, Overcoming Racism has presented a proposal based on principles of international law and emphasizing the full recognition of the fundamental rights and liberties of indigenous peoples. It maintains that recognizing these rights is the best way to eradicate racism. Defensoría Maya is still consulting about how to insure that this proposed legal reform obtains the support from key legislators, national Mayan networks and other sectors of society. It is considering carrying out an educational campaign in the media, aimed at all of Guatemalan society but especially at those who work in the judicial system. As part of this project, Defensoría Maya held a series of meetings with the Congress' Indigenous Affairs commission, and with the Supreme Court justices. As a result, plans were made to train judges about Mayan law. To promote further reflection on how to coordinate the government's and the Mayan systems of justice, Overcoming Racism has organized dialogues in various towns in rural areas. The participants have included people working in the official system, NGOs and Mayan groups.

Other principal reforms have had to do with property taxes and the acceptance of the Mayan justice system. At the request of *Comunidades de Población en Resistencia* (groups of people who had been displaced by the war), Overcoming Racism introduced bills proposing that civil, peasant and indigenous groups not have to pay taxes on real estate on indigenous and communal lands. The executive branch approved the proposals, but the Congress failed to approve them. The fact that none of the reforms proposed by Overcoming Racism have been approved is attributed (by Defensoría Maya) to the racist and exclusive nature of the judicial system, the Congress and the government in general.

### **3. Consolidating and Strengthening the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination, and the Mayan People's Consulting Body**

The Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination was created in 2003. It will serve for four years. Its mandate is to develop public policies that help to eradicate racist and discriminatory practices. It was created in response to the request from Defensoría Maya and other Mayan groups for a commission that would monitor racism. Defensoría Maya's hope is that this Commission will be able to achieve policy changes favorable to the Mayan people. Overcoming Racism helped in defining the group's mandate, selecting the commissioners, and naming a woman to work on the themes of women's rights and gender. Overcoming Racism also pushed for a campaign to inform the public – via radio, press conferences, communiques and forums – about the commission's aims. Along with other Mayan and Ladino organizations, it held workshops in various towns in the rural areas, inviting the commission to make presentations about its mandate and how it would function. Overcoming Racism also agreed to prepare a bulletin and a manual to show the indigenous population how to use the commission services. To help promote closer relations between the commission and the indigenous peoples, an agreement was reached between the commission and PAQ'UCH, a group of Mayan and Ladino organizations. Overcoming Racism played a leadership role in this effort. The aim of the agreement is to develop policies to eradicate racism, and to consult and coordinate on a national level on issues that affect indigenous communities and peoples.

Along with other Mayan groups, Defensoría Maya helped establish the Mayan People's Consulting Body, and to organize the first National Congress of the Mayan People in June 2003, with 117 communities participating. There the National Assembly of Representatives of the Mayan People and the Provisional Follow-up Committee were set up. To help prepare for this event, Defensoría Maya spent more than a year holding national and regional forums and conferences, and visiting the communities. After Defensoría Maya made a special effort to consult with women, women received key posts in the new leadership organizations. Defensoría Maya sees the Mayan People's Consulting Body as a way of complying with Agreement No. 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which protects the collective human rights of the indigenous peoples. This agreement says that when national law is applied to indigenous peoples, it should take into account their customs and common law, and should establish their right to

participate in decisions that will affect them. Governments should consult people, through their institutional representatives and appropriate procedures, whenever administrative or legal measures will directly affect the people.

### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Many cases have been resolved as part of this project. This shows that Mayan law works, even though it is not recognized constitutionally. Through project activities, the Mayan people have sought to eliminate racism by pursuing changes in policies and discriminatory practices.

Thanks to Overcoming Racism's assistance, many families have had access to the official legal system and have resolved their cases, availing themselves of their rights as citizens. This has meant a lessening of the marginalization and lack of attention that indigenous peoples have suffered under the official system.

One Defensoría Maya leader says that using Mayan law is a way for families and communities to fight against racism and discrimination, because it brings dignity and new value to the Mayan people's principles and culture.

In three of the regions where Overcoming Racism works, it is common for the courts to refer cases to Defensoría Maya for solution. Overcoming Racism feels that as a result of its training work, the two legal systems are drawing nearer to each other, and the people are being better attended.

The legal assistance and advice provided by Overcoming Racism has had an economic impact, one that, quantified, could amount to significant savings for families and for the government.

In its efforts to get the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination installed, form the Mayan People's Consulting Body, and reform the law of the official legal system, Overcoming Racism has done a great deal of work in the areas of consulting, lobbying and formulating proposals. Overcoming Racism is helping to forge alliances between various Mayan groups. This will make it possible for the Mayan People's Consulting Body to be truly representative of the Mayan people. This is an important contribution toward strengthening Guatemala's social movement.

In Guatemala, there used to be a lack of mechanisms for dealing with the government and promoting public policies that were reached by consensus and favored the Mayan people; the Presidential Commission and the Mayan Consulting Body have helped to fill this void. To enable these groups to function and to be autonomous, Defensoría Maya and other groups have pressured the government to provide economic support. The communities and organizations now need training to utilize the Commission in the various parts of its mandate. Further ahead it will be possible to judge what impact this has had, in terms of changes in government policies and practices.

## Lessons learned

At first Defensoría Maya worked to defend human rights in general. Then it worked to oppose government policies during a repressive period in Guatemala's history. Now

it has become a group that reaffirms the collective rights of Mayan peoples through formal and informal channels. By focusing its work on developing, disseminating and asserting Mayan law throughout Guatemalan society, Defensoría Maya has shifted the terms of debate on the issues of multiculturalism, and of the changes that are needed in the judicial system.

Overcoming Racism has adapted its strategies to changing circumstances and has worked in different areas: in direct service to the people in the provision of legal assistance and conflict-resolution services where the government has not responded; in the formulation of law-reform proposals; in the use of political pressure; in the training of workers in the justice system; and in the formation of new groups that are needed to articulate processes of participation in public policies. Defensoría Maya is facing many challenges as it tries to follow up its various program areas, both technical and political, and to lead a grassroots organization that seeks more participation for the communities. This must require more involvement and training of community members so that they will be able to analyze the situation, and become active in the defense of their own rights.

In recent years Defensoría Maya has learned to work in alliances with various sectors, including indigenous and non-indigenous groups, and political and governmental groups. Part of this learning occurred in its work toward the formation of the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination and the Mayan Consulting Group. However, the main Mayan organizations have not found a forum where they can work together on a permanent basis. This, plus the wide range of groups that claim to represent the Mayan people, has made it difficult to advance a common national agenda that would have greater impact in the area of discrimination and racism. Defensoría Maya is one of the main Mayan groups that has worked in the building of alliances and the search for consensus, although until now, this work has been on more immediate issues. It will have to galvanize and broaden its support base in order to push through its judicial reform proposal.

Overcoming Racism has drawn nearer to educational groups, including universities, and this has meant improvement in its documentation and greater coverage of its work in providing legal services. Overcoming Racism has invested its limited resources in seminars for those who work in the justice sector, and has furnished them with publications. It has sought not only to train these workers, but also to make them more sensitive. Defensoría Maya needs to think more about how best to do this work with the limited resources at its disposal.

Overcoming Racism has chosen to continue providing help with individual cases, and this work takes up most of the time of those who work in the regional offices. Overcoming Racism needs to prioritize these cases along strategic lines; until now, anyone can go to one of the regional offices and ask for help, and they will be attended if the technical teams have time.



The Farming and Pest Management project aimed at building capacities of food-deficit farm households to increase, diversify and sustain farm production in an environmentally-friendly manner. The project facilitated linkages of Farmer Field School (FFS) groups with other service providers, sources of new innovations and reputed agricultural input suppliers. The project also facilitated the establishment of farmer organizations that would have more power to access common property natural resources and essential extension services through rights education and through engagement of duty bearers at the local level in discussions about the rights and needs of small-scale farmers.



CARE BANGLADESH AND EIGHT LOCAL NGO/CBOS

# Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises and New Options for Pest Management

*Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises and New Options for Pest Management* (Farming & Pest Management, aka LIFE-NoPEST) Phase II was a merger of the previously phased-out *Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises* (LIFE) and *New Options for Pest Management* (NoPEST) projects. Applying different methodologies, the project aimed at increasing agricultural productivity of small-scale farms located in two different regions of the country and assisted food-insecure farm households to build their capacities to seek out, experiment with and adapt improved and environment-friendly farm technologies and practices.

Farming & Pest Management Phase II combined the most effective strategies and activities from the two previous projects (e.g., adopting NoPEST's Farmer Field School (FFS) extension methodology, and LIFE's initiative to facilitate linkages between farmers' groups and sources of new innovations) and piloted a couple of concepts based on lessons learned during the predecessor projects. These were to facilitate informal farmers' groups to evolve into community-based organizations and to build farmers' capacity in agricultural marketing so that they could fetch better prices for their produce.

This three-year project (including a 15-month no-cost extension) was entirely funded by the European Commission (EC) with a total budget of approximately US \$5 million.

## Context

### PROBLEM ANALYSIS

With a population of more than 135 million in an area of 144,000 square kilometers, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Approximately 50% of its total population lives below the poverty line. Agriculture accounts for 23% of Gross Domestic Product, and is heavily dominated by production of rice—the staple food of Bangladeshis. Bangladesh is undergoing a transformation from semi-subsistence agriculture to a commercial market-oriented sector. The future of Bangladesh agriculture lies in sustainably increasing the productivity of land through adopting environment-friendly technologies and farm management practices. In order to make this happen, the capacities of small-scale farmers to innovate need to be enhanced, new technologies need to be developed, and access of small-scale farmers to these technologies and common natural resources needs to be improved.

Although policies that favor small-scale growers exist, they are not enforced. For example, marginal farmers have the legal right to use *khas*<sup>19</sup> lands and water bodies but in practice are usually denied access to these natural resources. Smallholders also do not have equitable access to mainstream extension services, natural resources and sharecropper rights that are, in principle, guaranteed by existing law. Thus, enforcement capacity has to be strengthened and agricultural institutions reformed in order to create an enabling environment for small-scale growers.

Most large landowners are urban oriented and view ownership of land as a status symbol rather than exclusively as a means of production. Influential rural elites restrict access of marginal farmers to common natural resources. The rural elite use their influence with government departments and officials to get *khas* land allocated to their names. A significant proportion of small and marginal farmers cultivate land under various sharecropping arrangements. Large landowners usually compel sharecroppers to accept exploitative terms and tend to grant no guarantee of tenancy rights, which makes farmers vulnerable to unlawful evictions from share cropped land. While there are laws in place to protect the rights of sharecroppers they rarely come into play because of the low level of awareness of legal rights among the farmers, and because enforcement is weak. Under these conditions tenant farmers are not interested in investing time and energy for improving land or soil management practices.

Bangladesh has a countrywide public sector agricultural extension system. However, its capacity remains underutilized because of resource constraints, and inadequate accountability and transparency; and it tends to be gender-biased. The benefits of public sector agricultural extension are monopolized by a small number of relatively large farmers.

Farmers' organizations at the village level are generally weak. As a result, farmers are not able to access or mobilize resources, cannot effectively support each other, cannot jointly raise their voices for securing rights and have limited means for sharing information. Furthermore, there are weak linkages between farmers and sources of agricultural information and technology.

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<sup>19</sup> *Khas* land includes land and water bodies that are not privately owned. These are common property and the authority to allocate use of *khas* land lies with the government. There are an estimated 3.3 million acres of *khas* land in Bangladesh.

Food insecurity is the outcome of a wide variety of factors. In addition to technical agricultural and economic issues, institutional issues such as inaccessibility to common natural resources (e.g., *khas* land, *khas* ponds, water bodies, roadside lands), exploitative sharecropping arrangements, inadequate access to mainstream extension service provision, and social issues such as dowry and polygamy constitute social and institutional constraints to food insecurity.

## Project Design

### ASSESSMENT

In applying for the 15-month no-cost extension, the project made a shift from focusing on building farmers' technical capacity to enhance agricultural productivity, to facilitating evolution of farmers' organizations—the hypothesis being that farmers' organizations would be better placed to address social and institutional issues (like dowry, polygamy, access to common natural resources, exploitative sharecropping arrangements) than would FFS groups that focus mainly on building farmers' technical capacity. Organized farmers would be better equipped to elicit responses from duty bearers among service providers and from decision-making bodies.

The design phase of Farming & Pest Management Phase II was highly participatory, including analysis of secondary information, a participatory problem and needs assessment workshop with staff and participants from the LIFE and NoPEST projects, comprehensive stakeholder analysis throughout the design process, and a weeklong project design workshop with representation from all levels of project staff, project participants, donors and external resource persons.

The goal of Farming & Pest Management II was to improve the food security of 60,000 food-insecure farm households that primarily depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The project aimed at building capacities of food-deficit farm households to increase, diversify and sustain farm production in an environment-friendly manner. The project further facilitated linkages of FFS groups with other service providers, sources of new innovations and reputed agricultural input suppliers.

During the first sub-phase, the project piloted models for developing farmers' organizations and marketing initiatives. One of the primary objectives of the second sub-phase was to implement the results of the pilots, which had demonstrated the value of investing in FFS groups' evolution into viable and active Community-based Organizations (CBOs).

### PROJECT AND TARGET GROUP SELECTION

The project operated through district-based Field Offices of CARE, effectively covering 19 *upazilas*<sup>20</sup> in eight geographic districts. The target beneficiaries were “food insecure farm households that primarily depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.” Fifty-one percent of project participants were female.

During the first sub-phase, a total of 33,000 food insecure farm households directly participated in project activities. Each of these direct participants was obliged to discuss and share the learning that took place at FFSs with at least one neighboring farmer, thus facilitating secondary adoption of improved farm technologies and

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<sup>20</sup> An *upazila* is a governmental sub-district composed of an average of 10 unions.

practices. The remaining 3,000 farmers participated in the organizational development and marketing pilots. During the second sub-phase 12,500 farm households participated directly in the project, with an additional 12,500 farm households benefiting from secondary adoption activities. These 25,000 farm households were organized under 500 farmer organizations.

## Implementation Strategy

### PARTNERSHIPS

By the second sub-phase the project had consolidated partnerships with eight NGOs and CBOs that were responsible for direct intervention with roughly half of all project participants. Partners' involvement in project decision-making was limited initially, but project management later made a conscious effort to make decisions jointly with partners. Partners eventually had autonomy and made independent decisions in many important areas (like staffing, salary scales and procurement). Throughout the second sub-phase, partner NGOs participated in all meetings, training events and M&E design workshops.

### ACTIVITIES

Project interventions can be categorized into four broad areas. These are:

#### **Innovation and adoption of improved agricultural technologies and practices**

FFSs as an extension methodology helped farmers to become more analytical in understanding location-specific agro-ecological conditions and testing, as well as to innovate sustainable technical solutions to problems that inhibit enhancement of farm productivity. Farmers identified, prioritized and analyzed major problems and opportunities for enhancing farm productivity.

#### **Facilitating linkages between the mainstream service providers and farmers' groups and organizations**

In addition to providing technical assistance to the farmer groups, the project staff facilitated linkages between FFS groups and mainstream service providers. Major activities undertaken to facilitate linkages included workshops, science congresses, information and regular attendance at meetings of formal extension agencies.

#### **Facilitation of the formation of community-based organizations**

In the latter phases, the project focused on organizational development—facilitating the establishment of farmer organizations that would have more power to access common property natural resources and essential extension services through rights education and through engagement of duty bearers at the local level in discussions about the rights and needs of small-scale farmers.

The methodology adopted for facilitating the evolution of FFS groups into CBOs was guided by certain principles. The project allowed natural growth of farmer groups into community-based organizations. It was cautious of imposing rules and regulations from the top. It encouraged members to follow democratic norms and practices in decision-making and in conducting business. It avoided monopolization

of leadership by one or two dominant members. It promoted inclusive decision-making process in key decision-making, learning and sharing among all members, and a sense of ownership by non-interference and empowering group members to make decisions. It encouraged groups to develop and instill systems for accountability and transparency. It facilitated establishment of linkages between evolving farmers' organizations and mainstream service providers in both the public and private sector; and it facilitated federating the primary farmer organizations at the *upazila* level if the need was felt by the evolving organization.

In consideration of specific conditions pertaining in Chapai Nawabganj District, the project also worked on reinforcing the government sharecropping law and organized sharecroppers into associations as a platform from which they could raise a united voice with respect to sharecropper rights.

### **Building farmers' capacity in agricultural marketing**

The second pilot also built farmers' capacity for agricultural marketing, by helping farmers understand simple marketing concepts and principles, and by promoting improved marketing practices, including value addition through cleaning, grading and packaging. Wherever appropriate, the project also promoted the idea of collective selling and buying in order to take advantage of economies of scale.

In order to promote women's visibility in markets (both as sellers and buyers), the project engaged in discussion and lobbying with various relevant key players including the rural market management committees, opinion leaders such as elected Union *Parishad* Chairmen and women members of the concerned Union *Parishads*. The purpose was to make markets more attractive to women by facilitating establishment of a separate market corner in selected rural markets where women could sit and sell their products (to both men and women).

The shift toward organizational development in the second sub-phase was accompanied by a broader orientation toward rights issues relevant to the target population. In addition to addressing issues of sustainability of agricultural gains and enhanced access to government extension services, the new focus was also identified as building a platform for addressing a broader range of social issues. The project raised awareness on a number of social issues by providing orientations on existing laws and policies and the declared responsibilities of the duty bearers. The project recognized that, as FFS groups developed, they began to raise issues related to structural constraints such as access to common natural resources and exploitative tenancy arrangements. Project staff also recognized a need to address wider social issues that do not directly relate to cropping but do influence sustainable food security. Hence organizations in the second sub-phase were encouraged to address issues such as gender discrimination, access to health care and sanitation services, and participation of food-insecure households in local decision-making bodies. Being organized led to the development of advocacy platforms and the confidence to raise voices and to act collectively.

## **Results and Impacts**

### **INTERMEDIATE RESULTS**

The no-cost extension phase helped the targeted farmers to consolidate gains achieved in agricultural productivity during the earlier sub phase as well as to secure two specific

rights: the right to access mainstream extension services and the right to access common property resources such as *khas* land.

An assessment study undertaken in May 2003 (shortly after completion of the first sub-phase) showed generally positive results in the knowledge about, adoption of and experimentation with new technologies. Participants reported a production increase of 20 to 30 percent in comparison with reported production and cash revenues from before 2001. In all categories, secondary adopters showed positive but reduced results, and were less likely to engage in spontaneous experimentation than direct FFS participants.

With respect to linkages and networking with service providers, the study found that the further evolved pilot groups participating in the organizational development and marketing pilot initiatives had wider networks than FFS groups with a shorter history; and government organizations confirmed that the existence of FFS and organized farmer groups raises the potential for their organizations to deliver services more effectively.

““ *There is strong evidence that small-scale resource-poor farmers, when backed by their own organizations, are better placed to address various constraints to increase farm productivity and income....It is relatively difficult for public sector extension service providers not to respond to the legitimate demand for extension services when it comes from a locally rooted farmers' organization.*<sup>21</sup> ””

Examination of the organizational development pilot also showed positive results. Organizations were well-structured and several of the organizations had taken initiatives to federate at a higher level. In addition, organizational savings deposits were used to provide credit facilities, and to engage in profit-making agricultural activities.

Among the unanticipated results from the first sub-phase was the involvement of CBOs in social advocacy unrelated to agricultural production, as well as charitable work in their communities. These collateral activities indirectly contribute toward project goals by enhancing acceptance of farmer organizations in the community. They are also an indication of empowerment of participants and of a sense of organizational responsibility toward the community.

### IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Data is not yet available to confidently assess sustainability or impact through the end of the second sub-phase, although intermediate results from the end of the first sub-phase and anecdotal evidence from the field offer positive indications. The assessment report at the end of the first sub-phase concluded that "... given the evidence of enhanced capacity of farmer groups to function as organizations, greater community acceptance, capacity to mobilize and utilize internal resources and tap external resources and services, there are strong indications that these organizations will sustain.... The intensity of spontaneously replicated experiments is a valuable indicator

<sup>21</sup> LIFE-NoPEST May 2003 Assessment.

for successful facilitation, empowerment and sustainability of the project's vision being disseminated beyond its duration.”<sup>22</sup>

Indications also suggest that organized farmer groups have the potential to attract greater attention for their members from government service providers, as well as providing an avenue for capital accumulation and credit sources for small farmers.

The ability of such farmer organizations to address deeper and more politically sensitive structural issues such as land ownership has not yet been adequately proved (or disproved). However, the project experience working with issues of sharecropper rights in Chapai Nawabganj District suggests promising potential. Bargaining power of sharecroppers associations has improved considerably and they now rent land with better terms and conditions. Likewise, confidence levels of many leaders went up and they can now better articulate and interact with service providers. Locally elected representatives now tend to listen to leaders of farmers' organizations. It should be noted, however, that initiative was undertaken with strong support and mediation from CARE project staff and it is an open question whether such results would be sustainable, i.e., whether farmer organizations will have or can develop sufficient capacity, influence and motivation to engage on their own in advocacy, negotiation and conflict resolution around critical poverty-related food security issues.

It is too early to tell whether the tentative efforts toward addressing complex social issues such as dowry and polygamy through these farmer-based organizations can be effective. What is interesting about those efforts is that they were primarily undertaken by women-led organizations on their own initiative. This suggests that Farming & Pest Management has been effective at empowering women to operate independently on issues of importance to them.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

### LESSONS LEARNED

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Farming & Pest Management project is the emphasis on learning and adapting that has taken place throughout the project life cycle. This can be observed in the original design of the project (which grew from lessons learned in prior projects) and the redesign for the no-cost extension phase (which also was greatly influenced by lessons from the field). The following are a few of the lessons captured in a 27-page Lessons Learned document published by the project:

- The project's strategy to allow natural growth of leadership has proved effective. However, it is necessary to help members to develop and put in place systems and procedures to hold leaders accountable to the members and to facilitate development of alternative leadership. This is to check monopolization of leadership and potential abuse of power by the leaders.
- Male-only groups were better in establishing linkages with various service providers because of their greater social mobility. Female-only groups displayed

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

greater cohesiveness and showed much more interest in social issues. In mixed groups, men generally displayed a tendency to dominate women.

- Imposing rules and bylaws for running organizations from above does not work. A gradual process that facilitates organizational members to internalize the need for formulating rules and bylaws is more effective.
- Factors that influence whether an organization is more likely to remain viable after project closure are: better quality leadership, participatory decision-making, and transparency in financial transactions. Some of the attributes of better-performing leaders are reasonable educational background, previous involvement in activities related to group development, community acceptance, skill in networking, and greater mobility.
- Wider social awareness and more liberal attitudes are prerequisites in socially conservative areas for an initiative like the women's market corner to succeed.

### ADVOCACY AND RIGHTS

Strictly speaking, the project did not directly engage in advocacy. It did not directly seek change of policies nor engage in structured attempts to compel official duty-bearers to enforce legal rights and entitlements. Instead, the project's direct interventions had more the flavor of mediated solutions—a conflict-resolution approach to rights and entitlement issues taking into account needs and constraints of both duty-bearers and rights holders and working within (rather than attempting to change) existing structural constraints. The project focused on building linkages—personal connections—with government officials to secure entitlements for project participants.

The mediation metaphor is most explicitly applicable to the intervention around sharecropper rights in Chapai Nawabganj District. One option in such a situation would have been to work with those with formal responsibility for enforcing the law to ensure that legal rights were protected. The other option—the one chosen by the project—was to raise awareness of legal rights and to use the law as leverage to

bring the respective parties (in this case landowners and tenant farmers) together to “negotiate” more equitable arrangements consistent with existing legal rights.

This distinction is not intended as criticism of the project, which brought significant benefits to project participants in terms of rights and entitlements (in addition to technical agricultural and marketing support). However, it is important to recognize the difference in strategy with regard to rights and entitlements. A conflict-resolution approach does not generally bring broadly based structural change impacting target populations as a “class” (e.g., policy change or reallocation of resources at the national or regional level or more effective enforcement of legal rights). However, it



may be the most effective short-term strategy with regard to securing benefits for project participants in a situation in which legal systems and resources for service provision are inadequate and/or where directly addressing these broader structural constraints is beyond the scope of the project. Further, project experience suggests that this non-confrontational localized approach has potential “spillover” benefits in terms of raising awareness of duty-bearers of responsibilities toward the target population and providing a model by which services might be more efficiently and effectively delivered and rights secured.

## **EMPOWERMENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

The project has introduced structural change in the system through the development of strong and viable farmer organizations. These organizations seem to have been successfully empowered in the sense of seeing themselves as active and effective agents for change in their local communities. Further, at the federation level in particular, there is an incipient recognition of the need for more broadly based political and social change and a desire for tools (networks and methodologies) for promoting change at a higher level. It should be noted that, in terms of rights-based approaches, the project (and the farmer organizations) have been operating for a relatively short period of time and the project is rightly deserving of the attention it has received for developing, in that time period, an effective model for organizational formation and development.

Further movement in a rights-based direction (in follow-on or subsequent projects) would logically involve developing skills and capacities in advocacy, use of political influence, and approaches to social change, which could further consolidate and institutionalize gains already made in securing benefits for a wider constituency. Among the new challenges to such an approach would be, in addition to staff and participant capacity-building, the need for broader based partnerships and networking and the assessment and management of greater risk involved in more explicitly political and social interventions.

The existing organizations, in their current state of development, can and likely will continue to provide substantial benefits to members and communities. They also represent, however, a remarkable opportunity for further evolution as platforms for deeper and wider change and learning and development in rights-based approaches.



The Civil Society Capacity Strengthening project is a sequel to the Urban Food For Work project (Appendix A8). With growing recognition of the fact that poverty emanates from people's positions in society, CARE set out to address the underlying causes of urban poverty by strengthening capacity within civil society organizations (CSO), by empowering communities and by promoting good governance. Specifically, the project aims to establish civil society federations or unions by bringing CSOs together, building capacity, strengthening linkages, and establishing networks.

CARE ETHIOPIA

# Civil Society Capacity Strengthening Pilot Project

**T**he *Civil Society Capacity Strengthening* pilot project (Civil Society Strengthening, aka CSCS) was designed to address the gaps that had been identified as missed opportunities for CARE Ethiopia's Community Infrastructure/Urban Food-For-Work project (see Appendix A8). With growing recognition of the rights issue, and of the fact that poverty emanates from people's positions in society—from their relations to power in decision-making processes and in managing public resources and basic services such as health, education and clean water—CARE strongly believed that the underlying causes of urban poverty could best be addressed by strengthening capacity within Civil Society Organizations (CSO), empowering communities and promoting good governance.

The project under discussion was actually a pilot from which lessons for future direction were to be drawn. Funding for this 27-month pilot (approximately US \$78,000, including a second allocation so that activities could be replicated in two additional *kebeles*<sup>23</sup>) was provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The replication process is currently underway.

This case study will examine the problems the Civil Society Strengthening project is working to address, the hypotheses underlying its design, its modus operandi and achievements, and the lessons it is learning. The Civil Society Strengthening project is taking a rights-based approach (RBA).

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<sup>23</sup> A *kebele* is the smallest unit of administration in Ethiopia's local government.

## Context

One of the poorest countries in the world, Ethiopia has a very large population (around 70 million), of which nearly 80% live in rural areas and depend on traditional subsistence agriculture. However, subsistence agriculture cannot support the population year round, and there is chronic hunger. Repetitive natural calamities are partially responsible, but mismanagement of natural resources and inappropriate policies are also responsible. There is poor infrastructure and inefficient service delivery in all sectors; unfavorable land policies make for a high level of rural-urban migration in search of alternative livelihoods; foreign investment capital is not used to create employment; scarce resources are not optimally invested in priority development needs; and democratic institutions are weak. Fueled by drought and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS, the number of people seeking assistance to fulfill basic needs is growing.

The situation is exacerbated by the political climate. There has been little tangible commitment to the involvement of civil society and the private sector in policy formulation and decision-making processes. There is mistrust of the government on the part of civil society and the private sector and inadequate understanding on either side of the role that civil society could be playing in participatory governance.

The only way to change this situation for the better and for the economy to pull out of its downward spiral is to promote good governance—meaning governance that makes room for all sectors of the society to participate in policy making, and to take responsibility for proper implementation in a transparent and accountable manner. In order for this to happen the government would have to guarantee an enabling environment that would allow all development actors to play their roles not only in implementing development plans, but also in policy making, in a way that every party (including the government) would be held accountable and responsible for what it does.

Over the last few years the government has come to accept the need for transparent and accountable governance systems that promote the leadership of communities in their own local development interventions, in decision-making processes and in influencing policy changes. To this end, the Ethiopian government has been undertaking a decentralization process aimed at devolving decision-making power to the lower levels of government structures. This is a positive gesture on behalf of the government, which should yield favorable results. However, decentralization alone will not bring about substantial changes in power relations and decision-making processes. However willing the government may be in terms of providing opportunities to participate in policy formulation, given the present capacity of civil society and the private sector, it would be naïve to assume that their participation would be able to bring about measurable change. Neither civil society nor the private sector understands the benefits they could derive from a decentralized structure or the roles they should play in the process and in subsequent power transformations.

In order to have an impact or to make a contribution in dialogue with government bodies, civil society and the private sector have to first become aware of the consequences of this kind of power transformation and become institutionally capable and proactive. They have to learn how to influence decision-making and pro-poor policy. They need access to information. They need to become skilled in political maneuvering. They need organizational capacity, for example, in accountability and transparency. And they need to understand the value of collective action. These are all

abilities that are currently beyond the capacity of most community level groups—skills that will require external assistance if they are to be developed, and skills without which these organizations will find it difficult to effectively advocate for the rights of their constituencies, to influence policy reform, and to make informed decisions about their local development—in short, skills without which good governance, in the form of a genuine partnership between the government and the rest of society, will prove an elusive goal.

At around the same time that CARE was coming to this conclusion, its decade-long UFFW project was being evaluated. One of the most important findings was that “short-term food-for-work activities in a given locality would not bring sustainable improvement in the status of food security of targeted communities unless capacity enhancing interventions were integrated.”<sup>24</sup> CARE had spent years forging strong links with these communities, and wanted to continue working with them, but now it recognized that what was most needed was a radical change in approach.

## Project Design

It was with all of the above in mind that CARE designed the Civil Society Strengthening project. The idea was to focus on building the capacity of five CSOs in order to learn lessons that would indicate future strategies, directions and alternative options for long-term rights-based interventions in urban Ethiopia.

The overall goal of the Civil Society Strengthening pilot project is to promote community empowerment and good governance in selected *kebeles* in Addis Ababa. Specific objectives include:

- establishing civil society federations or unions by bringing CSOs together to discuss, realize, and capitalize on their commonalities and narrow their differences for mutual benefit
  - building the capacity of civil society federations and strengthening their linkages with local government bodies so that they can jointly plan and implement development activities
  - establishing networks and linkages among CSOs, local government bodies and the private sector and enhancing their capacity to have collaborative development efforts and assume a proactive role in local governance and development initiatives
  - establishing linkages among the different CSO federations/unions and local government bodies at the city level, leading to experience sharing, better interface and joint action in development initiatives
  - documenting lessons from the project and sharing these among all stakeholders
- CSOs and community representatives’ ability to analyze the real causes of poverty were developed through understanding the workings of power relations in society—in other words, in how certain groups manipulate power and social relations for their own benefit by denying other people’s rights. Training in community empowerment, governance, human rights, and gender and diversity issues was designed to enable participants to look at and act on development issues through a rights-based perspective.

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<sup>24</sup> Final Evaluation of Title II CARE Ethiopia Urban Project, September 2001, Executive Summary, p. viii.

When funding was secured, discussions were held with all key stakeholders both at the local and regional levels to create awareness and sufficient understanding of the objectives, approaches and operational mechanisms of the initiative.

## Project Implementation

### PARTNER SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Project partners were selected via a desk appraisal of all the 54 *kebeles* that had participated in the UFFW project. After field assessments of short-listed candidates, *kebeles* were ranked on a range of criteria, including demonstration of initiative during UFFW involvement, the presence of strong and active CBOs, a very low average household income, a large population, and both CBOs and local government bodies that were interested and willing to work within civil society strengthening interventions such as advocacy, civic education and good governance.

In the end, *Kebele 11* in *Kolfe-Keranio Kefle-Ketema*<sup>25</sup> was selected as the project area and *Tesfa Social and Development Association* (TSDA, or the Federation), a federation of *iddirs*<sup>26</sup> or traditional voluntary neighborhood associations, was nominated as a partner for the project on the grounds that it represented a federation of 24 *iddis*. That meant CARE could draw upon a body of 5,400 members and could reach a constituency of approximately 110,000 people. The *kebele* administration was supportive and willing to work with the project; each member *iddir* within TSDA was positioned to have equal say in all decision-making processes; and the TSDA structure guaranteed a high level of representation.

The proposal does not reference rights standards per se, but its objectives relate to the realization of rights. For example, the capacity-building elements are tailored to ensure that CSO members (1) understand and speak for the interests and rights of their constituencies, (2) learn how to effectively lobby governments and international bodies in terms of policy formulation and implementation, and (3) understand their common organizational interest and the power of collective association and action.

CARE Ethiopia's role in terms of project implementation has been confined to the provision of technical backup and coaching in the process of implementing TSDA's planned activities within the *kebele*.

The project has so far focused on the following three major capacity-building components:

#### Technical support

The project provides support in project design and implementation and coaching in institutionalizing good governance within the structure and in forging good partnerships with local development actors. All decisions regarding the *what* and *how* of project implementation have been made by TSDA and its members. The Federation sets criteria for the selection of target groups for the different project activities. It also decides who should participate in the selection process, determines the type of support the Federation needs from CARE, and establishes networks with other partners. Program resources are allocated according to their significance in having a long-term impact on the basic needs of the target groups. Federation members are also engaged

<sup>25</sup> Kefle-Ketema is the next higher level of administrative unit next to kebele in the new structure of Addis Ababa City Administration.

<sup>26</sup> An *iddir* is a community-based organization.

in advocacy activities in relation to free-land acquisition by the CSOs for social services and development activities

### **Training support**

Once CARE had decided on TSDA and its constituent *iddirs* as its partner CSO, a participatory institutional capacity assessment was conducted to identify priority capacity gaps that needed to be addressed. In the process, TSDA participants were assisted in identifying organizational, technical as well as conceptual gaps of the Federation. They also cited as priority needs better management systems and closing procedural and infrastructure gaps. They further proposed and prioritized alternatives by which these gaps could be addressed. As a result, CARE conducted a series of trainings for people drawn not only from member *iddirs*, but also from TSDA's executive committee and local administration offices to address conceptual gaps in the areas of governance, community empowerment, gender and diversity, financial and procurement management, project design, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Moreover, basic management systems, such as financial and procurement management, records and data management were put in place, and on-the-job training was conducted for relevant Federation staff and local administrators.

### **Material support**

Added to these were the necessary guidebooks and manuals that would serve as references for trained personnel, and basic office equipment and furniture both to support the operationalization of the established systems and to create a conducive working environment.

Currently, supported by the skills acquired through the trainings provided, action plans are being developed and implemented with the full participation of individual members through their respective *iddirs*. What is more, the Federation has been recognized by the local administration, including the municipality, as a representative body and a partner for local development.

### **Reporting, monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of project activities are carried out jointly by the Federation, project staff and *kebele* administration along with other service providers in the project area. Member *iddirs* are also fully involved in the process. Indicators used to verify whether the project has achieved its goal are whether there is greater acceptance of and legitimacy in the role of CSOs in the governance of the *kebeles*, and whether there is greater coordination and collaboration between the different sectors of society at the grassroots level.

## **Results and Impact**

In an operating environment as complex for the development and participation of civil society organizations as it is in Ethiopia, it is hard to expect intermediate results from this kind of project to be fully achieved in such a short span of time (barely two years). Understandably, the intermediate results of the project are not yet fully met. To demonstrate the results of capacity strengthening in the CSO will take time. Some of the results already achieved in this short period of time, however, deserve mention. As a result of the trainings provided, TSDA has started to practice elements of good

governance within its own structure and is striving to have the same adopted by its member *iddirs*. For instance, TSDA has become open to the extent of posting its main activities and corresponding budgets on its notice board for all to see with updated status each quarter. Decision-making processes about development activities are now carried out in such a way that each member within the constituent member *iddirs* is informed ahead of time and concerns that come from them are discussed in meetings of the council, and accommodated. Information is also regularly shared with the membership and feedback is solicited. Because of the design, monitoring and evaluation training provided to the staff of the Federation, it has been able to design sellable project proposals, two of which have already been funded. The Federation has established a transparent organizational structure well-aligned with its vision; appropriate management systems are in place that indicate authority and responsibility levels for each position; and there is accountability along the structure of the Federation.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

The project's Lessons Learned Review report indicates that there are promising lessons to be incorporated in future interventions of this kind, and that the project is on the right track when it comes to enhancing democratization processes, creating policy dialogues between the different sectors of society and eventually having an impact on poverty through systems and policy changes.

The project has set ambitious goals for itself. These will, of course, take time to achieve, and perhaps even more time to be able to adequately measure and quantify. But already, the work that has been done in capacity building has resulted in noticeable changes in the Federation that give a clear indication that the project is heading in the intended direction.

As partners, CARE and TSDA both have a clear vision of where they are headed; each is understood by the other and they handle project activities in a smooth and collaborative manner. This is in part the result of a residual foundation of trust and confidence built over the course of the UFFW project, but it is also largely because the project's participatory and transparent approach has served to enhance mutual trust and confidence.

Both CARE and TSDA have noticed a heightened level of accountability not only in the Federation but also within its member *iddirs* over the past two years. It seems the trainings, the interactions in the process of project implementation and the mentoring that CARE project staff provides to executive committee members in applying rights-based and good-governance approaches is paying dividends. Project participants report feeling empowered to address some of the major concerns their communities face, including problems associated with HIV/AIDS, elderly people, orphans and vulnerable children.

“

*After the RBA and human rights trainings conducted by the project, we are able to recognize that the real cause of poverty emanates from power relations in society. That is why many people go poorer and others become richer. So we are now able to challenge anyone who tries to deprive us of our rights; the only thing we need to do is organize ourselves to be more effective in this kind of challenge.*

”

MAJOR KASSAHUNE FELEKE, Chairman of the Federation

Such confidence and the understanding that underlies it are two more good signs. Now, as a direct result of project intervention, CSOs are becoming aware of the real causes of their deprivation and are beginning to address them in an organized and peaceful manner. There is an understanding in the project area in general and within the Federation in particular that poverty is structurally caused by policy makers — some groups in society are not given as much attention as others—and that poverty-related problems can best be addressed through structural changes and pro-poor policies.

The need for policy changes is perhaps clearest—at least where the Federation is concerned—in regard to the issue of lease-free land acquisition. The Federation has been looking to gain access to land so that it can parcel it out to CSOs that would use it to implement projects that render social and economic services. The same land issue has also led to a stronger advocacy agenda in the project. The Federation now emphasizes land rights as an important concern of CSOs in all of its public meetings, including a recent public meeting for CSOs organized by the municipality, where it raised the issue with both CSO representatives and municipal bureau heads.

Building the capacity of civil society groups in this way will, in a best case scenario, eventually lead through some difficult territory — questioning power relations is something that is seldom welcomed by those who hold the reins of power. So far this has not been a serious problem for the project partners, because the government is promoting good governance and would like CSOs to participate. However, words have yet to be transformed into practice. What is officially said through the media and at public gatherings is not seen in practice on the ground. Among other things, this has meant that the Federation has been unable to establish the community resource center and other training premises it had planned to construct.

If a thriving civil society sector is to develop in Ethiopia and play a role of genuine partnership with other stakeholders, it is very important that this model be considered elsewhere and replicated in other settings. The lessons learned from this case should therefore be tested and applied in other cases of collaboration between donors, government, NGOs and CSOs in order to develop a generalizable and replicable model for invigorating the civil society sector. It is suggested that a long-term consolidation phase include more emphasis on advocacy. The bottlenecks in terms of policy and guidelines for CSOs' role in development have already been reduced. However, further work in this area could facilitate the development of genuine partnership between CSOs and government. In particular policy and practice regarding land access, involvement in income-generating activities, savings and credit schemes, health insurance, and taxation could facilitate transparency, efficiency and good governance of CSOs seeking to become more involved in development.

Even though we have yet to see the bulk of the results from a project like this one, it is clear that rights-based and governance approaches to civil society strengthening are the way forward as they address the fundamental causes of poverty through helping to ensure that all available public resources are accessed and enjoyed by all social groups, and by promoting the development of an inclusive society in which all people enjoy their fundamental human rights.

CARE Ethiopia is hugely encouraged by the progress the project has made so far and is committed to continuing with it in the long term. It is also encouraged both by its changing role and by the results of applying governance and rights-based approaches to this project.



The goal of the Farmer Training project is to improve the livelihood security of small and marginal farmers, in particular female farmers, the aim being to promote sustainable use of existing resources by intensified farm management. In addition to strengthening capabilities through a Farmer Field School (FFS) approach and marketing of homestead garden products, the project has introduced a number of rights-based elements. It is helping participants to access *char* lands by orienting them on the relevant policies, procedures and systems, and by facilitating linkages between participants and national and local officials.



CARE BANGLADESH

## Local Initiatives in Farmer Training

The *Local Initiatives in Farmer Training* project (Farmer Training, aka LIFT) has a long history at CARE Bangladesh. Its methodology has changed through a succession of projects dating back to 1986 in different parts of the country ranging from the north to the south of the country and through changing donor hands.

The current Farmer Training project, being implemented in the greater Noakhali Districts, began in 1998 with funding from Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA). With a budget of slightly less than US \$3 million and including a two-year no-cost extension, it will run until July 2006. The six-year project is being implemented in three two-year phases, each focusing on a specific geographic cluster. Clusters 1 and 2 are currently being phased out with no plans to continue working in those areas during the no-cost extension period. Cluster 3 has received intensive training for two years and will continue receiving some support through the end of the extension period. Meanwhile, preparations are being made to engage with a fourth geographic cluster with a slightly modified methodology in the remaining two years (see Analysis and Lessons Learned Section below).

Farmer Training started as a non-RBA project, but in the no-cost extension phase, it has incorporated strategies to address denial of some rights of its target population. This case study will highlight the process and activities that the project has taken to address poverty and to secure improved livelihood of small and marginal farmers. It also highlights some of the issues associated with effecting the change from a non-RBA project to one attempting to adopt a rights-based approach.

### Context<sup>27</sup>

Bangladesh is located in the largest delta in the world. Life in Bangladesh is often hampered by natural disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones and tornadoes. At

<sup>27</sup> Much of this description of the Bangladesh context is adapted directly from the project proposal, which in turn cites as its source: Draft Programme Support Document & Annexes, Support to the Agricultural Sector, Danida, May 1997.

850 people per square kilometer, Bangladesh's population density is among the highest in the world.

In spite of the large size of the government administration (above 1 million employees in 1992-93) service delivery remains limited. Effectively, 42% of the revenue budget in 1996 was spent on government staff salaries, leaving inadequate budgets for the provision of public goods and services. The inadequacies reflect not only resource constraints, but also organizational and procedural problems. Many public-sector bodies suffer from poor management, lack of transparency, and weak monitoring and accountability.

Land is extremely scarce in Bangladesh and there is a close link between land ownership and poverty, since land is the most important income-generating asset. In 1994, the top 10% of households controlled 51% of the total land and had a 32% share of the total income. The incidence of poverty is as high as 78% among the landless.

## PROJECT AREA

Noakhali is located in southern Bangladesh, in the delta of the river Meghna. Administratively the greater Noakhali area is divided into three districts, which are further subdivided into 15 *thanas/upazillas*.<sup>28</sup> About 65% of the land in Noakhali is *char* land (land deposited by the river during the last 50 years). The demarcation between mainland and the *chars* is not stable, given that within 20- to 30-year cycles, new *char* land emerges and mainland households can disappear. Parts of greater Noakhali have a very low elevation, resulting in chronic waterlogging problems. This is aggravated by heavy rainfall in the monsoon. Agricultural production, particularly in *char* land, is hampered by salinity.

The gap between the rich and the poor is much wider in the coastal *chars*. Landowners have occupied hundreds of acres of newly raised land on which poor farmers have no rights, work mainly as sharecroppers and are subject to frequent evictions. *Char* dwellers are mainly unskilled agricultural laborers and their livelihood depends on the land; alternatively, male heads of households migrate in search of employment, and frequently do not return. Based on data available at the time of project design, it was estimated that more than 50% of the population was extremely or moderately poor, and that there was a correlation between malnutrition and the low and inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables in the area.

The Noakhali area is traditionally among the most socially and religiously conservative in the country. The majority of the women in the area (indeed, in Bangladesh) are caught between two vastly different worlds: one is determined by culture and traditions that confine them to the homestead; the other is economic realities that push them out of the homestead for survival.

## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Generally, adult males are focused on income-earnings (mono cash-crops and labor) and women and children on expenditure-savings (homestead gardening). The scope for expenditure-saving lies in full use of the household's own homestead resources, access to product residuals from the property of neighbors/friends, and access to common

<sup>28</sup> Thana is the former name for sub-districts. In a recent reorganization, the majority of thanas were redesignated as upazillas. An upazilla is a sub-district, comprising approximately 10 unions.

property resources. The contribution of such homestead activities is often underestimated, but income from homestead production ranges from 28% to 47% of the total household income for land-poor households. From 50% to 60% of the produce grown in the homestead is sold to meet other household expenses. Underutilization of homestead production is a large factor in a household's level of food security, and depends on:

- The level of adoption of improved cultivation practices
- The presence of an institutional mechanism through which women can group together and get access to technical information, quality seedlings and seeds, etc.
- Appropriate markets for their production

Ideally, ownership and management responsibility for newly raised *char* lands rests with the forest department for the first 30 years. According to policy, the forest department should plant plantations to stabilize *char* lands and should then transfer the ownership to the land department, which has responsibility for allocating land to deserving households. The land distribution policy gives preferential access to landless and poor households. However, in practice it is the rural elite with muscle power and good connections that most often get access to *char* lands. The poor are often not aware of the land distribution policy, and even if they know the policy, the process is too complex, and they lack the time and the power required to maintain control over *char* lands.

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## Project Design

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The long-term goal of Farmer Training is “to improve the *livelihood security*, including nutritional well-being, for small and marginal farmers, in particular female farmers, in greater Noakhali districts,” the aim being “to promote sustainable (social, ecological and economical) use of existing resources of targeted small-scale farmers by intensified management and utilization of the farmers’ land within or adjacent to their homesteads by strengthening the farmers’ capabilities in Bio-Intensive Gardening, marketing and sale of products, and organization, planning and management of future activities within the homestead garden productions.”

The three intermediate objectives are:

- To strengthen the capacity of farmers, in particular female farmers, to apply their self-help potential; to make use of their homesteads and available natural resources for maximizing income and expenditure-savings through bio-intensive gardening and tree management techniques; and to interact effectively with government and other services concerned with agricultural development
- To establish a rural system of local suppliers of seedlings and seed production and tree management services

- To improve nutritional well-being of farming households from the first-phase project area

In the last year, the project has also incorporated some rights-based pilot initiatives in an effort to bring the project into further alignment with current organizational goals.

## PROJECT AND TARGET GROUP SELECTION

Selection of participants in the first cluster was done informally through field visits by CARE staff and meetings with farmers. For the second and third clusters, participant selection was made based on a well-being analysis—a community-focused participatory process that allows community members to discuss and set criteria to categorize different households in the community, based on their socioeconomic conditions. Approximately 90% of participants in the project are women.

By the end of June 2004 the project had reached a total of 28,956 participants in nine selected *thanas/upazillas*. This comprises three major categories of participants: 570 local suppliers who are trained to manage vegetable/tree seedling nurseries and to provide associated technical training to farmers; 9,546 primary participants who participate in Farmer Field Schools and associated activities; and 18,840 associate participants who participate in about 25% of Farmer Field School sessions but primarily benefit through learning links to primary participants. In addition, 15,462 school students have been trained in home gardening and food-based nutrition through classroom programs.

Intervention has been, for the most part, at the local level involving community participants and activities and links to local-level service providers. Late in the project life cycle Farmer Training began meeting with other projects and government agencies at the national level for information sharing.

## Implementation Strategy

### PARTNERSHIPS AND EXTERNAL LINKAGES

Farmer Training was designed as a 100% direct service delivery project and hence, in its earlier stages, had no genuine partners. Since July 2002, Farmer Training has engaged in capacity-building activities with six local NGOs to build technical capacity in Farmer Field School methodology. In the no-cost extension period, Farmer Training plans to work with at least four local NGOs as implementing partners with responsibility for half of the fourth-cluster Farmer Field Schools.

The project also has a relationship described as “a necessary functional linkage and affiliation” with various government service providers, particularly with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). These links have been primarily at the local level and involved establishing relationships between farmer groups and DAE Block Supervisors.<sup>29</sup> More recently Farmer Training has engaged in more active collaboration with DAE in establishing Information and Service Centers in remote locations in project areas (described further in the section titled “Adjustments” below).

<sup>29</sup> A block is the smallest unit within the agricultural extension system. Each block supervisor attends 900-1,200 farmers where no irrigation facilities are available, and 600-900 farmers where irrigation facilities are available.

## ACTIVITIES

### Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

The central activity of the Farmer Training project is the farmer field school approach to building the capacities of Primary Participants to apply, test and adapt innovations associated with bio-intensive gardening. One of the field school participants is jointly selected by participants and the project to be trained as a Local Supplier of seed, seedlings, saplings and vegetables.

### Associations

Upon completion of a two-year FFS cycle local suppliers and primary participants are encouraged to organize themselves into associations. These are mostly informal groupings not registered under any Act or with any organization. They have a simple committee with chairperson, secretary and treasurer, hold regular and ad hoc meetings and often collect savings among themselves. Associations are a means toward sustaining local initiatives and represent a potential base for collective empowerment.

### Schools Programs

Farmer Training supports selected schools in homestead gardening by providing a training of trainers for two teachers and the head teacher in each school. Jointly with the students, the trained teachers develop trial/learning plots for practical demonstration with two to five classes.

### Adjustments to Project Methodology or Orientation

Some adjustments to implementation approaches and activities have been made over the life of the project. These adjustments have been in response to lessons learned from the field, recommendations from a mid-term review and changes in CARE Bangladesh strategic directions as outlined in a new Long Range Strategic Plan.

The original project log-frame contained an indicator for nutrition training for a small group of participants. However, after effective piloting of the nutrition initiative in three unions, the project mainstreamed food-based nutrition training in FFS sessions for all third-cluster participants.

In July 2004, Farmer Training began implementing “one-stop” agricultural service centers in collaboration with the government’s Department of Agricultural Extension. Staff members from DAE and other service providers are brought together on predetermined dates to provide services to farmers in remote locations in project areas. These Information and Service Centers were initially facilitated by CARE project staff, but responsibility is gradually being shifted to local government (Union Parishad) leadership. This initiative is meant to strengthen collaboration between Farmer Training and DAE and to gradually give the legitimate local actors the driving seat.

Farmer Training has also begun to incorporate explicitly rights-based programming in its project activities. In the third cluster, Farmer Field Schools have included sessions on gender issues (such as dowry and early marriage) particularly relevant in the Bangladeshi context. The rationale for including these topics in the otherwise agricultural curriculum is that gender discriminatory practices can threaten gains in homestead production. The project has also recently initiated “Imam Forums” in which CARE staff facilitate bi-monthly meetings with religious leaders to discuss both agricultural and gender issues in order to “leverage women’s rights issues in the

community.” The project is also planning to facilitate processes to help targeted beneficiaries to access *char* lands by orienting them on the relevant policies, procedures and systems, and by facilitating linkages between beneficiaries, government officials and locally elected Union *parishads*.

The project has planned further changes for the no-cost extension period including incorporation of more rights-based elements in its programming. These will be discussed in more detail in the Analysis and Lessons Learned section.

## Results and Impact

The project monitoring system is principally based on quantitative information collected by project staff. Indicators related to the more rights-based objectives in the no-cost extension have not yet been developed. Project documents (including the mid-term review) report primarily on activity-based indicators and provide anecdotal evidence or piecemeal data from monitoring systems. Staff interviews similarly reveal primarily anecdotal evidence of impacts. The donor-sponsored mid-term review mentions that the monitoring framework is unclear and does not comment on measurable impact with respect to the overall livelihood security goal of the project. However, some sense of project impact can be assembled from available evidence supplemented by observations from a brief field visit.

Available data suggests that agricultural education aspects of the project are having desired effects. There are reported increases in production, consumption and sales of vegetables and fruits, as well as significant adoption of new technologies. The mid-term report also praises effects of the Farmer Field School approach that “has become a concrete focal reference point for the primary participants who, in addition to being trained in homestead gardening technologies and messages, also internalize social stimulation and solidarity.”

Impact assessment with respect to interaction with government and other service providers and self-help potential, as well as the emphasis on improvement of conditions for female participants is less well-documented. However, there is some anecdotal evidence that women’s status is improving; male members consult with female counterparts in making family decisions, and enhanced status for women within the family is attributed to greater contribution to income generation.

There seems to be great success with respect to development of a rural system of local suppliers of seedlings and seed production and tree management services. The vast majority of local suppliers are thriving, with average monthly incomes having doubled between the first and third clusters. Local suppliers have formed their own associations (28 at last count), which are functioning as platforms for sharing business issues such as negotiating selling prices, creating new markets and expanding market shares.



A knowledge-and-practices evaluation has not yet been completed, but the mid-term evaluation identifies a “visible impact” of the nutrition pilot on production, consumption and sale of vegetables and fruits.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Farmer Training has taken a number of steps in the latter half of the project life cycle intended to enhance sustainability. Close collaboration with DAE in implementing Information and Service Centers in rural areas and the passing of responsibility for service centers to Union parishad officials are promising steps. Similarly, capacity-building efforts with local NGOs during the third cluster and plans to engage NGOs as major implementing partners in the fourth cluster offer the potential for technical knowledge and sustainable effects to remain in project areas beyond the life of the project.

Local suppliers and local supplier networks seem fairly well entrenched. Based on evidence from the field, it is estimated that 70% of these will continue in business after the project ends.

Although the project has taken steps to build structural support (formation of associations and more recently the formation of 10 officially registered CBOs from FFS groups) for sustainable impacts, it is too early to comment on their survival after the project ceases to operate. However, based on previous experiences, it is anticipated that roughly half of them are likely to survive. The success factors for survival are dynamic leadership, systems and procedure for internal control, participatory and transparent decision-making processes and the capacity to tap external resources and services.

The no-cost extension phase puts greater emphasis on sustainability. The project will make a deliberate attempt to work not only with local NGOs but also with Union parishads and other actors so that enhanced capacity developed by the project is retained at the local level.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Farmer Training project, certainly from the RBA perspective, is that this is a project attempting transition to a rights-based approach. The application for a no-cost extension in 2004 has provided an opportunity for a re-conceptualization to bring the project in closer alignment with new organizational priorities, not the least of which is a transition to rights-based approaches. During the no-cost extension phase, in addition to building technical capacity of the participants on homestead production, the project will make systematic attempts to address some non-technical issues such as gender discrimination and no/limited access to newly raised *char* land.

The food-based nutrition education was mainstreamed based on the learning that increased homestead production of vegetables and fruit, which tends to increase consumption, does not automatically result in better nutritional status of the family members. Enhanced knowledge on food value of different items and changes in hygiene are also essential.

Excluding the no-cost extension phase, the project was never intended to result in greater access to decision-makers, to rights, or to resources beyond establishing sustainable linkages to service providers and the knowledge and technical resources

they can provide. And there was no explicit advocacy element in the original project, which was designed more than four years ago. However, there has been an explicit attempt to change practices, for example, by bridging the gap between the farmers and frontline staff of the mainstream agricultural extension services and by facilitating linkages. Empowering participants to better represent themselves and to access their rights by providing information and involving Union *parishads* in the discussions is another recent attempt. The project has also recently begun to facilitate and motivate elected Union *parishad* councilors to set up and run one-stop service and information centers.

Likewise, the project was designed to address accountability with regard to the limited “right” to agricultural services, but not to explicitly address responsibility and accountability with respect to rights-holders and duty-bearers in general. The shift toward rights-based approaches represents not just a change in on-the-ground implementation methodology, but a change of discourse—an entirely new perspective on the nature of development intervention and the role of international development organizations. Partnership and participation, for instance, represent major areas of change from Farmer Training’s 1998 original design to the 2004 no-cost extension proposal. Farmer Training was the only remaining CARE Bangladesh project based 100% on direct service delivery. In the new no-cost extension phase, fully half of the new FFSs will be implemented by local NGO partners.

Many non-technical issues such as participation, working with locally elected bodies and local NGOs, and strengthening local input supply systems rather than directly supporting selected FFS groups to set up seed businesses, are explicitly redressed in the language of the new no-cost extension design. The challenge is to make the transition smooth by further developing understanding of staff and building their capacity to meet that challenge—in other words to live up to the participatory and collaborative discourse represented in the new proposal. Farmer Training acknowledges in the new proposal the need for staffing changes. The project has already begun the process of reducing total staff in recognition of the significantly reduced direct-delivery component. The proposal also recognizes that staff in the new phase will require different skill sets. The identification of skills appropriate for working with partners and the effectiveness of new staffing policies in implementing fundamental changes in the project approach to partnership and participation represent key opportunities for learning about projects engaged in such a transition.

The new focus on rights has also influenced the training curriculum. In addition to technical content, the project proposes to address key entitlement issues associated with homestead production or ensuring that gains made through homestead production are not lost. Issues to be addressed include land access and tenure, nutrition “especially related to intra-household distribution of food” and “specific factors which increase the vulnerability of women such as early marriage, dowry, separation, divorce and inheritance.” These sorts of issues require a fundamental shift, not just in the way we work, but in our understandings, relationships and roles.

Project documents and interviews with staff reflect an awareness of critical rights issues relevant to the project intervention. For example, land ownership and rights to *char* land, and conservative social practices and values with respect to gender were cited by project staff as among the challenges to be tackled in this latest phase. Efforts to improve women’s social position through homestead production activities alone is

not sufficient given the deep-rooted gender biases that are observed in most Bangladeshi institutions and rural societies. Associations and project-affiliated CBOs tend to be monopolized by male group members—a situation that the project intends to influence.

Farmer Training's attempt to better align with rights-based discourse was to some extent limited by DANIDA. DANIDA is yet to be fully convinced of the greater need of working in more conflict-stricken *char* areas, where denial of rights is more pronounced. Moreover, Farmer Training is operating from the starting point of a basic project design, which was never intended to explicitly employ a rights-based approach. This will engage, among other things, structural design issues (e.g., a monitoring and evaluation system designed to collect very different sorts of data); staff and partner capacity building issues (e.g., in the language and approaches of RBA); and project implementation issues (e.g., whether Farmer Training is prepared for the risks and challenges that may be encountered when raising politically and socially sensitive issues in the community).

The encouraging point is that Farmer Training staff now realize that the standards for success have shifted, which forces them to think critically and to acquire new skills required for deeper analysis of underlying causes of poverty and marginalization and to come up with appropriate responses. In doing so they keep in mind that the outputs agreed between CARE and DANIDA are to be produced at the end of the project life. Skills to enhance homestead productivity do certainly help women, but in order to sustain gains in productivity enhancement, women need to be empowered so that they can better articulate and claim their rights and entitlements.



## The Guatemala Empowerment for Small Producers project

has assisted farming families to come together to form community-based organizations to promote the integrated development of their members in the economic, social and political spheres. These community units federated to form associations whose principal purpose was to help market the agricultural products of the community units. In a later phase, the project promoted political participation at the local level as a way to achieve greater benefits for the rural communities.



OXFAM AMERICA (GUATEMALA) AND THE ASSOCIATION FOR  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## **Economic, Political and Social Empowerment for Small Producers in Guatemala's Central Highlands**

**S**an José Poaquil and San Martín Jilotepeque, both located in Chimaltenango province in Guatemala's Central Highlands, are the towns where the Association for Technical Assistance and Development Projects (ADAPD) has implemented the *Economic, Political and Social Empowerment for Small Producers in Guatemala's Central Highlands Project* (Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project). Most of the people in these towns are members of the Kaqchiquel indigenous group, which has preserved its own language and traditions. The indigenous population in this region suffered severe repression during a 36-year civil war in which more than 200,000 people were murdered or disappeared.

In 1996, after a process of dialogue between the government and guerrilla forces, peace accords were signed and the civil war in Guatemala came to an end. This allowed people who had been displaced from rural areas to return to their homes and to strengthen community organization in order to further their development. In this new stage, popular participation at the local governance level became possible for the first time in 34 years.

In 1984 a group of professionals working on a volunteer basis started ADAPD as a local organization to provide humanitarian aid for people affected by the armed conflict. In 1993 the government granted it legal recognition, and it began to work more systematically. In that same year, ADAPD defined its strategy, basing it on community development and economic growth. ADAPD's strategy included the creation of several grassroots groups that share the same vision and agreed to work together.

This case study examines the *Economic, Political and Social Empowerment for Small Producers in Guatemala's Central Highlands Project* (Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project) sponsored by ADAPD and jointly implemented by community units for integrated development, the Association of Small Producers of the Central Highlands (ADEPA) and the Coordinating Group of the Kaqchiquel Women (the Women's Group).

## Context

According to reports from the United Nations and other groups, most Guatemalans live in poverty. For most Guatemalans, basic needs are not met, and chronic malnutrition is widespread. In 2001, Guatemala ranked 119<sup>th</sup> on the global human development index.

Seventy percent of Guatemala's 11.9 million inhabitants are members of indigenous groups. A small group of privileged people holds political, economic, social and cultural power, and excludes the majority of the population from power. As a result, the poor are getting poorer and the richer are getting richer.

Chimaltenango province, the main working area of the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project, has 386,275 inhabitants (1999), of which 77% are indigenous people of Kaqchiquel origin. According to United Nations sources, Chimaltenango is among the provinces with the lowest development indicators in the country, while the capital city, Guatemala City, ranks highest. For ADAPD, this disparity illustrates the exclusionary social model of Guatemala.

San José Poaquil and San Martín Jilotepeque both grow mainly grains, coffee, vegetables and fruits. With assistance from the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project, coffee-growing has been reinvigorated on small plantations and has become the area's main source of income. In this zone, access to land is limited for the peasant population, which mainly farms on small plots. The average family plot is six *cuerdas* (0.67 hectares) in San José Poaquil, and smaller in San Martín where large farms are predominant. Many small producers lease land for their cultivation.

In the 1980s, during the armed conflict, these municipalities suffered repression, and entire communities often had to flee. Human rights groups report that 80% of the population was forcibly displaced. When the peace accords were signed and the war ended in 1996, many families, aided by humanitarian organizations, returned to their communities and began to rebuild their lives. The peace accords gave rise to greater openness and trust, and a certain freedom for community organization.

The gravity of the current situation is also reflected in the economic and social indicators, which will not be helped by the signing of CAFTA (the free trade agreement between the United States and Central America), and the implementation of the Puebla-Panama Plan. In Central America, Guatemala in particular, the agricultural sector is important because it produces food and provides jobs; yet CAFTA does not provide medium-term or long-term protection for small producers. The market is distorted by the subsidies and other aid that the United States provides to its producers. Since this affects the small producers of basic grains, vegetables and other products, it could end up undermining Guatemala's productive base and its food security.

ADAPD's analysis is that while there have been some political improvements, Guatemala does not show signs of significant structural changes. There have not been changes in indicators such as equitable income distribution, political participation of the entire population, distribution of property, gender equality or reactivation of the domestic market. On the contrary, during the recent government there was a drift to the right and an increase in common crime and political violence, particularly the intimidation of human rights groups.

While there have been some political improvements, Guatemala does not show signs of significant structural changes. There have not been changes in indicators such as equitable income distribution, political participation of the entire population, distribution of property, gender equality or reactivation of the domestic market.

## Project Activities and Results

The basic working unit for the project is a family working on its own piece of land. In each of the communities in each municipality, these families come together to form community productive units for integrated development. These community units promote the integrated development of their members in the economic, social and political spheres. At a higher level, these community units federate to form an Association of Small Producers of the Central Highlands (ADEPA).

ADEPA was formed to help market the agricultural products of the community units. Another organization, the Coordinating Group of the Kaqchiquel Women (the Women's Group), seeks to unite all the women working at different levels in the project. In this setting, the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project's role is to provide direct support for the community units, the Women's Group and ADEPA. This support takes the form of advice, information, training, fundraising and lobbying. In practice, ADAPD is a non-governmental organization supporting membership-based grassroots organizations.

The goal of the four-year project is to improve the quality of life of 1,500 families in 26 communities in Guatemala's central highlands via training, consolidating their community organization, and citizen participation. The project's specific objectives are: to raise the level of citizen participation in 26 working communities by training their leaders in preparing community development projects and fundraising; to strengthen the Information and Networking Center; and to do follow-up work with government institutions and private development groups.

During the first years in which the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project helped the towns of San José Poaquil and San Martín Jilotepeque, it tailored its work to respond to the demands of the people in the limited political space available due to the war. During those years, in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, ADAPD brought humanitarian aid to the people. In the next stage, it added technical-assistance programs aimed at improving agricultural production and introducing new crops. In this stage the emphasis was on community organizing, through the formation of the community units and the training of agricultural promoters.

While agricultural productivity increased, households continued to live at subsistence levels. ADAPD found that the main problem was a group of intermediaries who traditionally operated in the communities, buying produce at low prices and cheating the people when it came to weighing and measuring the produce. ADEPA was created to deal with this problem. Its job was to represent the communities on marketing questions, with the aim being to get rid of the traditional intermediaries. Later ADEPA

would have the additional responsibility of providing loans and agricultural supplies to the community units. In addition, the Women's Group was formed to help women participate more actively in the development of their communities and in the economic activities promoted by ADAPD.

Through this kind of organizing, and by training the promoters who work in agricultural development and integrated development, the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project has tried to get the community involved in the market. According to its analysis of the problems facing rural groups, the community's economy is the area where it is most vulnerable to the skewed distribution of wealth in Guatemalan society. Thus, ADAPD decided it was necessary for the communities to take control of

the three markets that determine their income: the selling of produce, the buying of supplies, and the financial market.

For the project's third stage, ADAPD and ADEPA proposed that political participation at the local level would be important as a way to achieve greater benefits for the rural communities. Their analysis was that agricultural production, and the marketing of their products, were being negatively affected by the lack of good roads, highways and other services, and for that reason it would be important for local governments to invest in these areas. They also hoped to have influence on municipal projects that would provide social benefits for the communities.

This case study focuses mainly on this third stage, whose aim is to strengthen citizen participation, fundraising skills, and organization in the areas of production and marketing.

### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

ADAPD and ADEPA have been promoting their organizations' active participation in the political life of the municipalities since 1995. At that time they helped to form a civic committee in San José Poaquil. It was made up of people associated with ADEPA and others who were not members of the communities. The civil committee took part in the town's mayoral election, but it did not win the election. Still convinced that political participation was necessary, the committee decided to do so more as a pressure group than as part of municipal government.

In the 1999 municipal elections, there was another opportunity to participate, this time in coalition with the party that had finished second in the previous election.



After examining the various constraints facing voters in earlier elections—such as lack of voter organization, lack of information about the citizen registry, and problems in tallying the ballots—the civic committee decided to take part in the coalition, with its members making up 50% of the ticket. This time, they won, and thus began a period of co-government with the Christian Democratic Party in San José Poaquil.

With the objective of continuing as part of the local government in San José Poaquil and promoting a similar experience in the other municipality, the project developed a series of activities aimed at resolving the problems faced in the earlier elections. In particular, there were sessions for analyzing the political situation and providing training about the electoral process. The aim here was to insure that the majority of the population eligible to vote would feel motivated and would have the requisites necessary in order to exercise the right to vote.

In 2004, the committee ran a third time, but its coalition with the Christian Democratic party lost the elections, in spite of the fact that a survey conducted in mid-2003 indicated that more people would be participating in the elections, and that their participation would favor the coalition. They believe they lost the election due to corruption, suspecting that the party now in power bought votes. This led the group to conclude that strengthening community organization that could have an impact at the municipal level was more important than ever.

## **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDRAISING BY THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

Most of the project's activities are related to the training of leaders of the community units. ADAPD advises the community units and ADEPA in the analysis of problems, diagnosis of community needs, fundraising and follow-up on projects. At the same time, ADAPD contacts the funding groups to explain its support work for the grassroots organizations and to pressure for approval of the funding requests.

The process, which takes about a year, consists of gathering information about the requisites for accessing funds, training the community unit leaders, advising them in the presentation of project proposals, and seeking to have an impact on the decisions about proposals.

As a result of the training and advice provided by the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project, most of the community units have been able to complete applications for government social compensation funds, and to do the necessary work to get their requests approved. Most of these public funds were established as part of the reconstruction process that has followed the signing of the peace accords.

ADAPD's intervention encourages community units to directly seek funding for infrastructure projects in the areas of housing, highways, potable water and electric energy. During the project's four years, the community units and ADEPA, with the support of the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project, applied for more than 100 projects valued at more than US \$1.6 million, and most of these applications were granted.

Besides the community infrastructure projects, the community units, ADEPA and the Women's Group, with technical advice from the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project, got loans for the purchase of materials used in growing and marketing agricultural products, and "in kind" donations of food (along the lines of food-for-work programs), equipment and school supplies. In order to request these

community development projects, the community units had to be legally recognized by the municipal and provincial governments. Achieving this recognition was facilitated by ADEPA's participation in the coalition government in San José Poaquil, and by the good relations that were established with the municipality of San Martín Jilotepeque.

### INFORMATION CENTER

ADAPD concluded that the communities' development work was limited by a lack of information. For that reason, an information center was set up as part of the project. The information center built a database that allows the stakeholders to stay informed about funding possibilities for social compensation projects, and about the requisites for obtaining these funds. The center also gathers information about technical and financial resources that are available from the private sector and can be used for community development work. As part of this project, the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project provided the technical equipment for the information center and the program necessary for maintaining the database.

### STRENGTHENING MARKETING ABILITIES

Given the problems that producers have faced in selling their products, ADEPA has assumed responsibility for ensuring that community units get better prices, especially for coffee and fruits—the rationale being that organized groups will get better prices for their products and may eventually be able to eliminate the intermediaries who have traditionally bought the products.

Practically speaking, ADEPA has operated in a simple way, gathering the small amounts that each family produces and then transporting them and selling them in bulk to get a better price. It does not add value to the produce by, for example, processing it or warehousing it until a time when prices are better. In effect, ADEPA has become a commercial intermediary that represents the interests of small producers and gets better prices for them. ADEPA has also taken responsibility for purchasing fertilizer collectively and distributing small loans for production.

ADAPD has emphasized training the community leaders in the technical side of the production process, focusing on the use of organic supplies and on quality-control procedures. It has also strengthened their negotiation skills.

## Impact

The project's main impacts have been in the areas of political participation and increased earnings of families as a result of collective marketing.

The project has led to changes and awakened longings about the real possibility of obtaining local power by direct participation in municipal government. As a result of its entry into electoral politics, ADEPA, as a federation of 15 indigenous communities, has now had the experience of holding local power. The experience has included difficulties, and has had mixed results. The decision to participate in local politics was seen basically as a way of improving the communities' economic conditions.

ADEPA leaders maintain that their involvement in municipal government in the 1999-2003 period facilitated public funding for community improvements—in a context in which, generally speaking, rural indigenous populations are ignored when the central government makes decisions about where it will make investments. Being

part of local government meant that communities associated with ADEPA were able to get registered legally and take advantage of the opportunities offered by social compensation funds.

In light of their defeat in the last election, communities are reflecting on the concepts of citizen participation and political participation, and on what is the best way for them to get involved politically. The defeat, due partly to corruption, came exactly at the moment when they were working most closely with the population in training and consciousness-raising about electoral processes, and when the infrastructure projects were in the midst of being implemented. ADAPD and ADEPA both fear that funding for projects benefitting these communities will suffer due to the change in government.

By training leaders of the stakeholders, the project has an impact on their capacity for public participation.

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*We women are politically conscious and trained, we know we'll have to apply pressure to get the benefits which the mayor's office, the central government and other institutions can provide.*

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The well-being of community households has improved: almost 200 houses were built; rural roads were opened, making possible the transportation of people and agricultural products; and electric light and water services were improved in a number of communities. The collective marketing of agricultural products, especially coffee and some fruits, has been a positive experience, in the sense that the families' earnings/incomes have increased. This is less than the legal minimum wage, but more than what people were earning when they marketed their produce through the traditional intermediaries. It is also questionable whether this is sustainable. The family farming plots are small, production has been limited, and the size of the families depending on the plots has increased. In addition, value is not added to the farm produce – for example, via processing – and, in the case of coffee, overproduction on a global level has driven down prices. While ADEPA says that family earnings have increased, neither ADEPA nor ADAPD has up-to-date information about production or about individual and collective sales of produce.

Using money provided by the government, ADAPD and ADEPA have offered loans ranging from \$50 to \$250 for families to care for the coffee plantations, using fertilizer at the right moment, and to diversify production. In addition, given that ADEPA has been able to pay the families for the coffee when they hand it over for marketing, families no longer have to wait to be paid by the coffee-processing facility. Some families have also been able to buy milk-producing cows and to plant basic grains. Now that the families have larger incomes, said one ADEPA leader, “they no longer have to leave home and seek work on the big farms in order to earn extra money. In addition, now their children can go to school. People from the ADEPA communities have now gotten technical degrees.”

At the rate it is going, it is unlikely that ADEPA will be able to continue to collectively market the families' produce. It has not adjusted its methods—especially the

marketing of coffee—in 10 years, not even in reaction to the crisis in the international coffee market. Likewise, its loans methodology has not changed. ADEPA will have to reform its lending policies and increase the volume of its loans if it hopes to cover its operating costs.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

Projects using a rights-based approach and those using a needs-based approach are fundamentally different, even though both seek to improve people's lives. RBA programs emphasize not only needs and rights, but also responsibilities, in particular the government's legal obligation to promote and protect people's rights. RBA projects also build the capacity of rights bearers, so that they can insist on their rights and on government accountability.

As part of the current project, community units have raised funds for a large number of social infrastructure projects to help their communities develop. However, these projects were more or less defined by the funding unit within the government, not by the communities themselves.

The aim of ADAPD in this project has been to make the families and the community socially dynamic and self-supporting actors. This is consistent with a rights-based approach. It is good that the project has helped the community units to take responsibility for the carrying out of agreements reached with the agencies providing public funds and with outside cooperating agencies. Still, an element of dependence continues to exist in the relationship between ADAPD and the grassroots organizations that were formed. Sustainability is thus suspect.

The project's work with women can also be seen in these terms. Although an organization was formed specifically for women, it does not have its own plans and it does not have a gender focus. It has received its working logic from ADAPD. To be sure, the women have benefited from the project, especially in the advances in social infrastructure. But there has not been a change in the women's participation in decision-making in the town government or in other organizations that go beyond the local community.

As for political participation, the Economic Empowerment for Small Producers project has made an important contribution by providing the community units with training and consciousness-raising about the electoral process. But beyond that, the value of the project's political participation is questionable. If the only way that civil society can influence local government is by *becoming* local government, big questions remain about the real impact this project has had on the capacity of civil society to influence and monitor local governance.

Although the problem analysis identifies underlying causes of poverty, and potential threats to the livelihood security of Guatemalan smallholders (such as CAFTA, equitable income distribution, distribution of property, or gender equality), the project makes no attempt to address these fundamental issues.

In conclusion, while life may have improved for the 26 organized communities and for the families associated with ADEPA as a result of this project intervention, as conceived, this project is highly unlikely to have a sustainable impact on the rights or on the economic development of poor and marginalized Guatemalan communities. In the absence of critical analysis of power relations, strategic strengthening of

civil society as an interlocutor with and watchdog over government, strengthening government responsibility and accountability, and advocacy for legal and policy reform (at various levels), widescale sustainable benefits to rural communities are highly improbable.



There are two layers of objectives in the Rift Valley Irrigation project: to increase food security and income of subsistence farmers; and to protect their rights to the land. In the process, the Rift Valley Irrigation project hopes to indirectly develop the capacity of the community to think and organize itself. Intermediate results such as increased production will continue to impact the community, especially in regard to land security and the accompanying protection from the pressure of the government and investors.

## OXFAM AMERICA (ETHIOPIA) AND ASSOCIATION FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

# Rift Valley Small-scale Irrigation Project

In the Rift Valley of Ethiopia, scarcity of water is a constant and serious threat to livelihood security. In 2001, an Ethiopian non-profit organization, Selam Environmental Development Association (SEDA), received funding from Oxfam America for the *Rift Valley Small-scale Irrigation Project* (Rift Valley Irrigation) along the shores of Ziway Lake in the Adamitullu-Jido *woreda*,<sup>30</sup> near Ziway town in the Rift Valley. The project began in the village of Washgula, and was replicated in Edo and Walimbula villages in 2002 and 2003, respectively. The duration of each project was one year.

SEDA was founded in 1992 as a national NGO focused on environmental sustainability and human development through participatory projects. This case study examines how SEDA's project was developed and implemented, assesses its impacts on project beneficiaries, and then discusses some changes necessary for participants to realize all of the project's intended benefits.

### Context

Ethiopia is one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, plagued by droughts and, in many parts of the country, lacking in the most basic infrastructure and social services. Rural development has been limited, particularly in the lowland arid regions, which are generally overlooked by the government in favor of the highland areas. Access to education, health facilities and safe, adequate water is lacking throughout these areas, including the Rift Valley. Foreign assistance to Ethiopia reaches many hundreds of

<sup>30</sup> A *woreda* is a district.

millions of US dollars each year, and in 2003 about one-fifth of the population required international food aid.<sup>31</sup> Agriculture and animal husbandry employ 80% of the people and contribute to 60% of the GDP. Only 1,900 square kilometers of land are irrigated, making up just 1.5% of arable land and permanent cropland.<sup>32</sup>

The communist Mengistu regime (also known as the *Dergue*) was overthrown in 1991. Today Ethiopians enjoy comparatively more civil, political, social and cultural rights than they did under the *Dergue*. However, although the Ethiopian constitution guarantees basic rights, many are still unfulfilled and people are afraid to speak out against the government for fear of imprisonment. Peaceful demonstrations have been violently quashed in the past, and journalists, leaders of opposition political parties and even directors of Ethiopian NGOs have been jailed and/or attacked for perceived anti-government activities. NGOs are only permitted to act as service providers and cannot engage in advocacy or civic education, or risk having their certificate—their permit from the Ministry of Justice to operate—revoked.

### LAND TENURE IN ETHIOPIA

The constitution states that all land in the country is owned by “the government and the people.” Under the current land tenure system, the government gives long-term leases to farmers. Consequently, although land tenure is passed down through a family, unproductive land with no tax revenue for the government is at continual risk of being taken from farmers and given to investors, even if it has been held by a family for generations. The government sometimes even works as a facilitator between investors and small farmers, encouraging farmers to sign long-term contracts that give the land to the investors for a small sum per hectare. Other times, because the government is usually receiving little or no tax revenue from the farmer who relies on rain-fed agriculture, the government approaches the small farmers and requires them to pay something to compensate for the lack of tax revenue in order to maintain the rights to the land. Farmers who cannot pay this are forced to contract out the land to investors—or lose it altogether. The investors then introduce irrigation and plant cash crops, making large profits, and farmers work as laborers on their own land. Because

Although land tenure is passed down through a family, unproductive land with no tax revenue for the government is at continual risk of being taken from farmers and given to investors, even if it has been held by a family for generations.

land is not privately owned it cannot be used as collateral for loans, further limiting the ability of small farmers to improve the productivity of their land.

When all else fails, farmers end up moving to Ziway town or other urban areas, or enter into the government’s resettlement program. Resettlement moves them to another part of the region, where they are given no assistance and are effectively cut off from traditional community support.

The government’s policy—that both it and the people jointly own the land—is vague, and in reality the government has more power than the people over the land.

31 Human Rights Watch, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/03/18/ethiop8131.htm>, accessed January 10, 2005.

32 CIA (2004) World Factbook, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html>, accessed January 10, 2005.

Women are particularly disadvantaged due to the male-dominated culture that leaves females without decision-making power or access to income. Women-headed households are disproportionately poor and food insecure. In the current land-tenure system, male household heads are the owners of the land, and it is difficult for women to obtain access to or own land.

## LAKE ZIWAY

The Rift Valley is a tectonically unstable, lowland region, known for its lack of water and for its high rates of malaria. The population of the Ziway region is about 10,000 people, with an average household size of seven.

About 58% of households are considered poor or very poor.<sup>33</sup>

SEDA decided to work only around Ziway because it is a chronic problem area due to food insecurity and environmental degradation, and because so many people have lost their land. The farming community around Lake Ziway is at particular risk because that land is valuable due to the potential for irrigation. Farmers relying on rain-fed agriculture cannot afford the inputs necessary to irrigate the land in order to compete. They are not able to challenge the government because they do not have knowledge of their constitutional rights, and are afraid that they will be considered anti-government and consequently imprisoned.

Irrigation is not traditionally practiced within the culture and technical knowledge was limited prior to the project. The farmers relied solely on the rains, which are inadequate and have been erratic and particularly unreliable for the past five or six years. Maize is the most common crop in the area, although some haricot bean, sorghum, wheat, barley and *teff* are grown. Livestock, as well as fishing and petty trade, are also important to the livelihood of the community.



## Project Design

In 2000, SEDA was working on other projects around Ziway when it was approached by a group of farmers from Washgula village. The farmers had been working as laborers for investors and had learned about irrigation. They owned land around the lake, but it was only being used for grazing, with minimal returns. They had heard of SEDA's activities and decided to request a pump to install an irrigation system.

The Rift Valley Irrigation project relied on the requests of the communities to design and implement the irrigation projects. Communities sent letters to SEDA

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33 Oxfam America, 2001, internal program document.

through their local government, and a Rift Valley Irrigation project officer visited the village to talk to the community, to determine its commitment, to see the land and the feasibility of the irrigation scheme, and to determine what inputs would be needed. According to one Walimbula farmer, “This partnership is positive. We have a mutual understanding. It is a direct relationship based on discussions and problem-solving. The staff is always with us, evaluating and continuously filling in gaps. We are all on equal footing.” The communities donated the labor to the projects.

The Rift Valley Irrigation project subsequently funded small-scale irrigation projects involving several villages around Lake Ziway. The objectives of its interventions were to maintain the ability of farmers to keep their land productive and to pay taxes, thus enabling them to protect their land from forced government expropriation or predatory investors; to give support to farmers to produce nutritionally and economically useful crops and vegetables; to transfer irrigation knowledge to farmers and the surrounding community; to create sustainable household income for the beneficiaries; and to increase the ability of the community to maintain food security rather than rationing food or relying on food assistance.<sup>34</sup> Thus, there were two layers of objectives: one, to increase food security and income of the community; the other, deeper objective, was to protect farmers’ rights to the land and transfer skills to the community. In the process, the Rift Valley Irrigation project hoped to indirectly develop the capacity of the community to think and organize itself. “By providing inputs for irrigation,” the Executive Director and co-founder of SEDA, Dabie Qonshie,<sup>35</sup> says, the Rift Valley Irrigation project could “build the confidence of the society over their right to land...show them they can be good producers, they can protect their land and be good citizens.”

Importantly, because the government does not permit civic projects, this project had to appear to be a basic food security intervention, even though its deeper rights-based objectives were to increase land security, empower women and promote community organization.

## TARGET GROUP

The projects reached 15 households in Washgula village (the pilot project); 27 households in Edo; and 156 households in Walimbula. Women constitute the bigger proportion of rural poor, but due to the culture and tradition, as well as the many household tasks a woman must perform, women have fewer opportunities to earn money and little decision-making power. In this project, therefore, women-headed households were given priority when beneficiaries were chosen. In 2001, the Rift Valley Irrigation project estimated that 65% of the project participants were female. By including women as equal members of the community, and by providing them with the same training and services that the men receive, the project could empower women.

## Results and Impacts

Monitoring and evaluation indicators included crop diversity, household nutrition, changes in income and how it was spent, ability to obtain basic necessities and how

<sup>34</sup> Oxfam America (2003). Internal program document.

<sup>35</sup> Convention in Ethiopia is to use first names to address people, so throughout the case study this custom will be followed.

those were shared among household members, educational changes, health and access to medical treatment, confidence in fight for rights to land, encouragement of others in the projects, and technical and marketing skills. Evaluation and monitoring took place through community discussions, feedback from project committees and local administrators, and the observations of the Rift Valley Irrigation project staff. The community also compared the most successful farmers' plots with those whose plots yielded the least, and analyzed the differences between them.

## INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

There are many intermediate impacts from the first three years of the project, related to food, housing, education, income and assets, business initiative and land security. Nutrition, dietary diversity, meal frequency and food security (as defined by the ability of the people to access an adequate amount of food at all times) were positively affected by the project. Before the project, farmers would grow maize as a staple crop, and would sometimes produce haricot beans and *teff* as cash crops. Now the farmers are growing cabbage, tomatoes, onions, peppers, kale and more, which they eat but also sell.

“*Before we started this project, we didn't have anything to feed our children,”* said a woman at the Walimbula site. *“Usually between February and July there was a chronic food-shortage period. We used to feed our families twice a day, which was not enough. Now there is no shortage, and we can feed them at least three times a day.”*

Income has increased, which has enabled households to purchase assets. Prior to the project, some of the farmers contracted their land to private investors for minimal returns. Now they are able to make a significant profit from the irrigated land. “[Now] we have oxen, cows, goats, horse carts and donkey carts—the project helped us to have these assets.” People also spoke of having improved the condition of their housing, of moving closer to the towns and schools, of being able to spare children's labor and of being able to provide clothes and school expenses for children.

One of the unanticipated results of the project was how much initiative was shown by some of the farmers. According to Dabie many farmers are now “communicating like businessmen and making linkages with businessmen. They are working within the markets in Addis Ababa. They are even starting their own businesses.”

Perhaps most importantly, however, is that the farmers now have increased land security. “Before the project, we didn't have security over our land. Over 30 hectares were taken from us. These four hectares are all we have left. We used to fear it would be taken too, but now we are equal to the investors and have no fear,” said a farmer in Washgula village. A farmer in Edo said, “The government will not ask for the land as long as we pay tax and it is cultivated.”

Finally, there have been effects on the wider community—not all of which were anticipated. The Washgula site raises tree seedlings and constructs mud stoves that are distributed within the wider community. Traditionally, the people within this culture share resources throughout the community. Members of all villages reported sharing

their produce with relatives and neighbors. Newfound skills in irrigation are also being shared, such that these projects can be used as a model for the outside community to learn how to implement and manage a small-scale irrigation system.

### ANTICIPATED LONG-TERM IMPACTS

It is anticipated that the intermediate results discussed above will continue to impact the community in the long term, especially in regard to land security and the accompanying protection from the pressure of the government and investors. It is also anticipated that over time, the project will help the Ziway area to achieve better drought resistance. A Walimbula farmer pointed out that “This *kebele*<sup>36</sup> is known for the dependence on food from the government in previous years, and now we are a *kebele* known for self-sufficiency.”

The project beneficiaries have learned to manage and maintain an irrigation system, to grow different types of crops and to prevent and treat plant diseases. They have also learned to join together and organize themselves, which will allow sustain-



ability for the project and impacts, and will also allow the community to demand certain rights in the future. One of the effects seen by this organization is the recent application of a group of farmers to the government to obtain the certificate to their land, which will provide them greater security compared to relying on land tenure alone. Although the certificate is not yet assured, this initiative is a result of the empowerment created by the project.

The project also helped to prevent resettlement and urban poverty. The families involved in this project are able to remain on their land and feel more secure.

Because the project tried to target women who are traditionally not given access to land, and to include the equitable

distribution of household income and assets as one area of community education, positive impacts relating to gender can be seen and will continue to be seen in the future. The project encourages equitable distribution of household income and assets, and stresses the importance of the work of women and young people in the family fields. The whole family now works together in the fields, giving women and young people a greater say in the community.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

### OBSTACLES AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Obstacles were minimal in terms of basic delivery of the projects; however, the organizations do continue to face obstacles due to the current government when it

<sup>36</sup> A *kebele* is an administrative unit, governed under *woredas*.

comes to discussion or education regarding rights. Being suspected of civic education or anti-government activities could result in the removal of an NGO's certificate or the imprisonment of its employees. Fear of the government limits the activities of both NGOs and beneficiaries. Land rights are an integral aspect of SEDA's irrigation projects around Ziway, but the organization is reluctant to raise its voice very loud. SEDA does participate and initiate discussions regarding the land tenure system, and it does a little bit of advocacy work, but wants to be very careful about how it speaks out. "Advocate groups have 'technical difficulties' on the subjects that the government is sensitive to, and the public is not yet aware of how to advocate. [Advocacy] is a new concept in Ethiopia, and people are afraid to contradict the government because of the *Dergue*," said Dabie. "These issues should be approached carefully by a small, independent organization like SEDA. SEDA can participate in network discussions and share information—to try to tell government officials about the realities—and the officials are happy to listen, but it is also difficult for them to speak openly."

Although reluctance to speak about rights is a legitimate cause for concern for organizations, advocacy will need to be a part of these projects. Access to water is a primary need—and right—of rural communities throughout the country. The Rift Valley Irrigation project does not have the capacity to provide water projects for all of the Ethiopians who are currently without access. In order to have an impact on a wider scale, the public will need to be mobilized to advocate for their rights (to land tenure and for basic infrastructure) and to ensure that the government is held accountable to the needs of its citizens.

Another issue is the high demand for these projects. Both projects have had effects far beyond the number of official beneficiaries, but all of the rain-fed maize failed in the area this year, which has compounded the problems of the surrounding community. There is increased pressure on project participants to share their assets.

One concern for the future of all projects is the sustainability of the water sources. The farmers in Ziway are already experiencing some problems with the water level of the lake. Rains were not adequate this season and the lake receded almost one kilometer, forcing the farmers to extend their irrigation canals that distance. Many of them expressed their concerns for the future over the water level. The Rift Valley Irrigation project has been organizing meetings and discussions over water usage with the surrounding community and government, in hopes that in the future rules may be invoked to limit the amount of water that large farms (owned by the government or investors) will be able to use.

It has proved to be very difficult for SEDA to evaluate the impact of the irrigation projects because farmers are afraid to declare their earnings and afraid to speak about their rights even though they are aware of them. The government is always included in project discussions, which is beneficial in limiting implementation barriers and to project sustainability, but it can make the community wary during the monitoring and evaluation phase.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF CAPACITY BUILDING

The community around Ziway speaks of capacity in terms of their assets and their technical know-how. Others demonstrate new-found confidence, as evidenced by the group of farmers who are petitioning for their land certificate, or by members who have shown initiative in starting businesses or going to new markets. They are better

able and more willing to represent and assert themselves. When community members from each village were asked what they would do if the government came and tried to take their land, they said that they would protect their right to the land. “If anybody requested to take the land we’d go to the head government structure and protect our land legally,” said a farmer from Washgula. Clearly, the people feel more secure in their ability to fight for their land due to the project.

Dabie raises an important issue. He points out how difficult it is to mobilize people around their rights when the most fundamental needs are unfulfilled. “To make people gain more power you must help them first to feed themselves, so that they can talk of the right,” said Dabie. This is a concept that was emphasized by other NGOs in the Rift Valley. Miesso Nebi, the Executive Director of the Center for Development Initiatives, another partner of Oxfam America, spoke at length on this: “For these people who are hungry, they do not even have the power to claim their rights. This is how we see the issue. First the basic needs should be fulfilled. These basic necessities should be a priority for other rights and should be fulfilled first. The people can’t strive for democracy because their needs tie them...”

According to this theory, because the irrigation project has fulfilled some of the basic needs of the communities involved, and because organization, training and women’s equality are a part of the project, the beneficiaries have become more empowered and better able to access their rights. With time the confidence of the project participants will grow, but further advocacy and community mobilization from SEDA will help enable and speed up this process.

## RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEVERAGE

Clearly, project beneficiaries—rights-holders—are taking more responsibility for their rights. In Ziway, communities participated in all phases of design and implementation, contributed most of the labor to the project, and spent hours being trained to manage and maintain the projects.

Certain responsibility holders have also been exposed to the projects. The Oromia Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Bureau visited the Ziway irrigation projects, and was impressed, according to Dabie. The Rift Valley Irrigation project also works closely with the Irrigation Authority Department and other government line departments on projects. This exposure is positive and helps to make the government more aware of the needs of the people, but as of yet the government has not taken any initiative.

The farmers’ leverage among the community has also increased due to their increased income and accompanying increased status. The rest of the community now turns to them for help, putting the project beneficiaries in a unique position to mobilize the rest of the community around rights.

Unfortunately, however, the principal duty-bearers (national government and local officials) have not been engaged or held responsible for their duty to protect their constituents’ right to earn a livelihood. The project is not attempting to change policy, nor has policy changed as a follow-on effect of the project. In fact, SEDA maintains that the policies as written are not the problem. Rather, the translation of policy into practice is the problem. “The policies of the government are not bad, but the government is deliberately violating the policy it has written,” said Dabie.

The fact is that as long as the farmers are productive and paying their taxes, their land tenure only seems secure. But what happens in the event of sickness or pestilence or drought?

As long as official policy and practice are not changed, and as long as duty-bearers are not held responsible and accountable for their actions, these farmers do not have security of tenure. In other words, the major fundamental cause of their poverty has not been adequately addressed.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

According to project managers, these irrigation projects are sustainable and easily replicable. They insist that sustainability was built into the projects in the form of management by beneficiaries, who have every interest in seeing the project properly maintained. The concepts and physical inputs are simple, making replicability possible. The projects could also be expanded geographically.

However, the sustainability of any intervention that relies on external inputs (pumps, parts) is by design not sustainable. Future iterations of this project should consider examining structural constraints, and sustainable solutions, to the input supply system. More attention should also be paid to alliance building. Organized farmers and federations of farmer organizations are infinitely better able to demand their rights than individuals or small groups of farmers.



In the aftermath of civil war and extended drought in Ethiopia, the overall objective of the Urban Food for Work project was to enhance short-term household food security for marginalized residents of Addis Ababa while improving primary infrastructure and basic services over the long term. It provided short-term employment opportunities in the form of food-for-work to marginal urban communities, built basic infrastructure at the community level, and enhanced the capacity of community groups to participate in future self-help development endeavors.

CARE ETHIOPIA

# Infrastructure Improvement / Urban Food-for-Work Project

The change in government in Ethiopia in 1991 resulted in a large population shift from rural communities to urban areas, largely due to security problems. The service delivery system and infrastructure of the capital city, Addis Ababa, became overstretched and had a difficult time accommodating the large influx of people. In response to worsening conditions, CARE Ethiopia launched a Community Infrastructure Improvement/Urban Food-For-Work Project (Food for Work) in Addis Ababa in mid-1993.

The overall goal of the project was “to enhance short-term household food security for marginalized urban residents while improving primary infrastructure/basic services over the long term in marginal urban *kebeles*<sup>37</sup> within Addis Ababa.” It had three specific objectives: to provide short-term employment opportunities in the form of food-for-work to marginal urban communities in Addis Ababa; to provide basic infrastructure services to the unemployed residents of these communities; and to enhance the capacity of community groups to participate in future self-help development endeavors.

The lion’s share of the project was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the form of wheat and vegetable oil, part of the latter being monetized to cover cash requirements. The remaining oil, together with the wheat, was used for food-for-work distribution to cover labor costs. The balance of the project funding came from local embassies and other bilateral and multilateral organizations such as World Food Program (WFP), the Department for International Development (DFID), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and NGOs such as Plan International. Addis Ababa City Administration also provided US \$51,345 in cash toward the implementation of the project.

<sup>37</sup> A kebele is the smallest unit of administration in Ethiopian local government.

Between 1993 and 2002, the project distributed more than 5,000 tons of wheat and approximately 250 tons of oil. It ran from March 1993 to September 2002.

## Context

From 1989 to 1993, Ethiopia experienced continuous internal conflict and civil war. It was unsafe to live in most rural areas, even for the native people. This was the time when the *Dergue*<sup>38</sup> and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front were fighting throughout the country for power, a struggle that eventually led to the overthrow of the *Dergue* in May 1991. The insecurity in the country resulted in massive rural-urban migration. When the *Dergue* was finally overthrown, this was compounded by the demobilization of a huge number of its military forces. Consequently, secondary cities in general and Addis Ababa in particular were forced to host large numbers of demobilized soldiers in addition to those fleeing insecurity in the countryside. The already underdeveloped social and economic services and the poor service-delivery mechanisms in place in the cities grew increasingly overstretched, until it became impossible for them to meet the needs of an ever-increasing population. Urban poverty grew rapidly, as did household food insecurity in Addis Ababa; food and shelter became the critical needs of all internally displaced and demobilized people.

The project documents indicate, however, that even before the rural-urban exodus started, Addis Ababa faced an increasing number of urban residents living in extreme poverty. The municipal government of Addis Ababa had estimated the urban populace to be in excess of 2.5 million, the majority of whom lived in severe slum conditions without adequate housing and basic services.

Meanwhile, the economy was also reeling under the effects of the prevailing political instability. There were few employment opportunities, especially for unskilled laborers, meaning that many families, especially those in marginal communities and internally displaced and demobilized households, experienced food deficits due to a lack of adequate income to meet their basic needs. It was estimated that many poor urban families were living on less than 10 cents per person per day for all food and non-food requirements.

Shelter posed another critical problem for internally displaced and demobilized households. The majority were forced to live en masse in temporary sheds, tents and community halls. Latrine facilities were nearly non-existent for such households and, in most cases, health facilities were almost completely inadequate. The labor market was not prepared to absorb all the trained manpower, let alone the glut of semiskilled and unskilled labor that flowed in from the rural areas and from the military. Job-creation investment, from internal as well as external sources, had ceased because of the war.

Cognizant of the situation, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) of the Ethiopian government was extremely concerned about the problem and tried to provide emergency relief assistance to nearly all the displaced families that lived in the country. But the problem was beyond its capacity and additional efforts were needed from civil society organizations (CSOs) and donors.

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<sup>38</sup> *Dergue* is the name of the military regime that was overthrown by the current regime.

Like the DPPC, CARE Ethiopia was also concerned about the situation and took it as part of its responsibility to intervene in a way that would address the basic needs of poor and marginalized people through a community-based approach. To this end, it designed the Food for Work project. It was CARE's first urban intervention.

The project was designed to meet basic infrastructure needs of marginal communities within the City of Addis Ababa through a food-for-work model that allowed many unemployed and underemployed community members to be deployed in project activities while generating their own income in the form of food. Basic socioeconomic surveys undertaken by CARE in 19 *kebeles* in six different *woredas* showed residents to have a strong need for and interest in a variety of infrastructure improvements. This knowledge guided the project's design, as did the idea that the activities selected should be labor intensive, requiring little or no technical expertise, so as to allow the participation of a large unskilled workforce along with a number of semiskilled and skilled laborers.

## Project Design

Based on the above analysis of the problem, and in keeping with CARE's Livelihood Security Program Framework, CARE designed the Food for Work project. In designing the project, CARE hypothesized that offering food as opposed to wages would directly enhance household food security; undertaking large scale, labor-intensive community infrastructure activities would create much-needed employment opportunities; involving community members directly in their own development activities would allow them to acquire basic skills and build their capacity to manage self-help development initiatives in the future; building community capacity and imparting basic skills in construction, store and property management, and labor organization and deployment would help produce the kind of skilled labor force the market was looking for and develop the kind of skilled workers the community could rely on for future development activities; improving access roads would allow goods and services to flow more easily into poor communities, and thereby boost local economic activity; and constructing drains, latrines, and protected water sources would improve hygiene, reduce water-borne disease and thereby improve the health status of communities.

## Project Implementation

### SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

From the beginning, the project used an established mechanism for selecting and supporting projects. Upon receipt of requests for assistance from *kebeles* or *woredas*, the Food for Work project would refer the requests to a Site Selection Task Force made up of individuals drawn from the Works and Urban Development Bureau, the Foreign Relations and Development Cooperation Bureau of the Addis Ababa City Administration, and from the project itself. The Task Force would hold discussions with development committees and administration representatives of candidate *kebeles* and *woredas*. During this rapid assessment process, the Task Force used set criteria to select and prioritize target areas, including, among others, magnitude of need, interest level and willingness of the local administrations, likelihood of municipal upgrades in future, and certain knowledge that the intervention would not lead to displacement.

Another factor that was seriously considered in both the selection and implementation of each project was the role of women. Women were to be equally represented as far as possible in all key project activity areas. At least 60% had to be women, of whom 80% to 90% were to be in unskilled positions, 8% in project management (property controller, storekeeper, food distributor, time keeper), and 2% in the skilled labor category. Within the Multipurpose Infrastructure Development Committees (MPIDC—the bodies that represented the residents), the proportion of women had to be 30%. The operation manual also specified that women's needs should be considered, for example, in designing latrine facilities. This is the only rights issue that was explicitly stressed in the Food for Work project.

Following the Task Force's rapid assessment report, the project office, along with its partners, the *kebele* administrations and MPIDCs, would conduct a house-to-house socioeconomic census in the selected *kebeles*, which would then serve as the basis for the technical design and cost estimates that would be developed jointly by project staff, MPIDC and *kebele* officials. Having established a common understanding and consensus, the project proposal would then be discussed by the ultimate decision-making authority—the general assembly of the respective community. If it was approved, a detailed implementation agreement would be signed between all the key partners: the MPIDC, the *kebele* administration, the *woreda* administration and CARE Ethiopia.

The Multipurpose Infrastructure Development Committees were the driving force in the design, implementation and decision-making processes of all *kebele* projects. They were the bodies that determined, modified, canceled or added activities as they felt it necessary. They controlled and mobilized resources (labor and community matching funds) and they were the key partners with whom all decisions were made. Thirty percent of their members were women.

The MPIDC, along with the *kebele* administration and in consultation with CARE social work promoters, selected FFW participants. Participation was voluntary, with priority given to women. During implementation, community leaders and social groups were encouraged to provide feedback through the MPIDCs for improvement on the quality of workmanship, resource utilization and control.

The *kebele* and *woreda* administrations were involved as representatives of the City Administration. Their role was primarily to provide administrative support during project implementation and to oversee the subsequent administration of the completed infrastructure.

Other counterparts such as the Bureaus of Works and Urban Development and the Foreign Relations and Development Cooperation of Addis Ababa City Administration were involved in site-selection processes as members of the selection task force and in evaluation activities.

CARE Ethiopia was fully involved in all project activities. It was responsible for providing technical support to the MPIDCs in site selection, design, smooth implementation, and finally for hand-over of the completed infrastructure. It was also responsible for the timely disbursement of all funds other than community contributions.

The project had a total of 11 technical and 10 support staff at project office level, and at each *kebele* site, there were MPIDC employed people who would participate directly in the field operations.

## Results and Impacts

The Food for Work project had a number of intermediate results that benefited participating communities. The access roads and crossings built by the project significantly improved people's mobility, particularly during the rainy season. Related infrastructure such as drains and culverts and retaining walls served to reduce flooding. The most noticeable benefit that accrued to the communities, however, resulted from the supply of potable water in specific project areas. Where such activities were carried out, 95% of the targeted population benefited.

According to the final report, "A Decade of Partnership in Urban Development", presented during the official project closure ceremony, over nearly a decade of its life, the project implemented 54 *kebele* projects in Addis Ababa. At the time, that was 16.5% of the total *kebeles* in the city. Over its lifetime, 310,565 community members benefited from roads and related infrastructure; 13,080 benefited from improved access to latrines; 2,320 benefited from improved access to water; 14,816 (of whom

**The food payments reduced food insecurity for the period during which the participants worked. There was also a positive intermediate result for women, who often said that participating in the project increased their confidence in their own abilities and made them feel more comfortable with the idea of working outside the home.**

8,890 were women) obtained short-term employment; and 88,896 enjoyed increased access to income through FFW. The average length of employment provided to laborers was six months.

Despite the positive results of the project, external evaluators pointed out some significant flaws. For example, one criticism leveled by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) was that the project failed to provide long-term food security. "Projects like this one should address long-term alleviation of poverty and hunger by seeking to improve participants' labor skills and linking beneficiaries with employers across the city," the IFPRI said.

Another flaw was that FFW participants were negatively affected by fluctuations in the price of grain whenever they wanted to sell part of the food they got as payment for their work. Many would have preferred cash instead of food, particularly during harvest and when the grain market was down.

Likewise, almost all key informants, both skilled and unskilled, said that working under the auspices of the project had done little to improve the sustainable livelihoods of participating individuals and communities. The project did little in imparting skills that would lead them into better jobs, and improved access roads and other infrastructure constructed under the project made no noticeable impact on employment or market access. Rather, when participants finished their work with the project, most simply went back to the kind of work they had been doing previously.

An implementation obstacle repeatedly reported was the issue of land acquisition for the construction of communal latrines. Although it is often indicated that nearly 30% of the city's population did not have proper latrine services, the construction



of communal latrines was greatly hampered by the land problem. This stemmed partly from the land policy that did not and still does not give clear guidance and space on the use of communal spaces for communal purposes and partly from the poor governance that prevailed at the local level that could and should have solved these kinds of local issues.

The one rights issue addressed by the project and reviewed by the study team revealed that while the project was designed to benefit women first and foremost (60% of the total labor force were to be women), it failed to some degree in this regard: pregnant women were not allowed to participate in project

activities, and the project failed to devise alternatives for breast-feeding mothers that would provide for their children while they were working.

The project did not have an impact on systems, structures or policy changes in general.

## Analysis and Lessons Learned

On the positive side, the Food for Work project clearly achieved a good deal of what it set out to do. In particular, given the volume of food it pumped into the participating communities, it achieved its immediate goal of generating employment and increasing (even if only in the short-term) people's level of food consumption.

The project was also successful in creating useful outputs and infrastructure improvements. Facilities like access roads and crossings created access to markets and basic services, and improved social interactions and safety in the project areas. Retaining walls protected many households from flooding; drains made for cleaner compounds and roads, contributing to better community hygiene and health. In 93% of the *kebeles*, the completed infrastructure was handed over in good order to the benefiting communities with documents specifying responsible bodies for managing the completed facilities.

But perhaps some of the most far-reaching outcomes of the project were ones the project did not anticipate. For example, almost all the people interviewed from government offices and community organizations asserted that the bottom-up approach the project used did much to promote the values of community-based initiatives in development and to motivate community participation in local level development activities.

The same is true of another important outcome: partnerships. Over the course of a decade, the project forged enduring partnerships based on mutual understanding, trust and joint effort with communities and local government. The extensive consul-

tative process undertaken with community representatives, *kebele* officials, and others at every step of the project—from selection through design and implementation to eventual handover of the completed infrastructure—paved the way for a smooth implementation process based entirely on collaboration with the municipality and has built up a residual base of good will that lives on to this day. The project was also successful in building productive partnerships with other NGOs, and development agencies and donors.

That being said, the project provided many learning opportunities arising out of places where results did not fit the hypotheses. Food-for-work is more complicated than cash-for-work. It requires a chain of logistical arrangements and caution during transportation, storage and distribution. In addition, using food commodities as a means of payment for work means adjustments have to constantly be made to cope with market price fluctuations of those commodities. Otherwise, as observed during the project period, participants are not adequately compensated for the hard work they've done. IFPRI, in its report “Lessons Learned from the Urban Food-For-Work Program: CARE Ethiopia; Notes and Observations” suggests that a more appropriate response to hunger in cities is to provide cash rather than food. This, the institute says, is because food insecurity in urban areas generally arises from a lack of access to food, owing to a lack of purchasing power. Seldom does it arise from lack of food availability. The Food for Work project as an approach may work best when it integrates or complements other development and livelihood interventions, for example those that can provide permanent employment/self employment, those that work to bring about women's rights, and those that help to secure access to community health.

Among the other primary objectives of the project was that it should impart marketable skills to a number of interested direct-project participants. The final evaluation of the project, however, revealed that the project was not very successful in this regard. Some men and very few women were trained and employed by the project for higher positions due to the new skills they acquired. Still, they were few in number compared to the total number of unskilled laborers deployed over the course of the project. What is more, there is no evidence that those who were trained subsequently secured employment in the open market because of the skills they acquired. The project should have addressed the long-term alleviation of poverty not only by seeking to improve participants' labor skills but also by actively helping to link them with employers across the city.

Another major lesson learned regards the hand-over and upkeep of completed infrastructure. As noted above, in 93% of the cases completed infrastructure projects were handed over to the benefiting communities; however, it is clear from the final evaluation report of the project that the management of project outputs and their sustainability had mixed prospects. Community Based Organizations (CBOs)—the various users' committees in each locality, and local administrations—were clearly named in the project completion certificates as being in charge of maintenance and upkeep of the completed infrastructure. Latrine Users' Committees were to look after the communal pits, water users' committees were to administer water points, and the formal development committees were to maintain other physical infrastructure such as roads and ditches. This was intended to have empowered community groups and increased their capacity to play a more active role in local development initiatives. But responsibility and accountability seem, by and large, to have been better practiced

during the project implementation period than in its post-implementation phase, making for mixed results in terms of sustainability of project outputs. Success in this regard varies from one neighborhood to the next, and seems less related to responsibility than to capacity—something the project failed to adequately address—and specifically to institutional coordination among the residents of each particular neighborhood. Where the local administration coordinates and mobilizes residents, there is much better upkeep and maintenance of completed activities.

Again, some of the most important lessons learned had to do with project approach. As described above, the project used a participatory approach at the community level in both the design and implementation processes. However, in relation to making critical decisions during project implementation and in managing project resources, the relationship with CARE and its partner communities could be described as more of a consultative process than a genuine partnership. For example, though MPIDCs were the leading implementing agents for their respective sites, it was the project that retained control over 90% of the resources allocated for any given *kebele* project and wielded more of the decision-making power than the MPIDCs. This was true throughout the life of the project.

This raises further questions as to what influence, if any, the project had in terms of promoting community empowerment through genuine partnership. Though the project's stated aim was to enhance the capacity of community groups to participate in future self-help development endeavors, some of the project's evaluation documents

**The project missed an important opportunity to provide community-based organizations with the assistance they needed to become local development leaders in their respective communities, and to enhance local capacity in action planning, information exchange, and consensus-building so that through taking a unified position communities could influence decision processes in their favor.**

criticize the project for repeatedly placing greater emphasis on physical activities/ outcomes than on building capacity in partner communities.

Flexibility was another issue. One of the greatest criticisms leveled at the project was that it was not at all flexible in its approach. Ten years on, it still showed no major changes in approach, direction or pattern of implementation; the types of activities that were being undertaken throughout the project period were the same as those that had been predetermined during the initial period of the project design. What is more, the way they were carried out did not take notice of emerging approaches, nor did it consider differences; rather, each *kebele* was treated as if it had identical problems to all the others. Such a static approach also meant that certain types of activities were undertaken, while others, regardless of the community's felt needs, were not even considered.

Due to the monitoring and evaluation framework of the project, there are some things that cannot be assessed at this point. It was not designed to track long-term impacts, nor was it created with a view toward reliably attributing impact to specific

interventions. For example, it was difficult for the project to measure the eventual outcomes and/or impact of ditch construction on the health status of benefiting communities because there are a number of factors that affect community health, of which the construction of ditches is only one.

# Facilitator's Guide

**T**his Facilitator's Guide provides structured learning exercises for replicating the reflection and learning process followed during the Ethiopia RBA Learning Workshop. The exercises are designed for field staff of development agencies that are active in designing, evaluating, monitoring, supporting, collaborating with, or carrying out development projects and programs. Partner organizations can also be included in the process for broader, more collaborative learning.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Using a set of case studies and workshop conclusions from the joint Oxfam America/CARE Rights-based Approaches Learning Project as a point of departure and comparison, participants will reflect on two of their own projects to identify elements of a rights-based approach to development (RBA) and to reflect on the different impacts RBA and non-RBA projects have.
- By the end of the process, participants will have developed shared understandings of what RBA is and the programmatic elements that can strengthen RBA in their own work.

## PREPARATION:

- Option #1: Read all eight of the CARE-Oxfam case studies presented in the Appendices.
- Option #2: For a shorter set of case studies, read only four case studies: Ethiopia Coffee Campaign, Guatemala Defensoria Maya, Bangladesh LIFE-NoPEST project and Ethiopia Urban Food for Work.

- Select two projects your team is currently working on or have worked on in the past. You should select one project you think of as very rights-based, and one that has very few, if any, rights-based aspects to it. You will analyze your two projects along side with the CARE-Oxfam case studies during the workshop.
- If the whole team is not familiar with the projects you are adding, the person most knowledgeable about them will need to prepare a brief presentation for them. It should cover five elements:
  - Problem analysis and project hypothesis
  - Rights issues directly addressed, if any
  - Goals and objectives
  - Methodology and process used
  - Results: Long-term impacts on
    - People’s lives
    - Civil society organizations
    - Policies, programs, and governance structures
- MATERIALS: Flip chart paper, flip charts or wall space, masking tape, different colored thick markers, notepads and pens for writing in small groups.

### ESTIMATED TIME:

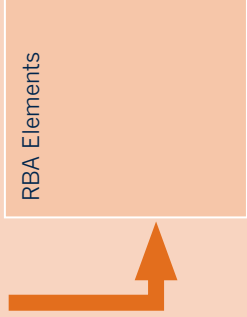
- Preparation: half day for reading the case studies and preparing to present two of your own projects for analysis (less, if only four of the eight case studies are read)
- Actual workshop: one day.

### PROCESS

- One or two people should volunteer to facilitate the group.
- Be sure to insert warm-up exercises, breaks, stretches, games, brainteasers, and so on, to keep people fresh and relaxed.
- In brainstorming sessions, all ideas count and get written up on flip charts without pre-screening. Afterward, in the refinement stage, people can ask questions, discuss, suggest changes, propose combinations of like elements, ask that elements be taken off the list, and so on, until the group reaches agreement. It’s not necessary to have 100% agreement. To keep the process moving, you can stop with a list of just what’s agreed on, and move on.
- When someone is presenting, ask clarification questions only, and hold discussion until the presentations are all done.
- Remember that the words and phrases used in the case studies, report and by the workshop participants may be different from the ones you would use. You are not looking to replicate (or even agree with) their language or ideas. Their conclusions are presented and used in these exercises as another “data point,” other people’s perspective to consider. The important thing is that you are exploring and discussing the questions together and building your own understanding.

DRAFT SCHEDULE:	
30 min	WARM-UP EXERCISE: <i>Round robin on Words (30 Minutes)</i>
120 min	RIGHTS-BASED ELEMENTS A. <i>Brainstorming the Elements (45 Minutes)</i> B. <i>Placing Projects on the RBA Continuum (45 Minutes)</i> C. <i>Compare, Reflect, Refine (30 Minutes)</i>
135 min	IMPACT ASSESSMENT A. <i>Identifying and Analyzing Impacts (45 Minutes)</i> B. <i>Synthesis and Comparative Impact Analysis (45 Minutes)</i> C. <i>Synthesis and Comparative Impact Analysis (45 Minutes) (Continued)</i>
30 min	WRAP-UP: Action Self-Evaluation "Chit Chat" (30 Minutes)

Session and Objectives	Activities	Tools & Resources
<p><b>Warm-Up Exercise</b></p> <p><i>Objective:</i> Get people talking about what they know about the Rights-Based Approach (RBA).</p>	<p><b>Round robin on Words (30 Minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Option #1: Everyone gets a piece of paper with a word or phrase written on it. Sit or stand in a circle, and go around the circle – people share their word and briefly say something about it. After going around once, pass your word down two people to the right, and go around again, with the new words. Then discuss.</li> <li>Option #2: every one pairs up and talks for 2 minutes with their partner about their word. Then they switch, and the partner talks about their word. Then everyone gathers back together to discuss.</li> </ul> <p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What struck you about what people said?</li> <li>Where is your understanding about the RBA?</li> <li>Do you agree among yourselves, or are there different understandings?</li> </ul> <p><i>Facilitator's Tips:</i></p> <p>Look for understanding of core elements of RBA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realizing human rights and human dignity</li> <li>Rights-holders claiming their rights</li> <li>Duty-bearers meeting their obligations</li> <li>Requires root cause/power analysis at multiple levels</li> </ol>	<p>Pieces of paper (A large index card or half an 8 1/2" x 11" or A4 sheet is perfect) with words written on them:</p> <p>Possible words and phrases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountability</li> <li>Empowerment</li> <li>Participation</li> <li>Vulnerable groups</li> <li>Discrimination</li> <li>Interdependent</li> <li>International legal norms</li> <li>Human dignity</li> <li>Obligation</li> <li>Responsibility</li> <li>State parties</li> <li>Duty-bearers</li> <li>Rights-holders</li> <li>Progressive realization</li> <li>Claim</li> <li>Rights</li> <li>Universality</li> <li>Respect, Protect, Fulfill</li> </ul>

Session and Objectives	Activities	Tools & Resources																																																																																				
<p><b>1. RIGHTS-BASED ELEMENTS</b></p> <p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants identify the elements that make a project rights-based, listen to each others' perspectives, discuss and reach closer understanding</li> <li>Participants begin to analyze their projects critically and openly based on their understanding of RBA</li> </ul> <p><i>Output:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of project characteristics or elements that people understand as being Rights-based</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Brainstorming the Elements (45 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare one flip chart for each project, including your own, with two vertical lines dividing the page into three columns, with headings as shown in the diagram at right. In the left-hand column, put a few notes to remind people what the project was about – who, what, where, why, when etc.</li> <li>In pairs or triplets, walk around to each project flip chart. At each chart, talk about the project approach used in each project. In the second column labeled “Rights-Based Elements”, write down the elements of the project approach – its methodology – you would consider rights-based. If another team has already put something you agree with, just put a checkmark by it. If you don't think the project had <b>any</b> RBA elements, leave it blank, or say so. (15 min)</li> <li>Come back together and look at the rights-based elements together. DISCUSS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What stands out? Share reflections, ask for clarification, discuss.</li> <li>How are your projects the same or different from the case study projects? (10 min)</li> </ul> </li> <li>On a new flip chart, write down the elements from all of the projects that people feel reflect a rights-based approach. The goal is to come to a preliminary list you agree on. (20 min).</li> </ol> <p><small>(At this point, do not do anything with the third column, Impacts. You'll get to that in Exercise #2A)</small></p>	<p>Flip charts: (one per project)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="284 220 673 787"> <thead> <tr> <th>Case Study #... Name of Project</th> <th>Rights-Based Elements</th> <th>Impacts</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>E.g., Coffee</td> <td>• • •</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Federations, Export monopoly,</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>International forum to facilitate linkages</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 	Case Study #... Name of Project	Rights-Based Elements	Impacts	E.g., Coffee	• • •		Federations, Export monopoly,			International forum to facilitate linkages																																																																										
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<p><i>Objective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get a basic comparative assessment of the projects with regard to RBA</li> </ul> <p><i>Output:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rank order of projects along a RBA Continuum scale</li> </ul>	<p><b>B. Placing Projects on the RBA Continuum (45 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break into 3 or 4 pairs or small groups. Go through the projects one-by-one, including your own projects. Discuss and reach agreement in each group about where each project belongs on a spectrum, 0 – 10, where zero is a project with no rights-based elements, and 10 is a project that is 100% rights-based. Make a note of your rankings. [NOTE: This is NOT a value judgment about the projects, but a way to begin analyzing project design and impact.] (15 min)</li> <li>Come back together, write the rankings on one big flip chart, and compare rankings, project by project. (30 min)</li> </ol> <p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you agree? Ask each other why they placed the projects where they did. You may end up convincing each other.</li> <li>Where do your projects come out in relation to the others?</li> </ul>	<p>1. Sheet of paper with RBA Continuum grid chart</p> <p>2. Flip Chart with same grid chart, for tallying small group 'votes'</p> <p><b>RBA Continuum Grid</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1153 220 1421 777"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>0</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> <th>6</th> <th>7</th> <th>8</th> <th>9</th> <th>10</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Project #1</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project #2</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project #3</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project #4</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project #5</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project #6</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Project #1												Project #2												Project #3												Project #4												Project #5												Project #6											
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	Session and Objectives	Activities (15 Minutes)	Tools & Resources						
<b>BREAK</b>									
	<p><i>Objective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare your own analysis with that of the workshop participants.</li> <li>Discuss and further refine your list of rights-based project elements.</li> </ul>	<p><b>C. Compare, Reflect, Refine (30 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the first page of Section 3 of the report, "Elements of RBA Projects." Look at the rankings and the RBA elements identified by the Oxfam-CARE workshop participants. Look at their list of RBA elements and scan the description of the key ones. (5 min)</li> <li><b>DISCUSSION:</b> (25 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your ranking of the projects agree with theirs? Does it change or add anything to what you thought before? Where do your projects fall? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on your own discussions so far, do you agree? Disagree? What would you change and why? What's missing?</li> <li>If this changed how you see things, go back and change your list. You should have a list of somewhere around a dozen elements at most. Eliminate any duplicate items that are essentially the same, remove items that the group can't agree on for now, and make sure that the list defines what you understand as a rights-based approach, not just "good development practice."</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Elements of a Rights-Based Approach as listed in the report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough analysis of underlying causes of poverty, including explicit and ongoing gender, power and risk analyses</li> <li>Community-centered development, including building sustainable capacity to claim rights and to drive decision-making</li> <li>Duty-bearers engaged, strengthened and held accountable</li> <li>Advocacy for sustainable change in policy and practice</li> <li>Alliance building</li> <li>Working at multiple levels (e.g., local, national, international)</li> <li>Focus on groups that are marginalized and discriminated against</li> <li>Problems framed as rights issues and linked to international, national or customary standards</li> </ol>						
<b>LUNCH</b>		<b>(1 Hour)</b>							
2#	<p><b>2. IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think about different impact assessment frameworks</li> <li>Use them to analyze the case study projects and your own projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Identifying and Analyzing Impacts (45 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a circle, (A) Discuss what people understand to be the difference between: outputs, outcomes, impacts. (Your assessment of project results is going to focus in on impacts.) (B) Discuss impacts in different areas or at different levels: (i) people's lives, (ii) civil society, (iii) governance and societal norms. What would impacts in these different areas look like? Do you have other impact areas that help you think about project effectiveness? (Add them, if they help you) Why do we care about them? (15 min)</li> <li>Break into 3–4 pairs or small groups. Divide up the projects, so each group can focus on one or two projects. In the small groups, talk about the impacts of each project in each area of impact. Using the same flip charts used in Exercise 1A, write the impacts, using the three categories plus others if you added them: People's lives, civil society, governance structures and societal norms. (See flip chart design at right) If you want, make a note if the impact has short- medium- or long-term sustainability (S, M or L). (Don't worry if you don't have an impact for each of the impact categories. They are only there to help structure and focus your thinking. Some projects may only have certain kinds of impacts.)</li> </ol>	<p>Note paper for each group,</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="899 226 1308 829"> <thead> <tr> <th>Case Study #1</th> <th>Rights-Based Elements</th> <th>Project Impacts</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List</li> <li>Of</li> <li>RBA</li> <li>Elements</li> </ul> </td> <td> <p><b>People's Lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul> <p><b>Civil society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance and structures and societal norms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Use the same flip chart paper you used to list the rights-based elements of each project, so you can see the elements and the impacts side-by-side.</p>	Case Study #1	Rights-Based Elements	Project Impacts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List</li> <li>Of</li> <li>RBA</li> <li>Elements</li> </ul>	<p><b>People's Lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul> <p><b>Civil society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance and structures and societal norms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact #1 (S/M/L)</li> <li>Impact #2 (S/M/L)</li> </ul>
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Session and Objectives	Activities	Tools & Resources
<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your observations about project impacts.</li> <li>• Develop an indicative list of RBA impacts</li> </ul>	<p><b>B. Synthesis and Comparative Impact Analysis (45 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Come back together. Each small group has shared its assessment of impacts, discuss together. (15 min)</li> <li>2. DISCUSSION: (30 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What stands out for you? Are there patterns? Contrasts among the projects?</li> <li>• Look at the impacts associated with the projects you placed at the extreme ends of the RBA spectrum. What do they tell you about differences between RBA and non-RBA projects in terms of impacts?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>(15 Minutes)</b>	
<p><b>Output</b></p> <p>Consolidated list of RBA impacts</p>	<p><b>C. Synthesis and Comparative Impact Analysis (45 Minutes) (Cont.)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Based on this discussion, write up a consolidated list on a new piece of flip chart paper that has all the impacts you agree can be associated with a more rights-based project approach. (5 min)</li> <li>4. Skim through section 4 “Impacts of Traditional and RBA Projects” and section 5 “Categories of RBA-associated Impacts (5 min)</li> <li>5. Discuss (20 min): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your list of RBA-related impacts mesh with theirs?</li> <li>• How about your conclusions on the contrast between RBA and non-RBA projects?</li> <li>• How do your projects relate? Are their impacts the same/ different from the case study projects?</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Go back and refine your list of RBA impacts, if you want. You might aim for about 10 or so. If the list is really long, see if some elements aren't essentially the same thing, or if others relate to just any kind of development intervention, not specifically Rights-Based. (15 min)</li> </ol>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">RBA Impacts</div>

(continued)

# B Facilitator's Guide

	Session and Objectives	Activities	Tools & Resources
	<p><b>Wrap Up</b></p> <p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get people to visualize and commit to how they are going to use the ideas from the day's work.</li> <li>• Map out a preliminary plan for following up on the ideas, momentum and questions generated</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Self-Evaluation "Chit Chat" (30 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pair up and complete the following sentence:        "After this workshop, the thing that will be different for me will be..." It may be an action, thought or feeling. After the first person has shared his/her sentence (1 min), switch, and the other person shares his/hers. (1 min) Let the Chit Chat go for a while.        (2 min)        (You can switch partners around and repeat this a couple of times.) (10 min max, total)</li> <li>2. GROUP DISCUSSION: (20 min)           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People share what they said, what they heard, the conversation they had.</li> <li>• Are there things the group would really like to do as follow up on this? Make a list and have someone in charge of leading follow-up, with dates and resources identified.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

# Notes

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# Notes

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**In recent years**, many relief and development organizations have understood that what they have traditionally called “basic needs” are in fact “human rights”. This realization has prompted an evolution from a development model based on filling poor people’s needs to one in which people are able to claim what is rightfully theirs—a model known as *rights-based approaches*.

Over the past several years, CARE USA and Oxfam America, two international non-governmental organizations, have embraced rights-based approaches as part of their commitment to helping families and communities overcome poverty and social injustice. In so doing, they uncovered numerous questions about the conceptual and practical application of rights-based approaches. Frequently collaborating to provide relief and rehabilitation responses in the field, CARE and Oxfam, with support from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, came together to implement the *RBA Learning Project*.

What are key differences between “traditional” development projects and development projects using rights-based approaches, and how does using rights-based approaches to programming change the impact of projects? With these guiding questions, CARE USA and Oxfam America adopted a comparative case study methodology to draw lessons from projects that have consciously adopted rights-based approaches, versus those that are using (or have used) a more traditional development approach. This methodology provided a field-based and practitioner-validated means for analyzing rights-based projects. Eight cases cover a wide range of approaches to a number of development issues in Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Guatemala, and shed light on the fact that there are many ways to approach rights-based programming.

Following case-specific analysis, 26 experienced CARE and Oxfam practitioners gathered for an *RBA Learning Workshop* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They identified eight elements that they deem to characterize rights-based projects, as well as the types of impact that RBA projects are likely to have on people’s lives, on civil society and on governance structures. A comparison of the eight elements identified by this project with the features of rights-based approaches as identified within other RBA frameworks reveals that rights-based approaches differ from traditional approaches in three principal ways: 1) RBA projects frame problems as rights, linked to international, national or customary standards; 2) they emphasize capacity and agency of rights-holders; and 3) they engage and hold duty-bearers accountable for meeting their obligations.

This publication presents the conclusions of the 26 seasoned development practitioners as drawn out through an analysis of the eight cases and a rigorous workshop methodology. The conclusions offer one set of informed assessments about the differences between the two approaches and their relative impacts.

This document is *not a* theoretical treatise on the meaning of RBA. It is not written for the development theorist. It is written for the field-based development practitioner who is struggling to understand what adopting a rights-based approach means for her or his work, and what promise it may hold for poor and marginalized communities. Through the examination of specific projects that were either designed to be rights-based or were later revised to adopt the approach, readers are given the opportunity to learn and to explore issues through the trials, experiences and findings of others.

A Facilitator’s Guide provides structured exercises for development practitioners to replicate the reflection and learning process followed, and for conducting similar analyses with their own projects.

This publication is also available in Arabic, French and Spanish.

