



# VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT

OXFAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

AUSTRALIA AFRICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEME (AACES)  
CAPACITY BUILDING COMPONENT



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Nyanga Village, Barotse Flood Plains, Zambia- The community gather to meet with Oxfam and the visiting partners and discuss the WASH program in the village.

PHOTO © Alexia Webster

# CREDITS

- Title:** Value for Money Assessment Oxfam South Africa Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) Capacity Building component
- Published:** April 2016
- ISBN:** 978-0-620-70548-6
- Author:** Michelle Besley, Independent Consultant
- Design:** LUMO design & illustration (www.lumo.co.za)
- Copyright:** Oxfam gives permission for excerpts from this paper to be photocopied or reproduced provided that the source is clearly and properly acknowledged. Suggested citation Besley, M. (2016) Value for Money Assessment Oxfam South Africa Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) Capacity Building component, Oxfam.
- Disclaimer:** The views in this publication are those of the respective author and do not necessarily represent those of Oxfam, The Australian Department of Foreign Aid and Trade or any funding agency.

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**Supported by:**



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



This research was funded under the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES). AACES is a partnership of DFAT (Department of Foreign Aid and Trade), ten Australian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their Africa-based partners. It contributes to the DFAT strategy for Africa through community-based interventions across the sectors of food security, maternal and child health and water, as well as sanitation and hygiene. The program focuses on marginalised communities, with particular attention to women, children, people with disability and people vulnerable to disaster.

**Commissioned  
and published by:**



**OXFAM**

# CONTENTS

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
Oxfam Australia's definition of Value For Money	5
Development of a Value For Money assessment framework	6
<b>Program Assessment Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
Program background	9
Value For Money assessment process	9
Summary of key findings	10
Key learnings	12
Key recommendations	13
<b>Full Value For Money Assessment</b>	<b>14</b>
Program information	15
Assessment summary	16
Component 1: Economy (Costs and inputs: What went in?)	18
Component 2: Efficiency (Inputs to outputs: What happened?)	22
Component 3: Effectiveness (Inputs to outputs: What happened?)	28
Component 4: Equity (Equal inclusion of vulnerable groups)	34
<b>Methodological Rationale and Theoretical Underpinnings of the Oxfam Australia Value For Money Assessment Tool</b>	<b>40</b>
Purpose	41
The approach	41
Defining the "value" of VFM	41
Placing theory of change at the heart of VFM	42
Comparison as a means of assessment	42
Leveraging as an indicator of VFM	43
Assessing scale and depth of change in VFM	43
Participation of partners and community in assessment of VFM	44
Evidence-based VFM assessment	44

# ABBREVIATIONS

AACES	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme
ATSIPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Program
ACRP	Australian Community Rehabilitation Program
BER	Basic efficiency resource
ECD	Early childhood development
ToC	Theory of change
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
KAP	Knowledge, attitude and practices
MDIC	Maputa Land Development and Information Centre
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MTR	Mid-term review
NGO	Non-government organisation
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
RAPCAN	Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
SROI	Social return on investment
TU	Tholulwazi Uzivikele
VfM	Value for Money
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OXFAM AUSTRALIA'S DEFINITION OF VALUE FOR MONEY

Oxfam Australia defines Value for Money (VfM) as “the best use of resources to contribute to positive significant change in the most vulnerable people’s lives”. Significant change includes:

- consideration of scale (the number of people benefitting);
- depth (the intensity and sustainability of change); and
- inclusion (the change benefits people who are vulnerable and marginalised).

VfM has four core dimensions referred to as the four Es:

<b>ECONOMY</b>	<b>Costs and inputs — what went in?</b>  Reasonable cost to acquire good quality inputs that will enable realisation of the desired changes
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>	<b>Inputs to outputs — what happened?</b>  A measure of productivity; how much you get out in relation to what is put in (increasing output for a given input, or minimising input for a given output, with a regard for maintaining quality)
<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>Outputs to outcomes — what resulted?</b>  Is the program generating positive and sustainable outcomes?
<b>EQUITY</b>	<b>Equal inclusion of vulnerable groups</b>  Is the program appropriately engaging and producing equal benefits for different groups?

Within the concept of VfM the four Es are interdependent, such that VfM cannot be determined in the absence of one or more of the four Es. Oxfam’s approach is weighted towards effectiveness (delivery of desired outcomes and sustained impacts) and equity (benefits are distributed fairly).

## DEVELOPMENT OF A VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Oxfam Australia sought to progress its understanding of VfM and how it can be practically applied within its programs. In 2015 it engaged Michelle Besley, an independent consultant, to work with three program teams to facilitate reflection on the VfM of their programs, and conduct three independent VfM assessments:

- **Oxfam in South Africa Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES)**  
capacity development support to partners component.
- **Oxfam Sri Lanka Australian Community Rehabilitation Program (ACRP3)**  
institutional strengthening support to Community Based Organisation partners in Eastern Sri Lanka component.
- **Oxfam Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Program (ATSIPP) Straight Talk**  
whole of program.

The VfM tool was developed iteratively as the assessments were undertaken by testing its application in different ways and in different contexts. Assessment was based on evidence obtained through traditional evaluation methods such as desktop reviews, stakeholder interviews and questionnaires. The process explored the use of different methods and ways to incorporate different stakeholder perspectives on the VfM of these programs. Some assessments used highly participatory methods, such as partner workshops whereby partners themselves rated Oxfam's performance, and some assessments were conducted more remotely and informed by desktop review and staff focus group discussions.

The three VfM assessment processes were tailored according to the different contexts and needs of program teams. For the Oxfam in South Africa AACES and Oxfam Sri Lanka ACRP3 VfM assessments, formal assessments with ratings were undertaken. This was because these programs were nearing completion and there were internal and donor imperatives to formally assess VfM. The ATSIPP Straight Talk assessment was completed without ratings. This was because the process had a focus on learning and was carried out as the team wanted to get a sense of how the program was tracking on VfM and explore how VfM could be better incorporated into the program's upcoming re-design.

Assessment is made against two sub-criteria within each of the four Es (eight sub-criteria in total). These criteria were developed through a consideration of how VfM can best be assessed in relation to Oxfam's particular development approach and programming context. Each of these sub-criteria are then aggregated to produce an overall VfM proposition. The assessment framework recognises that an assessment can only be made on the basis of evidence; it does not make an unsubstantiated judgement due to lack of evidence or penalise programs by rating VfM as poor due to a lack of data. Rather, the assessment notes the extent to which the judgement is well supported by evidence, or if a tentative judgement is made noting gaps in data. When insufficient information is available to enable an informed judgement to be made, this is stated. As with many evaluation methodologies, the judgement is ultimately the subjective interpretation of the evaluator.



The approach recognises that Oxfam delivers programs in complex settings, and that context specific factors determine VfM options and considerations. For example, contextual factors may have implications for the different components such as costs of operating in specific countries and presence and capacity of other in-country actors that a program engages with. These factors may make it costlier or difficult to implement activities or achieve outcomes, or conversely make it more affordable and easier to implement programs and achieve outcomes. A program should therefore only be judged in relation to what it can feasibly and realistically achieve in light of these factors. The approach does not attempt to compare across contexts or programs; assessment is based on how well the program has been designed and delivered to bring about changes within its scope of control in light of the level of investment, the operating context and what alternative approaches may have been possible. Additional information on the theoretical underpinnings of the tool is provided on page 41.

VfM can be approached from a compliance and/or quality perspective. The process adopted sought to apply a VfM lens to see if this could enhance program quality and improvement. As such, the tool seeks to draw out learnings and recommendations related to the VfM of a program and how it can be improved. It also aims to strengthen the assessment of costs and investment, which is often lacking in program review, and help teams to better consider cost and investment options and make evidence-based VfM decisions. The process recognises that assessment of VfM can only be made if appropriate data across the four Es is available. The approach therefore uses VfM assessment as an opportunity to help teams strengthen their Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) frameworks to collect particular information to inform on VfM in the future, and better manage for VfM.

# **PROGRAM**

## **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) is the largest Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) program of funding for Australian Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in Africa. The program is being implemented over five years (2011–2016) and has a budget of up to \$90 million. The program focuses on DFAT priority sectors in Africa: food security, water sanitation, and maternal and child health. It targets marginalised communities in 11 countries with particular attention to women, children, people with disability, and people vulnerable to disaster. AACES is implemented by ten Australian NGOs through 39 in-Africa partners. The Oxfam AACES program is managed by the Oxfam in South Africa country office.

The Oxfam AACES program focuses on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in South Africa and Zambia. The overall goal of Oxfam's AACES program is to improve the health and quality of life of poor and vulnerable people in targeted areas of Zambia and South Africa. Oxfam's program in South Africa is delivered through existing NGO partners that did not previously work in the WASH sector. The program approach has been to support partners to mainstream WASH into their own organisations and programs. It has used an integrated approach, supporting partners to develop technical expertise in WASH, but also develop non-WASH related capacity central to strengthening the organisational architecture that supports and enables partners' WASH work (such as community engagement, advocacy, and monitoring, evaluation and learning). Oxfam's role in the partnership has been bringing partners together and providing opportunities for them to learn collectively to integrate WASH — providing technical expertise in WASH and other forms of institutional capacity development support to partners, and guiding partners to deliver aspects of the program including WASH and donor requirements around inclusion.

Oxfam's AACES program in South Africa is delivered by NGO partners who have existing programs in different thematic areas including food security, HIV and AIDS and child protection. The program initially had six partners that integrated WASH into their programs: Maputa Land Development and Information Centre (MDIC); Save the Children KZN; Fancy Stitch; Tholulwazi Uzivikele (TU); OneVoice South Africa; and Woza Moya. Two partners (MDIC and Fancy Stitch) subsequently exited the program. Two other project partners provide technical support to the other AACES partners responsible for integrating WASH: CREATE, who provides support in disability inclusion, and Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN), who provides support in child protection.

## VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Oxfam's AACES program in South Africa was selected for this process as the program team sought to build on previous work undertaken around VfM as part of the AACES Mid-Term Review (MTR). It also saw this as an opportunity to undertake in-depth analysis of its capacity building work to AACES NGO partners and identify learnings and recommendations to take forward during the final phase of the program and use in the end of program report.

Due to the large scale and complexity of the program, clear parameters were put in place to make the VfM assessment manageable. This VfM assessment examines the capacity development support provided by Oxfam in South Africa to implementing partners through the AACES program. It does not aim to provide a VfM assessment across the whole AACES program in South Africa. The assessment was undertaken towards the end of the program period, prior to the final program report. It was carried out by an external consultant and provides an independent assessment. The assessment used common evaluative methodologies including: a desktop review of program documentation; a Focus Group Discussion with Oxfam South Africa program staff; and an NGO partner questionnaire completed by five AACES NGO partners. The questionnaire sought partner feedback regarding the quality, appropriateness and impact of Oxfam's capacity building support.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The overall Value for Money of the AACES capacity building program component is excellent. Oxfam in South Africa has invested and appropriately used resources to ensure it has successfully built the capacity of its NGO partners to integrate WASH into their programs. It has selected the “right partners” who were able to reach and provide WASH services to a range of vulnerable groups and supported them to link and learn collectively to integrate WASH. The programming approach of supporting the wider organisational capacity development of partners in rights-based community programming and advocacy, rather than solely focusing on building partner’s technical expertise in WASH was found to be appropriate. As a result, the investment in non-WASH related organisational capacity building support was central to strengthening the organisational architecture that supports partners to effectively deliver WASH. Overall, the investment has been well directed towards the achievement of program objectives.

The strong and respectful partnership established between Oxfam and NGO partners, and between NGO partners, has supported the efficient delivery of the program. The level of trust among partners and willingness to share challenges and solutions in inclusive WASH programs has supported a focus on program delivery and collaboration for practical program improvement. Internal leveraging of partner knowledge, skills and resources within the program has been extremely high, with several partners going on to form collaborations outside of the program. Partners have shared their internal systems and processes with each other to support collective improvement. Failures in WASH systems have been shared, allowing partners to avoid mistakes. In the same way, successful technologies and innovations, such as “tippy taps”, that have emerged through the program have also been shared. In some instances, the integration of WASH into partners’ programs and the capacity building inputs provided by Oxfam has enabled partners to leverage additional external support to further benefit their communities.

The program approach adopted has been highly effective. There is clear evidence to indicate that partners understand WASH and have contextualised it to their programming contexts. This is significant given that initially partners reported having little knowledge of WASH and how to integrate it, and encountered resistance to it within their own organisations. The capacity building inputs have clearly cascaded to benefit communities, with partners bringing about a range of WASH outcomes for communities, including changes in WASH knowledge and practices and increased access to WASH services. The program design supports a high level of sustainability by using an integrated approach which aims to ensure NGO partners can continue to deliver WASH after the partnership with Oxfam has come to an end. The indications that WASH will continue to be integral to NGO partner organisations and their programs are high. However, some constraints to sustainability were identified including the ability of some partners to ensure duty bearers provide and maintain WASH infrastructure. The assessment highlights opportunities to continue to address sustainability issues in the final phase of this program.

Reduced inequalities in WASH is a program objective that has been well facilitated by the program, with comprehensive data provided on the many benefits experienced by women, children and people with disability across the program. Overall, the program has performed well in supporting partners to ensure WASH programs equitably target and reach vulnerable groups. Significant progress has been made in relation to progressing disability inclusion and child protection which have been standout features of the program. This has been brought about as a result of DFAT requirements in these areas and of Oxfam in South Africa’s appropriate engagement of technical support to partners provided consistently over the course of the partnership. While men and women’s access rates to WASH have increased at comparable levels, tackling gender issues has been acknowledged as a challenge among Oxfam and partners. While efforts were made to address gender gaps, sufficient progress and success has not resulted in this area.



Bongi Zuma from from CREATE who visited the Plan Uganda field visit.

PHOTO © Wendy Lubbee

## KEY LEARNINGS

- Time was invested in supporting partners to explore and understand the AACES WASH theory of change (ToC), with partners discussing the pathways and how their work contributes to the desired outcomes. This process supported partners to develop a shared understanding of the program and see the connections between activities which supported an integrated approach.
- **All capacity building outcomes were systematically and carefully linked to program outcomes**, with the ToC being viewed when determining capacity building inputs and priorities.
- Tailoring capacity building assistance to enable partners to integrate WASH into their programs **with a relative focus on both software and hardware aspects of WASH**, and strengthen their **wider organisational capacity**, has been an effective strategy.
- **Partners placed a high degree of trust in Oxfam at the beginning of the program**, allowing it to support and guide partners to meet donor requirements, with partners initially not knowing how requirements could be met.
- **Oxfam's readiness may not be the same as partners' readiness** — partners may be in different places in terms of starting work, as well as in the ability to navigate requirements when defining capacity building activities and pace of work; **knowing when Oxfam was overstepping and needed to pull back** was essential to maintaining a successful partnership.
- The **design of the program with a focus on collective learning and sharing between partners** has been essential. The level of trust built among partners through the program has supported learning, as partners have engaged in an open and non-competitive manner.
- **Providing ongoing linking and learning activities** such as annual reflections and planning meetings, the WASH group and field visits has enabled rich exchanges between partners which have led to new ideas and ways of implementing WASH programs.
- Use of **external national consultants has brought a wealth of knowledge** relating to their experience of other program approaches and strategies in South Africa that were of great benefit to the program.
- **Engaging national consultants to work with and mentor partner organisation staff continuously over time** has helped to embed learning and capacity, both individually and institutionally.
- **The program provided a platform between partners to meet and develop strategic partnerships** — the forming of strong partnerships between AACES NGO partners supports the potential sustainability of outcomes, as support networks have been created which may endure.
- **Including an advocacy component** is essential to ensuring the sustainability of the program; it has been challenging to introduce "advocacy" activities due to an initial negative perception around this term and form of engagement with government.
- **Having a specific objective around equity** (ie reducing inequalities in WASH) **has focused partners** in working towards inclusion.
- **Giving technical service providers in disability inclusion and child protection the freedom to decide what supports are necessary**, rather than providing blanket requirements, has been appropriate.
- Having **Oxfam staff learn with and alongside partners** demonstrates leadership and commitment to supporting inclusion.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM PERIOD:

- Consolidate data across all AACES partners to **provide a comprehensive picture of the impact** of the program and the extent to which it has **benefited different groups** in the final report.
- **Document the most and least appropriate and cost-effective WASH technologies** and reasons for this and capture important technical learnings that can be applied in future WASH programs.
- Work with the disability inclusion partner CREATE more strongly, so as to review the disability content in partner reports and strengthen Oxfam's own understanding of disability issues and ability to provide technical analysis, and **take greater steps to progress its own disability inclusive practice at all levels within the organisation as partners have done.**
- **Undertake a sustainability mapping of WASH infrastructure** which outlines the requirements and avenues of each partner to receive, maintain and repair WASH hardware in the future.
- Support partners to **form links with external WASH hardware suppliers** (government and private sector) exploring a **range of avenues for sustainability.**
- **Continue working with advocacy partners** that support and mentor AACES partners to continue to build their advocacy WASH work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING:

- Ensure a **strong induction/orientation process** in the early interactions between partners which gives them opportunity to raise questions and develop an understanding of the program.
- Provide partners with an **annual plan of events in advance** to allow for better planning and coordination with field activities.
- **Support additional exchange visits at the community level** to allow partners to see first-hand examples of how effective WASH committees operate and pose questions to stakeholders directly, such as: how they began; how they were formed; how they operate; what works well and what does not.
- **Bring Oxfam in South Africa's internal expertise in gender** (gained through its experience of delivering other programs in South Africa over the last decade) to bear on AACES, in addition to putting in place other strategies to address gender issues.
- **Ensure outcomes can be realistically achieved in the program period** (i.e. ability of community and NGO partners to influence duty bearers to provide and maintain WASH infrastructure) by outlining what is inside and outside of the program's sphere of influence, and what changes may require a longer time frame.
- **Factor sustainability of WASH outcomes from the outset** and ensure appropriate and sufficient investment in partner capacity to source and receive WASH services and infrastructure at the end of the program.

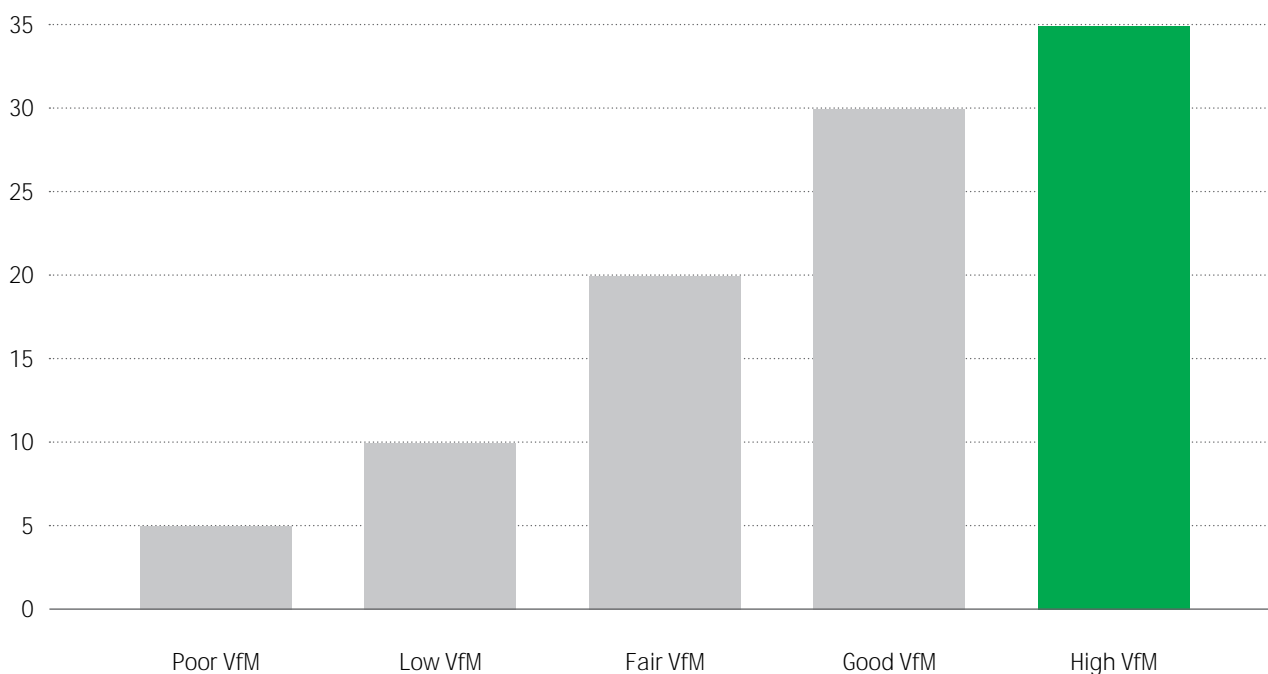
# FULL VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT



## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program name:	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES)
Program type:	Capacity building for inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programming
Region:	Southern Africa
Country:	South Africa
Program period:	2011–2016
Stage in program cycle:	End of the program cycle
Theory of change in place:	Yes (initial ToC and revised updated ToC in 2014)
Program cost:	AUD \$2,628,779 (ZAR 6,469,709) capacity building support
Goal of program:	Improving the health and quality of life of the poor and vulnerable people in targeted areas of Zambia and South Africa.
Investment located (Individual, community, NGO):	NGO
Attachments:	Financial summary

## OVERALL VFM RATING



## ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

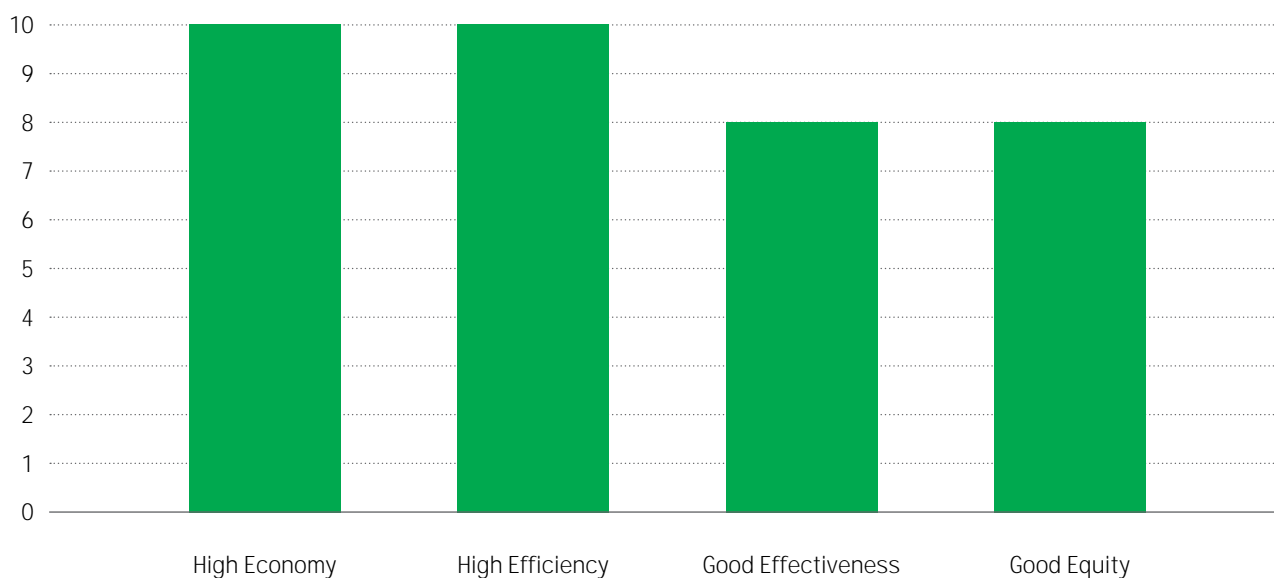
The overall Value for Money rating for the program component is excellent. Oxfam in South Africa has invested and appropriately used resources to ensure it has consistently and successfully built the capacity of its NGO partners to integrate WASH into their programs. It has used resources to support partners to link and learn collectively to integrate WASH (appropriately programming in relation to Oxfam's expertise and value-add) and engaged appropriate local consultants to provide technical expertise in WASH and other forms of support. The program was managed responsively; when gaps were identified in relation to required inputs, or existing inputs were found to be inappropriate, the investment was redirected to support needs and achievement of program objectives. The large investment in non-WASH related organisational capacity building support was central to strengthening the organisational architecture that supports and enables partners' WASH work.

The strong and respectful partnership established (between Oxfam and NGO partners, and between NGO partners) has supported both the efficient delivery of the program and a focus on program delivery and collaboration for practical program improvement. Internal leveraging of partner knowledge, skills and resources within the program has been extremely high, with several partners going on to form collaborations outside of the program. In some instances, the integration of WASH into partners' programs and the capacity building inputs provided by Oxfam has enabled partners to leverage additional external support.

There is clear evidence to indicate that partners understand WASH and have contextualised it to their programming contexts and communities in which they work. This is significant given that initially partners reported having little knowledge of WASH and how to integrate it, and encountered resistance to it within their own organisations. The capacity building inputs have clearly cascaded to benefit communities, with partners bringing about a range of WASH outcomes for communities, including changes in WASH knowledge and practices and increased access to WASH services. The indications that WASH will continue to be integral to NGO partner programs/organisations is high. The program design supports a high level of sustainability by using an integrated approach which aims to ensure NGO partners can continue to deliver WASH after the partnership with Oxfam has come to an end. Some constraints to sustainability were identified, with partners' ability to ensure duty bearers provide and maintain WASH infrastructure unclear at the point of this assessment. Oxfam has made efforts to ensure sustainability, such as supporting partners to develop sustainability plans, developing an advocacy policy and forming links with advocacy organisations. The assessment highlights opportunities to continue to address sustainability issues in the final phase of this program.

Overall, the program has performed well in supporting partners to ensure WASH programs effectively target and reach vulnerable groups. Significant progress has been made in relation to progressing disability inclusion and child protection, which have been standout features of the program. Gender has been acknowledged as a challenge among Oxfam and partners throughout the program. While efforts were made to address gender gaps, the program has not made sufficient progress in this area. Reduced inequalities in WASH is a program objective and has clearly been facilitated by the program, with comprehensive data provided on the many benefits experienced by women, children and people with disability across the program.

## SUMMARY OF VFM COMPONENT RANKINGS



### ECONOMy HIGH (6/6)

Sub-component 1: theory of change

Sub-component 2: competitiveness

6

3/3

3/3

INFORMED JUDGEMENT

well supported by a range of quality evidence

### EFFICIENCY HIGH (6/6)

Sub-component 1: productivity

Sub-component 2: leveraging

6

3/3

3/3

INFORMED JUDGEMENT

well supported by a range of quality evidence

### EFFECTIVENESS GOOD (9/12)

Sub-component 1: reach and depth of change

Sub-component 2: sustainability

9

6/6

3/6

TENTATIVE JUDGEMENT

made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps

### EqUITy GOOD (9/12)

Sub-component 1: equity of process

Sub-component 2: equity of outcomes

9

3/6

6/6

TENTATIVE JUDGEMENT

made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps

## SUMMARY OF VFM COMPONENT RANKINGS

### COMPONENT 1: ECONOMY (COSTS AND INPUTS: WHAT WENT IN?)

#### Reasonable cost to acquire good quality inputs that will enable realisation of the desired changes

##### Relevant contextual factors and implications for investment options

- Government provision of WASH services in South Africa is relatively weak.
- The South Africa component was part of a broader program also implemented in Zambia.

#### ECONOMy SUB-CATEGORy 1: THEORy OF CHANGE (TOC)

##### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

##### Has Oxfam invested in the “right” types of partners to achieve the change sought?

Oxfam engaged seven NGO partners with different sectoral focuses to integrate WASH. Two partners exited the program during the partnership. The other five partners have continued, and successfully integrated WASH. All partners reported that WASH aligns well with their program activities. One partner stated, “WASH marries perfectly with the concept of addressing the holistic needs of the young children while at the same time ensuring that the young child is accessing a quality learning environment. It has suggested and exposed us to areas of the young child’s needs that we would not previously have considered”. This indicates that Oxfam has selected partners with a shared vision and way of working and reinforces the appropriateness of the premise of the program’s integrated approach and the ability of the program to deliver this. Where this was not the case (of the two partners), appropriate arrangements were made to exit the partnership.

Partners are NGOs who serve different target groups within different communities and work in different sectors. As NGOs have groups of community workers, conducting home and school visits in the regions they serve, they are able to reach a large number of people at the community level, often in remote areas. This has allowed Oxfam to extend WASH outcomes to diverse community groups (as outlined in Component 3: effectiveness — reach and depth). Arguably, Oxfam has selected the “right” partners if NGO partners are able to deliver WASH outcomes to vulnerable communities in an inclusive manner, and if these NGOs continue to provide WASH services.

Challenges around the ability of partners to engage government and duty bearers to deliver WASH services were identified during the program. An objective in this area was subsequently integrated into the revised ToC, with the program aiming to support women and men to influence and claim their rights and a WASH influencing strategy being developed in 2014 to further this objective. Anecdotal discussions with staff indicate that partners have started to advocate for WASH services and infrastructure on a local level with community members taking some responsibility in this area, but that this has not resulted in communities’ ability to effectively claim their rights in this area.

It is not currently clear to what extent sustainability of WASH outcomes is contingent upon the ability of AACES NGO partners to advocate for and receive WASH services. If WASH infrastructure cannot be maintained, a gap in the ToC may be evident (i.e. advocacy outcomes may be unrealistic or investment insufficient). This is discussed in greater depth in the section below: effectiveness — sustainability. When this challenge emerged, Oxfam management responded by making greater investment mid-way through the program (and thereafter) to strengthen advocacy work. In year four, Oxfam brought Equal Education — an advocacy organisation that focuses

on the school sector — into the partnership. One of their current programs is around school infrastructure, and they have proven to be a good organisation to engage with to bring about advocacy level outcomes.

#### Has Oxfam used the “right” resources to support the changes sought? (Has it invested appropriately and sufficiently?)

Oxfam's investment has involved 1) using internal resources to support partners to link and learn collectively to integrate WASH, and 2) engaging consultants to provide technical expertise in WASH and other forms of support to partners. Oxfam's role and value-add in the program has been: holding an overarching vision of the program; bringing partners together to learn and share; supporting and evolving the partnership; guiding partners to deliver aspects of the program (WASH and other program requirements); and providing organisation strengthening support.

As outlined in greater detail in both Component 2: efficiency, and Component 3: effectiveness, the inputs and resources used to bring about change (linking and learning and engaging consultants to provide technical support) have been largely appropriate. While the inputs sources were the “right” ones needed to make the change, some inputs were not delivered appropriately as planned, resulting in diminished levels of change in some areas. Inputs identified by some partners as being inappropriate and ineffectual include: the gender training (which was found to be too theoretical with little relevance to work on the ground); Participatory Rural Appraisal and fundraising activities (as insufficient time was allocated); and story gathering processes. In regards to gender training, a pilot exercise with a gender expert was implemented and because the results were extremely poor Oxfam cancelled this contract and did not roll it out any further due to the large disconnect.

The program was not only about WASH, but was designed to strengthen the capacity of partners in a range of ways, having added benefits outside of WASH. There was a large investment in non-WASH specific organisational capacity building support, such as MEL (ie data collection, development of baselines, knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) methods), community engagement, participation, awareness raising, disability inclusion, program management, reporting and advocacy, which supported partners' ability to deliver, monitor and report on WASH work by strengthening the organisational architecture that supports WASH work. It also allowed partners to apply this new capacity across other thematic areas, having an extended impact beyond WASH. Arguably, this model was more effective in creating interest and buy-in among partners than a model with an exclusive focus on WASH capacity building inputs, which while may have been a less resource-intensive approach, is unlikely to have produced the same level of outcomes.

#### LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What learnings does the program hold for constructing the ToC and ensuring investment is appropriately aligned?

- While the program's ToC was clearly articulated in the program design document, it was not socialised well with partners because WASH was new to both Oxfam in South Africa and the partners and it was not clear what areas of WASH partners would want to focus on in their communities across two countries. However, as it was not socialised upfront time was wasted early on as partners struggled to understand the program.
- After the mid-term review it was clear that the ToC had to be re-visited and mapped against the program objectives with partners identifying their own pathways of change and mapping them. This process supported partners to develop a shared understanding of the program and see the connections between activities which supported an integrated approach.
- Time was invested in supporting partners to explore and understanding the AACES WASH ToC and high-level indicators, with partners discussing the pathways and how their work contributes to the desired outcomes.
- All capacity building outcomes were systematically and carefully linked to program outcomes, with the ToC being viewed when determining capacity building inputs and priorities.
- As AACES was part of the wider No Longer vulnerable program, partners were linked in to a larger program and network and received additional support.

## RECOmmENDATION qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could resources be better directed to achieve the program's intended outcomes?

- **Factoring sustainability of WASH outcomes from the beginning** and ensuring appropriate and sufficient investment in partner capacity to source and receive WASH services and infrastructure at the end of the program.
- **Ensuring outcomes can be realistically achieved at the end of the program** (i.e. capacity of men and women to influence duty bearers) by clearly outlining what is in the sphere of influence of Oxfam and partners and what is outside of it (and what may require a longer time frame).
- **Advocacy type partner brought into the program from the outset to share their experiences early on and provide further support** — many of the partners were traditionally involved in service delivery in the areas of health, social protection, and food security so their focus was more on “filling the gap” when government was failing to provide essential services. Oxfam could have provided more training earlier in the program on the “rights based approach”, assisting partners to shift their thinking regarding their roles and responsibilities versus the government's.

## ECONOMy SUB-CATEGORy 2: COmpETITivENESS

### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

**Have costs been kept reasonably low while maintaining quality? (Outline in relation to other comparable options available to support the same changes OR the way in which the program has been implemented so reducing or increasing costs/inputs).**

Costs have been reasonable and appropriate and on the whole a high level of program quality has been maintained. Internal Oxfam resources have been used to support linking and learning which has been highly effective. These activities have used 1.24% of the total budget (this does not include investment of staff time and partner staff time). This demonstrates how a relatively small financial investment can have a significant impact on effectiveness. High quality national consultants have been engaged to provide technical support and local South African NGOs were engaged to provide support on child protection and disability; no international consultants were engaged, keeping costs down.

Of the capacity building budget, 3.12% has been spent on capacity building in MEL, which has been a relatively small area of investment which has been of high value to all partners. The bulk of capacity building funds have been spent on joint technical training of staff from multiple organisations (40.82%) and coaching and mentoring of NGO staff (37.32%); noting a few exceptions, the technical support provided by partners through these activities was reported to be instrumental in assisting partners to strengthen their organisational capacity. Exchange visits were provided in region, allowing partners to learn practically from other WASH programs implemented in similar contexts.

**Have funding arrangements allowed costs and inputs to be used as necessary according to the program context?**

The AACES program afforded a good amount of flexibility. Oxfam staff noted that they were able to cancel planned activities if they no longer made sense, and be responsive to needs and requests from partners. DFAT did not institute compliance guidelines which enabled Oxfam and partners to determine their own implementation pathways.

## ECONOMY RATING

### OVERALL ECONOMY RATING: HIGH ECONOMY 6/6

(2 poor economy, 3 low economy, 4 fair economy, 5 good economy, 6 high economy)

<b>THEORY OF CHANGE: 3/3</b>		<b>COMPETITIVENESS: 3/3</b>	
How well has the program directed resources to bring about planned outcomes?		Have costs been kept reasonably low while maintaining quality?	
U	It is not clear if resources have been closely linked to outcomes; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear if resources have been kept low and quality maintained; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Investment directed to achieve changes is largely inappropriate	1	Program costs are either unreasonably high or too low, affecting quality
2	Some forms of investment directed to achieve changes are appropriate, with scope for improvement	2	Some forms of investment are reasonable, some costs could have been reduced or redirected
3	<b>Investment directed to achieve changes is largely appropriate</b>	3	<b>Investment is largely reasonable and quality maintained</b>
<b>STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE</b>			
Poor evidence:		Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence	
Average evidence:		Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps	
<b>Excellent evidence:</b>		<b>Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence</b>	

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment
  - Program budget
  - Theory of Change document (diagram and narrative)
  - MEL capacity building training report
  - AACES mid-term review
  - Operational plans (detailing capacity building support activities)
  - Oxfam WASH influencing strategy
  - Focus Group Discussion with staff
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment
  - Comprehensive financial data received with a breakdown of what investments were made in different capacity building strategies
  - 2014 ToC is robust and detailed, supporting a clearer understanding of the program and the perceived pathways for achieving change
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment
  - Investment of staff time would provide a more comprehensive assessment of investment in linking and learning
  - Limited documentation of a “sustainability assessment” which outlines which WASH services and infrastructure each partner can source and maintain internally (and is therefore sustainable), and what external support is required by partners to maintain and continue WASH work (and is therefore potentially unsustainable if there is not a clear process in place to ensure this is received)

## COMPONENT 2: EFFICIENCY (INPUTS TO OUTPUTS: WHAT HAPPENED?)

A measure of productivity — how much you get out in relation to what is put in (increasing output for a given input, or minimising input for a given output, with a regard for maintaining quality)

### Relevant contextual factors and implications for efficiency

- Oxfam had worked with AACES NGO partners prior to the program and had already established good working relationships — allowing for a relatively high degree of trust.
- South Africa has a high level of national technical expertise — making it possible to engage quality local consultants.
- Oxfam in South Africa was engaged in the Oxfam 2020 process and was informed of the closure of their office during the implementation of ACCES — resulting in management having to navigate internal agency processes and manage its own exit during the implementation of the program.
- A relatively high number of donor requirements were attached to AACES funding — requiring Oxfam and partners to navigate and develop capacity in a range of new areas for the first time (i.e. disability inclusion and child protection).
- AACES partners are working in different regions and sectors with different target groups and different levels of capacity — making it difficult to standardise capacity building support.

### EFFICIENCY SUB-CATEGORY 1: PRODUCTIVITY

#### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

#### How has the project created efficiencies?

The outputs sought relate to building partner capacity to integrate WASH into their organisations and programs. Oxfam's two main delivery approaches are 1) supporting partners to link and learn collectively to integrate WASH, and 2) engaging consultants to provide technical expertise in WASH and other forms of support to partners.

With the exception of one partner who reportedly exited the program mid-way due to the burdensome level of requirements, all partners surveyed noted that the partnership had involved a heavy investment of their time in capacity building processes, but that this was worth it given the benefits received. All Oxfam partners stated that on most occasions, the support provided aligned with their needs. There is a breadth of evidence which demonstrates that Oxfam has been genuinely responsive to partner needs, responding to specific requests for capacity development support. For example, partners initiated a WASH group in which they meet every two months to find common ground. This group was reported by partners as being pivotal to the program's effectiveness and has been supported by Oxfam at the request of partners. Oxfam's flexible and supportive approach has created efficiencies by ensuring capacity building investments are relevant to partners.

Oxfam has contracted out the majority of capacity building inputs rather than bringing in or using in-house expertise. Oxfam noted they chose consultants carefully and took their time during the selection process to make the right choice. This approach of engaging external national consultants appears to be appropriate, given the need to deliver tailored and flexible technical support to different partners in different areas. With a few



exceptions (ie gender consultants), the consultants engaged were reported by partners as being highly skilled with a good knowledge of the context and an ability to work well with partners. Partners commonly identified appropriate selection of quality consultants as a key factor underpinning the success of the program.

Oxfam has not seen a high turnover of Oxfam staff and partner staff involved in the program. This has prevented inefficiencies and allowed for a continuity of programming and a high level of comfort and trust to develop between Oxfam and partners. Oxfam in South Africa management made a conscious decision not to involve AACES program staff heavily in the Oxfam Single Management Structure change process. As a result, staff attention was not diverted and program quality was maintained over the course of the program. Despite the impending closure of the Oxfam in South Africa office, Oxfam staff have remained dedicated to the program and focused on supporting partners to complete the program well, working to maximise impact and sustainability.

Partners trialed the use of different WASH infrastructure and technologies in different communities and undertook exchange visits to share their experiences. This has allowed partners to compare technologies, avoid making the same mistakes, and determine which are the most suitable and cost-effective solutions. For example, the construction of the “enviroloo” was considered too expensive for a mass rollout, and the installation of boreholes failed three times, while the dripping water system and “tippy taps” were seen to be both affordable and effective. Oxfam supported partners to attend the World Toilet Summit, and participate in exchange visits to Zambia and Malawi to visit other WASH programs implemented through AACES in collaboration with Oxfam and Water Aid. These were collaborative platforms which facilitated information and knowledge sharing between Oxfam and various partner NGOs.

#### **How has the project created inefficiencies?**

Inefficiencies appear to have been present at the beginning of the program, with several partners reporting not to have had a clear vision of what they were expected to achieve and what was needed to implement the program. One partner stated, “there was quite a bit of time wasted in the early days with us all foundering around trying to understand what this new program was and what was expected of us”. This indicates that greater investment was needed in the design and startup phase to ensure a clear and shared understanding of the program among all partners.

Some partners reported a rush to start implementation of WASH work within their organisations, caused by funder urgency. This purportedly led to some resistance within their own organisations to the idea of integrating WASH into programs with a different sectoral focus, with staff not initially seeing the relevance of the approach. This potentially created inefficiencies as partner staff had to work to overcome resistance created, which may have been countered by allowing more time for awareness raising and discussion within partner organisations.

#### **LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:**

##### **What can be learned about trying to produce certain outputs in relation to the context and program type and the implications of this for investment?**

- Partners identified the following as **key strengths of Oxfam’s approach**: aligning themselves to what NGOs were doing; agreeing on expectations and targets mutually; being responsive to requests for support; good communication and willingness to listen; being aware of the capacity of partners; allowing failures; and assisting partners in supporting each other.
- **The need to balance software and hardware capacity building support** — some reported a lack of alignment with their needs, due to an initial focus on hardware which was not seen as relevant to their context and therefore not benefiting early on; this was later addressed.

- **The need to take the levels at which partners work, their target groups and implementation approaches** into consideration when defining WASH mainstreaming approaches. One partner noted that as the program had an initial focus on WASH governance, they perceived Oxfam to be using a top down approach that did not align with their work at the household and community level.
- **Trust in Oxfam to navigate requirements** — both partners and Oxfam reported that a high degree of trust was placed in Oxfam at the beginning of the program, particularly in relation to supporting and guiding partners to meet donor requirements (i.e. MEL, disability, child protection, technical aspects of WASH) with partners initially not knowing how these could be done. One partner stated “we trusted that Oxfam knew what was needed, and went along with the flow in the early years”.
- **Oxfam’s readiness may not be the same as partners’ readiness** — being mindful that partners may be in different places in terms of starting work and the ability to understand and navigate requirements when defining capacity building activities and pace of work; knowing when Oxfam was overstepping and needed to pull back was essential to maintaining a successful partnership.
- **Engaging consultants to work with and mentor partner staff continuously** — having consultants continue to work with partners (often a group of people, not just one staff member) over time helped to embed learning and capacity, both individually and institutionally.

### RECOmmENDATION qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could Oxfam produce more or better outputs with a commensurate level of investment?

- **A stronger induction/orientation process** in the early interactions between partners, giving them the opportunity to raise questions and issues and develop an understanding of the program, would create efficiencies.
- **Involving partners in the selection of consultants** — while partners often cited high-quality consultants as being key to the program’s success, they also stated the program would have benefited from their participation in the selection of all consultants.
- **Engaging the disability inclusion support partner more strongly** — CREATE was engaged to provide technical support to partners, however it could also have been used to review the disability content in partner reports and strengthen Oxfam’s understanding of the issues and ability to provide technical analysis and feedback.
- **Providing partners with an annual plan of events in advance** to allow for better planning and coordination with field activities.
- **Documenting the most and least appropriate and cost-effective technologies** and reasons for this would capture important learning that could be applied in future WASH programs.

## EFFICIENCY SUB-CATEGORY 2: LEVERAGING

### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How well has Oxfam strategically used and mobilised resources (i.e. the ideas, skills, funds and resources of other individuals/organisations, and its own skills, knowledge and networks)? Outline how it has leveraged and missed opportunities to leverage.

A key strategy of the program has been to provide a platform for NGOs to meet and develop strategic partnerships. The program has facilitated a high level of engagement between partners, allowing them to learn and benefit substantially from each other’s skills and experience. This has been a highly successful strategy for achieving outcomes and is a program outcome in itself. The partnership (between Oxfam and partners and between ACCES partners) has developed strongly. This has strengthened WASH outcomes, but has also facilitated a range of multiplier effects of benefit to partner organisations and communities.

Internal leveraging of partner knowledge, skills and resources within the program has been extremely high. Partners have shared these on a regular basis through the working group and reflection processes where they have come together to discuss each other's work. Partners developed a comprehensive charter to outline the ways in which they will collaborate with each other. One section includes a commitment to performing pro bono work for each other and reciprocating services. Partners have shared their internal systems and processes with each other to support collective improvement, such as innovative WASH systems, MEL and financial systems. Several AACES partners noted the value of knowledge and experience shared by Save the Children of WASH in early childhood development centres and of Woza Moya in the building of "tippy taps".

In several instances, NGO partners have gone on to form collaborations outside of the program. For example, disability inclusion partner CREATE has formed formal partnerships with two AACES NGO partners. For CREATE, their inclusion in AACES has enabled them to develop a new model for stimulating disability inclusive development within NGOs, rather than solely functioning as a service provider. One partner has established a formal link with Save the Children which has led to the establishment of a local ECD forum, independent of Oxfam funding. This has allowed the organisation to reach more ECD centres (which are isolated and receive very little government support) than it previously did in a more cost-effective way. This is expected to result in significantly more children being equipped and prepared for school. AACES partners have also recently submitted joint funding proposals.

The integration of WASH into partners' programs and the capacity building inputs provided by Oxfam has enabled partners to leverage external support. One partner's WASH work in schools has enabled it to link with the Expanded Public Works Programme based in the municipality. Another partner noted that as a result of Oxfam's capacity development support on collection and presenting of stories, they have become better able to share information about their program and have obtained direct funding support as a result.

#### LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about trying to leverage in relation to the context and program type?

- **The design of the program and focus on collective learning and sharing between partners** has been essential to maximising program efficiency and effectiveness.
- **The level of trust built among partners through the program has supported learning** — partners have engaged openly and in a non-competitive manner which is reportedly rare in the context.
- **Use of external national consultants** — consultants reportedly brought a wealth of knowledge relating to their experience of other program approaches and strategies in South Africa, which was of great benefit to the program.

#### RECOmmENDATION qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could Oxfam have better leveraged?

- **The program has facilitated a high degree of internal leveraging** (of partners and consultants); there are therefore no recommendations in this area.
- **It is not immediately clear if and how Oxfam could have better leveraged internally** within Oxfam (such as by drawing on Oxfam Australia). Possibilities include WASH technical support (which was reportedly requested and not received) and support with documentation of aspects of its model.

- It is not immediately clear if and how Oxfam could have better leveraged externally, such as through engagement of the private sector in support to WASH hardware, as discussion of this issue is not present in program documentation. It is recommended that Oxfam and partners consider this in discussions regarding sustainability of WASH infrastructure (as noted below, this has been raised as a potential constraint to sustainability).

## EFFICIENCY RATING

### OVERALL EFFICIENCY RATING: FAIR EFFICIENCY 6/6

(2 poor efficiency, 3 low efficiency, 4 fair efficiency, 5 good efficiency, 6 high efficiency)

PRODUCTIVITY: 3/3		LEVERAGING: 3/3	
How well have efficiencies been created during program implementation?		How well has the program strategically mobilised resources?	
U	It is not clear how the way in which the program was implemented has supported efficiency; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear what leveraging occurred; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Program implementation was largely inefficient, affecting program quality	1	No/very limited leveraging occurred
2	Some efficiencies have been created by the way in which the program has been implemented, with room for improvement	2	Some leveraging occurred and some opportunities for leveraging were missed
3	<b>The ways in which the program has been implemented have been largely efficient and supported program quality</b>	3	<b>Strong leveraging occurred, extending and enhancing outputs</b>

### STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence
Average evidence:	Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps
<b>Excellent evidence:</b>	<b>Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence</b>

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment
  - Focus Group Discussion with Oxfam staff
  - Interviews and questionnaire from AACES partners
  - Operational plans (detailing capacity building support activities)
  - Program reports and reviews
  - Documentation of learning events
  - Partner Charter
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment
  - Learning events were well documented, outlining the challenges experienced by partners during implementation and actions taken and achievements
  - Clear evidence was outlined regarding how partners would work together — making it easy to understand points of intersect and how this would support program delivery
  - The questionnaire enabled partners to clearly identify the value-add of Oxfam and what had supported productive working relationships
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment



Oxfam in South Africa AACES partners visit the Nyanga village in Mongu Zambia to learn about the WASH interventions.

PHOTO © Alexia Webster

## COMPONENT 3: EFFECTIVENESS (INPUTS TO OUTPUTS: WHAT HAPPENED?)

### Is the program generating positive and sustainable outcomes?

#### Relevant contextual factors and implications for effectiveness

- Partners had no/limited knowledge of WASH and of how to integrate WASH services — as a result partners were starting from a relatively low base
- AACES partners are connected with a wider program (no longer vulnerable) in which capacity building and reporting are connected
- Partners are working in different regions and sectors and with different target groups — making it difficult to standardise and aggregate outcomes

#### EFFECTIVENESS SUB-CATEGORY 1: REACH AND DEPTH OF CHANGE

##### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

##### Did the program bring about the outcomes it had sought to?

The capacity development inputs provided through the program have significantly increased the capacity of AACES partners in a range of ways (related to WASH and other areas). Partners were asked to rate the level of impact of Oxfam's capacity building work on their organisation. One partner rated it as having a medium impact; the other four partners reported it as having a high impact. Several partners noted it stretched and developed the capacity of individual staff members and their organisations. As stated by an AACES partner, "the capacity building, networking, linking, and learning together has had a lasting influence. WASH will stay, partnerships have been formed and minds have been opened".

Most significantly, partners understand WASH and have contextualised it to their programming contexts and the communities in which they work. Initially they reported having little knowledge of WASH and how to integrate it, and encountered resistance to it within their own organisations. These issues have clearly been navigated and addressed, with partners reporting greater confidence and expertise to implement WASH independently. There is a range of evidence to indicate that partners have successfully mainstreamed WASH by integrating it into their organisational policies and procedures, and into their existing programs. As one partner stated, "empowering our community care workers around WASH issues has had a direct impact in improving health outcomes in the homes. Our community care workers now understand the direct link between improved hygiene practices like hand washing, water storage, waste disposal and the improved health outcomes. They have taught the families under their care this and we have seen the incidence of diarrhea decreasing in the community".

##### Did the program produce reasonable reach (numbers of people benefiting) and depth of change (systematic change) in relation to the level of investment?

The capacity building inputs have clearly cascaded to benefit communities. A range of examples which support this are documented in reports including: increased community knowledge of safe and clean water and other WASH aspects; changes in WASH practices resulting in improvements in health; increased access to WASH services and infrastructure; reduced inequalities to WASH services (outlined in the section below); establishment of functioning WASH governance structures; and collective local responsibility taken to access, protect, use and maintain WASH infrastructure by community members.

The qualitative data provided indicates a level of systematic change has been achieved. For example, institutional change in capacity to integrate WASH has occurred among all partners. Quantitative data reveals the reach facilitated by the program. A total of 11,306 additional people (6,551 women and 4,755 men) are reported to have access to sustainable and safe water over the life of the partnership. The majority of people (8,082) received services in July 2012–June 2013, with a smaller but consistent number of people obtaining access in the following two years. This is likely due to the delivery of WASH hardware/infrastructure that took place at the beginning of the program. A total 9,793 people (5,595 women and 4,198 men) experienced access to appropriate sanitation. The majority of people (7,757) experienced these benefits from July 2014–June 2015, with numbers of people lower in the previous year of July 2012–June 2013 (1,777) and even lower in the subsequent year (259).

After the AACES MTR, the program emphasised the objective related to increasing the capacity of men and women to claim their rights, respond to external trends and shocks, and influence those with power and to hold duty bearers to account. While this objective was always present, partners had not made the conceptual shift from service delivery to building the capacity of their communities to claim their rights. At the time of the assessment, the extent to which this has been achieved could not be discerned due to lack of data as this assessment was undertaken prior to the final evaluation.

### LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What lessons can be learned regarding the resourcing of critical pathways/strategies to support change in this program context?

- **Providing ongoing linking and learning activities** (such as annual reflections, planning meetings, WASH group and field visits) allowed for rich exchanges between WASH partners, often leading to new ideas and ways of implementing WASH programs and helping partners to learn from each other's challenges and mistakes and share experiences and expertise.
- **Providing partners with exchange visits, and the opportunity to see how WASH was being practically taken forward by others in different countries, was highly valuable** — these experiences motivated partners and enabled them to “look at what they were doing with new eyes”. Several partners noted being impressed by the proactive roles women were playing in WASH construction in Zambia, and how Oxfam had used the WASH program to improve women's livelihoods. The actions taken by the Zambia program in skilling communities to sustain boreholes also impressed partners.
- **Supporting partners to attend the World Toilet Summit enabled partners to become more familiar with global innovations** in technologies and legislation on sanitation and human rights, with organisations practically taking forward some of this learning in their own organisations.
- **The program provided a platform between partners to meet and develop strategic partnerships**, as illustrated by the new formal partnerships formed and joint funding submissions.
- **Tailored capacity building assistance to enable partners to integrate WASH into their programs** (with a relative focus on both software and hardware aspects of WASH) and **strengthen their organisational capacity in other areas** (such as digital media, storytelling, video making and photo stories).
- **Providing strong support to improve MEL** — **the consultant was able to relate concepts simply and practically**, and taught partners a behavior change model which was found to be useful.
- **Providing targeted and sustained disability inclusion support** has supported partners to understand the need and importance of integrating disability inclusion and take practical steps to facilitate inclusion.

## RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

Could Oxfam have invested differently to enhance the quality, scale or depth of outputs/outcomes? Are there alternative ways in which the program could be implemented that Oxfam should explore? (other models/strategies used by Oxfam or other agencies)

Partners identified the following ways in which effectiveness may have been enhanced:

- **Additional exchange visits (ie on the ground, community to community)** to allow partners to see first-hand examples of how effective WASH committees operate and ask questions to stakeholders directly such as: how they began; how they were formed; how they operate; what works well and what does not.
- **Undertaking more frequent support visits** — this would, however, have required additional investment by Oxfam by either using other internal staff to provide this additional support or engaging short term external expertise.
- **Encouraging joint projects between partners earlier** — while this was noted by a partner, it is not clear if the level of trust required to enable this would have been present earlier on in the partnership.

## EFFECTIVENESS SUB-CATEGORY 2: SUSTAINABILITY

### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

Are the outcomes sustainable, or is there evidence to indicate likely sustainability?

The indications that WASH will continue to be integral to NGO partner programs is high. This is because of 1) **institutional integration of WASH among all agencies**, 2) **knowledge and capacity built around WASH**; 3) **the perceived value of WASH held by partner organisations**. There is evidence that partners have institutionalised WASH within their programs. For example, organisations have incorporated WASH content into their learner manuals and curriculums. Changes in knowledge of WASH have led to attitude and practice changes among NGO practitioners whereby the community workers of some NGO partners have incorporated WASH teaching and monitoring into their community visits. Partners have noted the high value of WASH, and how it marries well with, supports and reinforces their other program activities. This indicates that partners are likely to continue to invest in WASH without Oxfam's external support as they see the alignment and benefits. Quantitative data reveals that 11,306 additional people are reported to have access to **sustainable** and safe water over the life of the partnership.

Some possible constraints to the sustainability of WASH outcomes are identified by two partners with regards to maintaining WASH infrastructure and obtaining funding to meet WASH demands. Partners' ability to ensure duty bearers provide and maintain WASH infrastructure is unclear. While the program has created demand for WASH, the extent to which partners are positioned to advocate and obtain this is not clear. This issue was identified and invested in towards the end of the program (in 2014) with the development of a WASH influencing strategy. However, at the time of this assessment the gains the program has made in supporting people to engage with duty bearers and advocate for WASH services are not known. The other two NGO partners did not foresee these issues, reporting that they expect to continue to implement WASH in a sustainable way.



From the design of the program Oxfam had its own sustainability plan in relation to partners which influenced what it did and how it rolled out the program (participation, partnership and capacity building) however on a partner level more support was needed to assist partners to have their own sustainability plans. Towards the end of the program, Oxfam began to carry out sustainability and exit planning with partners. Partners noted the value of this work in supporting them to plan and work in a more strategic way. They noted its particular importance in the context of a large donor exiting within a constrained funding environment. There is, however, concern that this work started too late in the program. Furthermore, the fundraising support did not materialise as partners could not agree on how to complete it within the short time allocated.

As previously noted, strong partnerships have been formed by partners facilitated by collective linking and learning activities. Partners noted the momentum that has been built through AACES in this area, and how rare such strong collaboration is between NGOs in South Africa. While some formal partnerships have been formed (in non-WASH areas), partners have identified a risk that they will revert back to a more isolated way of working without Oxfam playing the role of convener, losing momentum and access to collective knowledge and experience.

### LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about ensuring sustainability of program outcomes in relation to the context and program type?

- The integrated approach of working with partners in a tailored and flexible way to **mainstream WASH at institutional and program levels** has fostered sustainability, as partners have bought into WASH and have the capacity to implement it.
- The inclusion of an objective related to the establishment of stakeholder forums around partners **identifying which government departments are responsible for ensuring delivery** has supported partners to know who to target for future WASH advocacy.
- **The forming of strong partnerships between AACES NGO partners** (as discussed in the Efficiency Leveraging section above), supports the potential sustainability of outcomes, as support networks have been created and may endure if partners continue to use these.
- **Including an advocacy component is essential to ensuring the sustainability of the program** — it has been challenging to introduce advocacy activities due to an initial negative perception around this term and form of engagement with government.

### RECCOmENDATION qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

What measures could have been taken to enhance sustainability and would this require additional investment?

- **On a partner level more support was needed to assist partners to have their own sustainability plans** — institutional sustainability and exit planning work would have been more effective if it had begun mid-way through the program rather than towards the end.
- **Partners form links with external WASH hardware suppliers (government and private sector)** — while influencing the ability of government to deliver WASH services and infrastructure is largely beyond the control of Oxfam and partners (as it is very difficult to gain traction and influence in this area), making clear the requirements and avenues of each partner to receive, maintain and repair WASH hardware would support consideration of sustainability and its assessment.
- **Partners continue links with advocacy partners** such as Equal Education who could support and mentor partners who want to continue to build their advocacy WASH work in schools.

## EFFECTIVENESS RATING

### Overall Effectiveness Rating: High Effectiveness (9/12)

(2 poor effectiveness, 4 low effectiveness, 6-7 fair effectiveness, 9 good effectiveness, 12 high effectiveness)

REACH AND DEPTH OF CHANGE: 6/6		SUSTAINABILITY: 3/6	
How well is the program achieving its intended outcomes?		To what extent are program outcomes likely to be sustained beyond the program?	
U	It is not clear if the program is achieving its intended outcomes; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear to what extent the program has addressed sustainability; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Outputs led to a small number of scale and breadth of outcomes	1	Sustainability has not been well considered and/or it is not clear how program outcomes are likely to be sustainable
3	Outputs led to a good level of scale and breadth of outcomes	3	<b>The program has been designed and implemented with sustainability in mind, though it is not clear if sustainably is likely</b>
6	<b>Outputs led to a high level of scale and breadth of outcomes</b>	6	Strong efforts have been made to ensure sustainability and evidence of likely sustainability is strong
STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE			
Poor evidence:		Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence	
<b>Average evidence:</b>		<b>Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps</b>	
Excellent evidence:		Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence	

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment
  - AACES MTR
  - AACES snapshot reports
  - Partner reports
  - Oxfam WASH influencing strategy
  - AACES partner Questionnaire
  - MEL report
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment
  - Reports provided rich qualitative data, allowing changes in relation to each AACES objective to be analysed
  - In the questionnaire, partners provided clear information on which inputs had supported effectiveness and why
  - The MTR and reports contained rich analysis of the implementation process including issues encountered and how they were addressed
  - Quantitative data to show the reach of partners
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment
  - Limited documentation of a "sustainability assessment" which outlines which WASH services and infrastructure communities can source and maintain (and is therefore sustainable), and what external support is required by partners to maintain and continue WASH work (and is therefore potentially unsustainable if there is not a clear process in place to ensure this is received)



Nyanga Village, Barotse Flood Plains, Zambia- Kabu Kabu Kalauka, chairperson of the village WASHE committee, and the Nyanga community offer a warm welcome with music and dancing as the Oxfam team and the visiting partners arrive for the site visit by boat.

PHOTO © Alexia Webster

## COMPONENT 4: EQUITY (EQUAL INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS)

### Is the program appropriately engaging and producing equal benefits for different groups?

#### Relevant contextual factors and implications for equity

- Partners had not previously worked to incorporate disability into their programs — meaning that they were starting from a low base
- Oxfam had not previously worked in disability inclusion, and did not have internal expertise in this area
- Gender inequalities are entrenched — with partners experiencing challenges in this area

#### EquITY SUB-CATEGORY 1: EQUITY OF PROCESS

##### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

How well is the program appropriately targeting and ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups?  
(ie women, men, children, people with disability, people from different ethnic groups)

The focus on disability inclusion has been a standout of the program. The support provided by CREATE has been nuanced, targeted and high-quality and has been highly valued by NGOs. As stated by one partner, “the support and training provided by Oxfam via CREATE was no less than revolutionary in our organisation and community. Including people with disabilities in the training was a very effective way of changing perceptions around disability both within our own team and in the community”. The disability inclusion focus came about through a donor requirement. Despite an initial perception among partners of a top down requirement, partners began to see this as a need and have demonstrated genuine commitment to the concept and the process. Interestingly, while one original partner dropped out of the AACES program due to the heavy requirements, they have stayed in contact with CREATE and are seeking to continue this relationship to progress disability inclusion. As illustrated in the section below, partners have developed a range of capacities to include people with disability in their work.

Gender has been acknowledged as a gap and challenge among partners throughout the program from beginning to end. As stated in one report, “gender issues, as mentioned by some partners, remain the big elephant in the room. It appears that most partners found it easy to tackle issues of inclusion of people with disabilities but struggled on issues of gender. The rural and traditionalist nature of Kwa-Zulu Natal contributes immensely to this topic being difficult to tackle”. Oxfam invested in this area, engaging consultants to provide support to partners to strengthen the gender outcomes of their work. After a pilot activity, both Oxfam and partners acknowledged that these consultants were inappropriate. Partners found their approach to be overly theoretical, not culturally appropriate, not male inclusive and to have created more harm than good. Oxfam battled to find an alternative consultant and decided to use their MEL consultant in the recent annual workshop to highlight some of the gender issues and how they intersected across program objectives. While actions were taken to progress gender, the program appears to have resulted in a missed opportunity to progress gender by not being able to address this issue earlier on; partner program reports do not provide sufficient information of what gender issues partners have faced and how they have tackled these.

Several partners work in rural areas which has also enabled the program to ensure remote populations have access to clean water and other WASH outcomes. The program has targeted a range of age groups by virtue of the target groups served by partner organisations. Of the five partner organisations, three partners are child focused agencies; one works directly with youth; and one serves all age groups. This has ensured children and youth are reached through the program. Oxfam has engaged the partner Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) to work with partners to strengthen their ability to integrate child protection across their programs. RAPCAN conducted a baseline with partners which allowed them to identify what their value-add was. RAPCAN's training on child protection went further than instituting organisational child protection policies and safeguards by supporting partners to develop a child rights-based approach to programming.

#### LEARNING FOR IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS:

What can be learned about supporting equity in relation to the context and program type?

- **Having a specific objective around equity** (reducing inequalities in WASH) has focused partners in working towards inclusion.
- **Providing ongoing support to partners** by working in relation to the pace and capacity of partners, rather than approaching inclusion from a language and approach of compliance has been an appropriate strategy.
- **An integrated approach to disability and child protection** — whereby support agencies worked with partners in tailored ways to build understanding but also helped the different partners to relate and integrate these concepts and approaches within their own programming contexts.
- **Engaging two specialised partners** (child protection and disability inclusion) to provide ongoing and targeted support has been effective.
- **Giving service providers the freedom to decide what supports are necessary**, rather than providing blanket requirements has been appropriate.
- **Having Oxfam staff learn with and alongside partners** demonstrates leadership and commitment to supporting inclusion.
- **A good balance on reaching children, youth and adults** has been achieved by selecting organisations that work with a range of target groups.

#### RECOmmENDATION qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

How could equity be more strongly integrated into the ToC, and the design and implementation of the program?  
What resource implications would this have?

- **Instead of only focusing on supporting partners to facilitate inclusion**, Oxfam itself could have taken greater steps to continue to progress its own disability inclusive practice at all levels within the organisation as partners have done.
- **While equity was well integrated into the ToC conceptually**, alternative strategies to address gender issues should have been put in place early on, with other options sourced when planned work did not eventuate or was inadequate.
- **Bringing Oxfam's internal expertise in gender to bear on AACES**, gained through its experience of delivering other programs in South Africa over the last decade, may have benefited the program.

## EqUITy SUB-CATEGORy 1: EqUITy OF OUTCOmES

### ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

#### How equitably have different groups benefited?

Reduced inequalities in WASH is a program objective and has clearly been facilitated by the program. The AACES MTR and program reports provide clear evidence that partners have improved their capacity to understand and navigate inclusion issues, particularly in relation to disability and children (noting gaps in gender capacity identified above). A range of data is provided to show the **organisational capacities** partners have developed to support inclusion (i.e. identify WASH needs for people with disability, understanding of the differing needs and access to WASH services between rural communities and urban communities). A range of data is also presented on the **adaptations/inclusion strategies** used to promote inclusion (i.e. design and building of accessible toilets for people in wheelchairs, and training of community health and care workers in identifying people with disability).

Comprehensive qualitative data is provided on many of the benefits experienced by women, children and people with disability across programs, detailing the changes in people's lives as a result of the program. Comprehensive gender disaggregated data is provided for the life of the partnership. Figures provided in the effectiveness section above in relation to the additional people accessing sustainable and safe water and appropriate sanitation indicate that increases in men and women's access have been comparably equitable, with women experiencing slightly higher access rates.

A total of 230 additional people with disability reportedly gained access to services. Some partner reports reveal anecdotal evidence regarding the reach of their programs in relation to people with disability. For example, one partner stated, "our community care workers began to do home visits with a keen new set of eyes finding many more people and children with disabilities in the community than we were previously aware of; the numbers of children identified and assistance to the monthly disability clinic tripled". Disaggregated data is not provided in relation to the number of boys and girls and people with disability accessing WASH services. However, given the number of partner organisations serving children, it can be expected that children have been well reached through the program.

### RECOmmENDATIONS qUESTIONS (CURRENT/FUTURE PROGRAM):

- **The final evaluation offers an opportunity** to provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the program and the extent to which it has benefited different vulnerable groups.
- **Program documents reveal partners have used a range of MEL tools** to capture and analyse how their WASH interventions have affected different groups; this information could be reported on and fed into the final evaluation.

## EQUITY RATING

### Overall Equity Rating: Equity UNKNOWN (9/12)

(2 poor equity, 4 low equity, 6-7 fair equity, 9 good equity, 12 high equity)

TARGETING OF VULNERABLE GROUPS: 3/6		FACILITATING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS: 6/6	
How well is the program appropriately targeting and benefiting vulnerable groups?		To what extent have vulnerable groups benefited?	
U	It is not clear if equity has been integrated; a judgement cannot be formed	U	It is not clear who has benefited; a judgement cannot be formed
1	Equity was not sufficiently considered and integrated	1	The most vulnerable groups have not benefited
3	<b>Equity was integrated and resourced to some extent; there is scope to strengthen</b>	3	Some vulnerable groups have benefited and others have not
6	Equity was strongly integrated into the program's design and implementation	6	<b>Vulnerable groups have benefited significantly and equitably</b>

### STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE

Poor evidence:	Judgement made on best available data, not well supported by evidence
<b>Average evidence:</b>	<b>Tentative judgement made on the balance of evidence, noting some gaps</b>
Excellent evidence:	Informed judgement well supported by a range of quality evidence

- List the primary sources of information used to inform the assessment
  - AACES MTR
  - Partner reports
  - Annual snap shot reports
  - AACES partner questionnaire
- List the strengths in the information and how they enabled assessment
  - Rich qualitative data on the changes (particularly in relation to people with disability)
  - Information on the strategies and adaptations used by partners to bring about inclusion
  - Disability disaggregated data on the number of people with disability accessing services and infrastructure delivered through the program
- Note gaps in MEL which made it difficult to make judgement, or what additional information would have helped to make a more robust and nuanced assessment
  - Lack of child disaggregated data
  - Analysis of gender issues including strategies to address them



Oxfam Staff and South African partners meet in Livingstone for the Annual Reflection and Planning workshop.

PHOTO © Oxfam



## VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT APPENDIX

### SUmmary OF COSTS AND INPUTS (ZAR)

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	TOTAL
Innovation	0	103,659	0	0	103,659
Research	108,000	210,700	108,514	79,800	507,014
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	119,850	342,766	215,061	32,319	709,996
WASH conferences	0	17,309	77,914	0	95,223
Exchange visits	0	3,600	33,243	0	36,843
Technical training	30,000	310,615	356,300	450,000	1,146,915
Cross cutting themes	664,828	525,000	394,137	320,300	1,904,265
Photographs	20,400	34,200	16,500	13,000	84,100
Storytelling and video making/photostories	0	204,055	141,600	85,710	431,365
Annual reflection and planning meeting	488,522	387,525	257,134	317,148	1,450,329
					<b><u>6,469,709</u></b>

**METHODOLOGICAL RATIONALE  
AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS  
OF THE OXFAM AUSTRALIA  
VALUE FOR MONEY  
ASSESSMENT TOOL**

## PURPOSE

This document outlines the theory behind the VfM assessment tool used to assess the Oxfam in South Africa AACES program. It aims to orientate the reader as to why the particular approach has been taken and why certain elements have been included. The assessment framework draws on a range of VfM research and analysis that has taken place over the last 10 years. This document provides an outline of what the VfM tool does and does not aim to do and why, with reference to this literature.

## THE APPROACH

The approach takes Oxfam's definition of VfM — "the best use of resources to contribute to positive significant change in the most vulnerable people's lives"<sup>1</sup> as the starting point for the tool. It aims to articulate the links between resources invested and outputs and outcomes achieved (with reference to the four Es: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity) and examine if and how Oxfam could achieve greater change given the level and type of investment and operating context. It draws on aspects of the Basic Efficiency Resource (BER) approach by comparing outputs and outcomes to resources.

The approach recognises that Oxfam delivers rights-based programs in complex settings, and that assessment of VfM must recognise the context specific factors that determine VfM options and considerations. It draws on Bond's proposition that one way of approaching VfM is for NGOs to "build a robust and defensible case for how an intervention balances economy, efficiency and effectiveness and delivers the most value for poor and marginalised people".<sup>2</sup> Oxfam sees VfM as integrated throughout the program management cycle, and believes that if these processes are followed, its projects will deliver VfM. The tool provides a practical way to assess initiatives to see if this holds true and consider how VfM can be enhanced. It seeks to progress Oxfam Great Britain (OGB)'s finding of needing to "find ways to demonstrate VfM that are more than good management but may not go as far as monetary measurement of impact".<sup>3</sup>

## DEFINING THE "VALUE" IN VFM

The approach does not aim to assign value in the way approaches such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) do, using proxy indicators to come up with an overall value proposition. This focus does not systematically answer the fundamental VfM question: "could the use of resources be improved". The approach does not seek to determine or rate the value of the changes made and ask the question "was it worth it in relation to the investment put in" as some other approaches do. This is because Oxfam has not taken this approach and there are competing interpretations of what value is, or should be, and who ought to define it<sup>4</sup> and because value takes time to deliver, especially at scale<sup>5</sup>, and may only be realised after the program has completed. In addition, Oxfam works to progress human rights enshrined in national and international conventions (which arguably must be progressed regardless of their perceived value). Oxfam recognises that pathways to achieving rights are non-linear, context specific and must be strengthened through the application of strong MEL, and has therefore focused on better understanding and improving its change pathways with a VfM lens.

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1 Value for Money Discussion Paper, Oxfam Australia, Program Quality Unit, Sept 2013, Page 1.

2 Bond for International Development, 2012, Integrating Value for Money into the programme cycle.

3 OGB VfM training slide pack, June 2013, Page 78.

4 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 3.

5 OGB VfM training slide pack, June 2013, Page 64.

## PLACING THEORY OF CHANGE AT THE HEART OF VFM

The central role of Theory of Change in Vfm is being increasingly acknowledged as development agencies seek to apply Vfm concepts at a programmatic level. London School of Economics (LSE) research conducted in relation to Vfm approaches and debates notes that “many stakeholders mention a Theory of Change as it reveals the organisations’ understanding of value, illustrated through their rationale connecting inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact”<sup>6</sup>. Findings of an OGB evaluation that included a Vfm assessment highlighted the importance of focusing on ToC to advance Vfm. It states, “by carefully identifying the point at which success is measured (between activity and impact), and carefully tracking the types of interconnected inputs into the activities which contributed to such change, the assessment of Value for Money — and programme quality itself — can gradually be strengthened”<sup>7</sup>. The assessment tool takes this suggested approach forward, using ToC to locate these elements, examining Vfm in relation to the change processes Oxfam and its partners contribute to. As highlighted by Oxfam, this is important to ensure that “the value is not considered in the achievement of an activity, but in the occurrence of change, progress towards the outcomes and final vision as expressed in the theory of change”<sup>8</sup>.

Using ToC is also important to ensure Vfm assessment is strongly located in the programming context and is not reductionist and disconnected from context, which very much influences level of cost and investment required to achieve specific changes. As highlighted through the OGB evaluation, “The monitoring of Value for Money needs to be able to link outcomes to inputs and those to financial resources. It is important to build in ways to relate these elements together without losing the complexity and nuance of how change happens”<sup>9</sup>.

## COMPARISON AS A MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

“An intervention can only be Vfm compared to a different option, not by itself”<sup>10</sup>; “Nothing is good or bad, except in comparison to something else”<sup>11</sup>. While the need to build comparison into Vfm assessment is acknowledged in the literature, challenges related to this undertaking such as determining comparable data sets, comparing programs that are implemented in different contexts, and finding available data to enable comparisons are also widely noted. The approach recognises that it is difficult to do this in any precise way, but aims to trial some comparative methods in a flexible way. As observed by a director of NGO performance, “We have to encourage comparisons. We’re going to lose some nuance — that’s OK. We cannot make decisions without losing some nuance”<sup>12</sup>.

The tool aims to document the costs and inputs in relation to the different strategies/activities used to effect change in different thematic and sectoral programs. It also aims to document the contextual factors that affect Vfm considerations to support comparison. In time, this may support Oxfam to compare across its own programs with similar desired outcomes<sup>13</sup>. The approach to comparison draws on work undertaken by OGB<sup>14</sup> which identifies three forms of comparison: **1) benchmarking measurement** (comparing program achievements with similar achievements outside the program — external agencies); **2) trend measurement** (which shows progress

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6 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, May 2011 Page 3.

7 Women’s Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB’s “Raising Her Voice” portfolio, June 2013, Page 59.

8 Women’s Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB’s “Raising Her Voice” portfolio, June 2013, Page 58.

9 Women’s Right to Be Heard: An evaluation of Oxfam GB’s “Raising Her Voice” portfolio, June 2013, Page 13.

10 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011 Page 24. According to Nicholles “the objective of understanding Vfm is to make decisions and these are usually between more than one thing. This is powerful and useful within an organisation, but not necessarily between organisations because often it is hard to compare like for like”.

11 OGB Page 3, Bond OGB Vfm Discussion Paper BER, Clair Hutchins, Page 3.

12 LSE, Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011 Page 25.

13 This approach is also supported by LSE research which states “discussions with interviewees, as well as the analysis of the methodological underpinnings of Vfm, suggest that one purpose of Vfm could be to compare interventions with the same desired outcome. As such, Vfm would refer to a way of achieving the same outcomes with more efficient use of inputs” (LSE Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 26. Ideally its programs could be compared to external agencies, however this requires other organisations to document their models and associated investments and make these publically available. Concerns have been raised regarding the competitive environment this approach would create and the ‘race to the bottom’. LSE Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates, 2011, Page 26.

14 OGB Vfm training slide pack, June 2013, Page 89.

over time can demonstrate cumulative effect or show comparative improvement over time); and 3) **stand-alone measures** (show what has been achieved within a reporting period and can be compared against the plan for that period). Those steering OGB's work argue that programs often undertake comparison in relation to stand alone measures, but need to move towards external benchmarking. In the early stages of the VfM assessment process, the assessor tried to work with teams to identify available external comparators. However, in practice when undertaking the three assessments, this could not be achieved at this early stage of formal VfM assessment and trend measurement and stand-alone measures were used.

## LEVERAGING AS AN INDICATOR OF VfM

The VfM framework explicitly integrates "leveraging" as defined by Oxfam International in a 2014 paper *Leverage: reaching scale in our work*: "Leverage is working strategically with others in a 'clever' way, in order to lever a bigger change than we could ever achieve on our own. It depends on developing a rich web of mutually beneficial relationships and alliances at country, regional and global level. Leverage emerges out of that connectivity".<sup>15</sup> Leveraging is not new and is something Oxfam does widely throughout its programs. However, integrating leverage in a VfM assessment aims to help program teams to consider how they are and can more explicitly harness the networks, resources, ideas and assets of others to achieve goals more efficiently and effectively and create larger change — enhancing VfM. It also ensures an assessment of VfM includes what others bring to the change process, rather than explicitly focusing on Oxfam's actions and resources. As highlighted in Oxfam International's paper, "a leverage approach means we must systematically strengthen these networks at all levels. Leverage is about being far sighted as to what we want to achieve, clear sighted and strategic about who will do it and especially, astute about understanding what kind of actions will create the alliances and momentum we need in order to bring about the big changes we seek."<sup>16</sup>

## ASSESSING SCALE AND DEPTH OF CHANGE IN VfM

Christian Aid has developed a considered and eloquent approach to VfM. Its approach is about achieving the best results it can with the money and resources it has. It defines "best" results as the **scale** (numbers of people benefiting), **depth** (intensity and sustainability of change) and **inclusion** (in other words, a change has greater impact if it benefits people who are more excluded and marginalised)<sup>17</sup>. Oxfam shares this approach, and the VfM tool seeks to capture numbers reached, level/depth of change, and levels of equity within outcomes. While it is challenging to define and measure "depth" of change, the framework seeks to assess the extent to which changes in practice and structural/institutional changes brought about are expected to be sustained beyond the life of the program. Noting that impact can be difficult to measure and may not be realised until years later, the framework seeks to assess the strength of outcomes produced.

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15 Oxfam International 'Leverage: Reaching scale in our work', 2014, Page 1.

16 Oxfam International 'Leverage: Reaching scale in our work', 2014, Page 1.

17 Christian Aid, How Christian Aid Assesses Value for Money in its Programmes, July 2012, Page 1.

## PARTICIPATION OF PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY IN ASSESSMENT OF VFM

A Vfm assessment must importantly consider from whose perspective value is defined. This Vfm assessment tool is based on evidence collected through participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Community participation in this Vfm assessment is encouraged through the methodology. There are different ways in which communities can be involved throughout the assessment and the approach aims to encourage teams to explore different ways of engaging stakeholders. This approach draws on DFAT's approach to Vfm which incorporates ethics (transparency and accountability) into its definition of Vfm<sup>18</sup>.

## EVIDENCE-BASED vFm ASSESSmENT

Assessment is based on evidence. This includes regular MEL data and program documentation and additional data collected by the assessor in the event of gaps in available data in relation to any of the four Es. Assessment is based on evidence obtained through traditional evaluation methods such as desktop reviews, stakeholder interviews and questionnaires, and participatory reflection workshops. The approach recognises that a Vfm assessment can only be made on the basis of evidence, and does not seek to facilitate a process whereby assessment makes an unsubstantiated judgement due to lack of evidence, or penalises projects by rating Vfm as poor due to a lack of existing data. It is recognised that in some cases it may be difficult to make a judgement due to lack of data. As with many evaluation methodologies, the judgement is ultimately the subjective interpretation of the evaluator. The approach uses Vfm assessment as an opportunity to help teams strengthen their MEL (and application of the wider program management cycle), and explore how they can better integrate Vfm into their MEL frameworks which is key to managing for Vfm.

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18 An Oxfam presentation 2012 states, 'Ethics is described by AusAID as 'gives attention to the way Vfm assessment is conducted to ensure that the research or data collection is undertaken with permission of participants and in a way that is honest and understood by those involved'.



Mdumiseni Zungu greeting the Nyanga community during a partner village.

PHOTO © Wendy Lubbee



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